

About the Charles Babbage Institute and Archives

The mission of the Charles Babbage Institute (CBI), and the Archives (CBIA), is to facilitate, foster, and conduct research to advance understanding of computing, information, and culture. We fulfill this mission through synergistic programs of curating and continuously expanding the leading global archives on computing and society, and running an interdisciplinary history research center. CBI hosts major conferences/symposia and smaller workshops, engages in sponsored research, publishes scholarly books and articles, conducts oral histories, provides editorial leadership, manages fellowship and grant programs, has public history programming, and contributes to education on campus and beyond.

With a global community of researchers and scholars, the Charