Jon L. White collection on Common Lisp

Finding aid prepared by Bo Doub, Kim Hayden, and Sara Chabino Lott
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Computer History Museum
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March 2017
Title: Jon L. White collection
Identifier/Call Number: X6823.2013
Contributing Institution: Computer History Museum
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 8.75 Linear feet, 7 record cartons
Date (bulk): Bulk, 1978-1995
Date (inclusive): 1963-2012
Abstract: The Jon L. White collection on Common Lisp contains material relating to the development and standardization of the programming language Common Lisp and, more generally, the Lisp family of programming languages. Records date from 1963 to 2012, with the bulk of the material ranging from 1978 to 1995, when White was working at MIT’s Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, Xerox PARC (Palo Alto Research Center), Lucid, and Harlequin Group. Throughout many of these positions, White was serving on the X3J13 Committee to formalize a Common Lisp standard, which aimed to combine and standardize many previous dialects of Lisp. This collection consists of conference proceedings, manuals, X3J13 Committee correspondence and meeting minutes, notebooks, technical papers, and periodicals documenting White’s work in all of these roles. Other dialects of Lisp—especially MAClisp—are also major focuses of the collection. White also collected significant amounts of material on object-oriented programming, artificial intelligence, garbage collection memory management, and floating-point arithmetic in his various computer programming roles.
Languages: The collection is predominantly in English, with some French and Japanese.
creator: Jon L., White
Access Restrictions
The collection is open for research.
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of Item], [Date], Jon L. White collection on Common Lisp, Lot X6823.2013, Box [#], Folder [#], Catalog [#], Computer History Museum.
Immediate Source of Acquisition
Biographical/Historical Note
Jon L. White was involved in the development of the programming language Common Lisp, a standardized and enhanced version of MIT’s MAClisp, both of which are dialects of Lisp. He also chaired Lisp conferences, edited Lisp periodicals, and sat on the board of the Association of Lisp Users. In addition to his contributions to Lisp development, White was also involved with compilers, garbage collection, and higher-level memory management. He earned a bachelor’s degree in mathematics from Carnegie-Mellon University and a master’s degree in applied mathematics from Harvard University. Lisp was first implemented in 1958 at MIT and was frequently used for artificial intelligence research purposes. In the late 1960s, MIT’s Project MAC developed the Lisp dialect MAClisp. White joined MIT’s Artificial Intelligence Laboratory in 1969, where he began developing Lisp systems and compilers. He led the later development of MAClisp, wrote and maintained the MAClisp compiler, and led the creation of NIL, an implementation of Lisp that ran on stock hardware as opposed to Lisp-specific machines. In 1977, White took a one-year leave of absence from MIT to work on Lisp/370 at IBM’s Watson Research Center.
By 1980, there were many discrete dialects of Lisp, and a committee was convened to develop one standardized successor dialect. White was on this committee, and the group ultimately developed Common Lisp. White was also involved with X3J13, the technical committee formed in 1986 to standardize Common Lisp under the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). He was the chair of the X3J13 Iteration Subcommittee, which standardized Common Lisp’s Loop and Iterate macros.
White left MIT in the early 1980s to work on product development for another Lisp dialect, Interlisp, at Xerox PARC. In 1985, he joined Lucid to develop Common Lisp systems, and then worked on Lisp projects at Harlequin. After Harlequin, White worked briefly for NASA Ames Research Center, and then at CommerceOne.
Scope and Content of the Collection
The Jon L. White collection on Common Lisp contains material collected and created by White during his work with the programming language, Lisp, and one of its most widely used dialects, Common Lisp. The records span 1963 through 2012 with the bulk of the collection ranging from 1978 to 1995. One focus of the collection is the X3J13 Committee’s work in standardizing Common Lisp under ANSI. This collection holds X3J13’s meeting minutes, correspondence between members, presentation material, drafts of papers, and voting ballots on committee issues -- with a specific focus on the Iteration Subcommittee. Books, manuals, and technical reports documenting Common Lisp and the Common Lisp Object System (CLOS) supplement the material relating to X3J13. Other records in this collection relate to the Lisp family of programming languages more generally, with conference proceedings, academic technical papers, and other publications documenting the development and use of Lisp and its dialects (other than Common Lisp). Much of this part of the collection came out of MIT’s Project MAC and the MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. Material of interest in the MIT material relate to MAClisp, Lisp programming for the PDP-6, SCHEME, and LAMBDA. The last part of this collection covers other topics relating to programming, such as object-oriented programming, garbage collection memory management, artificial intelligence, floating-point arithmetic, standardization, and compilers. Object-oriented programming is an especially prevalent topic, with significant amounts of material from ACM’s OOPSLA (Object-Oriented Programming, Systems, Languages & Applications) Conference and the periodical OOPS Messenger published by ACM’s SIGPLAN.

Arrangement
The collection is arranged into 3 series:
Series 1, Common Lisp records, 1980-2012, bulk 1985-1995
Series 3, Object-oriented programming, artificial intelligence, and other records, 1972-2001

Related Collections at CHM
Herbert Stoyan collection on LISP programming, Lot X5687.2010.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
COMMON LISP (Computer program language)
Computer programming
Garbage collection (Computer science)
Object-oriented programming (Computer science)

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Series Scope and Content
This series consists of material collected and/or created by White relating to the development and use of the programming language, Common Lisp. Types of records in this series include manuals, correspondence, notebooks, meeting minutes, technical reports, and conference proceedings. One significant focus of this series is the X3J13 Committee, which formed in 1986 to develop and formalize the ANSI Common Lisp standard. This series holds X3J13’s meeting minutes, correspondence between members, presentation material, drafts of papers, and voting ballots--and discussions of their results--on committee issues. White served as chair of X3J13’s Iteration Subcommittee, which standardized Common Lisp’s Loop and Iterate macros. This series contains correspondence, presentation slides, and technical papers from the Iteration Subcommittee on the development of Loop and Iterate. Many of the manuals in this series were published by Lucid, Inc. and Harlequin Group and provide instruction for using instances of Common Lisp compatible with systems from Sun Microsystems, Hewlett-Packard, and Apple Computer. The Common Lisp Object System (CLOS), Common Lisp’s facility for object-oriented programming, is also well-documented in this series. One other highlight of this series is material relating to the funding of one of White’s projects by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). The proposal for this project was titled “An Integrated Lisp-C/C++ Environment” and aimed to co-develop a C++ (and/or C) compiler and debugger along with extending Common Lisp’s Foreign Language Interface. This series is arranged chronologically.

102773988 X3J13 Committee correspondence, presentation slides, and technical papers on Loop and Iterate macros 1980; 1987-1988
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Guy Steele corrections and clarifications for Common Lisp : the Language 1985</td>
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<td>102773991</td>
<td>Richard C. Waters writings on Loops and Common Lisp 1985-1989</td>
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<td>X3J13 Committee task groups and Cleanup Committee meeting minutes 1986-1989</td>
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<td>X3J13 Committee reference documents and correspondence 1986-1994</td>
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<td>A programmer's guide to Common Lisp 1987</td>
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<td>Sun Common Lisp version 2.1 manual and release notes 1987-08</td>
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<td>102773571</td>
<td>Golden Common Lisp : a hands-on approach 1989</td>
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<td>102773998</td>
<td>SunTechnology : the journal for Sun users 1989</td>
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<td>102774001</td>
<td>Programming in CLOS and Lucid Common Lisp course material 1989-1990</td>
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<td>102774002</td>
<td>HP Common Lisp advanced user's guide 1990</td>
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<td>102774003</td>
<td>Lucid Common Lisp/HP guides 1990</td>
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<td>102774004</td>
<td>Visualization and graphical layout in object-oriented systems 1990</td>
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<td>102774005</td>
<td>The Common Lisp Object System (CLOS) and Delivery Tool Kit (DTK) 1990-09</td>
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<td>102774007</td>
<td>Lucid Common Lisp/Sun versions 3.0 and 4.0 guides 1990-1991</td>
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<td>102774008</td>
<td>Understanding CLOS : the Common Lisp Object System 1991</td>
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<td>102774009</td>
<td>An overview of YY and YYonX : a CLOS based window tool kit and its implementation 1991-02-25</td>
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<td>102774010</td>
<td>X3J13 Committee notebook 1991-1992</td>
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<td>102774012</td>
<td>Macintosh Common Lisp (MCL) 2.0 manual and release notes 1992</td>
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<td>102774013</td>
<td>Straight talk about Lisp : a special report for the technical community 1992</td>
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<td>DARPA funding for BAA 92-13 project 1992-1993</td>
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<td>Object-oriented programming : the CLOS perspective 1993</td>
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<td>102774015</td>
<td>Persistent CLOS : user guide/reference manual version 1.20 1993-12</td>
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<td>102774018</td>
<td>Lucid accounts receivable portfolio and Creditor's Committee correspondence 1994-1995</td>
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<td>102774019</td>
<td>Lucid Common Lisp/SPARC Solaris manual 1995-04</td>
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<td>Harlequin Common Lisp ORB : developing component software with CORBA 1999-01</td>
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Series Scope and Content

This series contains records related to the programming language Lisp. Material dates from 1963 to 2001, with the bulk from 1978 to 1994, and includes conference proceedings, technical papers and reports from several universities, manuals, standards, books, and periodicals. There is quite a bit of material on the development of Lisp and MAClisp at MIT’s Project MAC laboratories, including papers written by White, and numerous AI Memos from the MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. Specific Project MAC topics include Lisp storage and garbage collection, programming for the PDP-6, Lisp for the PDP-6, Lisp matrix inversion, LAMBDA, SCHEME and its compiler Rabbit, NIL, LetS loop notation, and MAClisp. This series also has a large number of issues of two periodicals: Lisp Pointers, which White contributed to as technical articles editor and, later, as editor of the entire publication, and Lisp and Symbolic Computation (including issues under its later title Higher-Order and Symbolic Computation). Conferences with material in this series include the ACM Conference on Lisp and Functional Programming, International Workshop on the Cooperative Extension and Refinement of Lisp (ICERL), Dynamic Objects Workshop and Association of Lisp Users Meeting, MACSYMA Users’ Conference, and Lisp Users and Vendors (LUV). Some of the technical reports outline Lisp implementation on specific computers, including the IBM System/360, IBM System/370, and Burroughs B1700/1800. Finally, this series includes a workbook from a Stanford University Lisp programming course, reports on Carnegie-Mellon University’s Spice Lisp instruction set project, the IEEE standard for the Lisp dialect Scheme, and a paper by White titled “Historical Perspective on Numerics in Lisp or, Numbers Are Symbols, too.” This series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

102773610 ACM Conference on Lisp and Functional Programming proceedings 1994
102773621 Carnegie-Mellon University Spice project 1983
102773592 Dynamic Objects Workshop and Association of Lisp Users Meeting proceedings 1996
102773612 ICERL ’91 proceedings 1991
102773622 IEEE Scheme standard 1991-1992
102773611 Langages Lisp, Les 1994
102773618 Lisp 1.5 and its implementation on the IBM System/360 at RPI 1970
102773614 Lisp pointers 1987-1995
102773615 Lisp Users and Vendors (LUV) ’92 conference material 1992
102773617 MACSYMA Users’ Conference proceedings 1977; 1979
102773619 Portable Standard Lisp (PSL) manual and newsletter 1982; 1984
102773616 Project MAC Lisp and MAClisp development 1963-1984
102773623 Stanford University Lisp programming course material 1984
102773626 Technical reports and articles 1978-1998
102773627 UtilLisp manual 1988-01
Object-oriented programming, garbage collection, and other records, Series 3, 1972-2001

Series Scope and Content
This series is made up of material related to object oriented programming, garbage collection, artificial intelligence, floating-point arithmetic, and other programming topics. Material dates from 1972 to 2001. Records related to object-oriented programming make up about half of this series’ records. A large portion of those records are proceedings, working papers, and attendee lists of the ACM’s OOPSLA (Object-Oriented Programming, Systems, Languages & Applications) Conference. The rest of the object-oriented programming material consists of technical papers and reports, books, manuals, presentations, and newsletters, including the ACM SIGPLAN OOPS Messenger. A smaller but still significant portion of this series contains technical papers and reports, newsletters, and conference proceedings on garbage collection and memory management from a number of sources, including MIT, Digital Equipment Corporation’s Western Research Laboratory, Xerox PARC, INRIA, and University of Illinois at Chicago. The rest of this series contains technical papers and reports, manuals, standards, conference proceedings, and periodicals on artificial intelligence, floating-point arithmetic, standardization, compilers, and other programming topics. Much of the material on artificial intelligence was published by MIT’s Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. White authored some of the papers in this series on floating-point arithmetic and garbage collection. This series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

102773591 ACM SIGPLAN notices 1996
102773576 Annotated C++ reference manual, The 1990
102773581 Apropos newsletter 1989-1990
102773575 C traps and pitfalls 1988
102773582 DEC Western Research Laboratory papers on garbage collection 1988-02; 1989-10
102773594 Dylan programming : an object-oriented and dynamic language 1997
102773593 Ecrits d’ICSLA 1994-1995
102773578 Floating-point arithmetic 1972-1991
102773595 Franz Inc. presentations 1999
102773574 Image Understanding Workshop 1993
102773583 INRIA papers on garbage collection 1987; 1990
102773584 ISMM 2000 proceedings 2000
102773570 MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory manuals and reports 1980-1984
102773585 MIT papers on garbage collection 1977-1998
102773598 Object-oriented concepts, databases, and applications 1989
102773597 Object-oriented modeling and design 1991
102773596 Object-oriented software construction 1988
102773600 Objectworks\Smalltalk 1990
102773601 OOPS messenger 1990-1995
102773586 OOPSLA ’90 Workshop on Garbage Collection in Object-Oriented Systems 1990
102773603 OOPSLA ’92 proceedings and tutorial notes 1992
102773599 OOPSLA ’93 proceedings 1993-10
102773587 OOPSLA ’93 Workshop on Memory Management and Garbage Collection 1993
102773604 OOPSLA ’94 proceedings 1994-10
102773605 OOPSLA ’95 proceedings with addendum 1995-10
102773606 OOPSLA ’96 proceedings 1996-10
102773602 OOPSLA attendee lists 1986-1992
102773573 Organization for programs in fluid domains 1981
102773588 Other companies papers on garbage collection 1984; 1987
102773580 Other universities papers on garbage collection 1985-1991
102773572 PC AI 1994-03
102773608 Programs as Data Objects (PADO) proceedings 2001
102773577 Reports on compilers 1979-1991
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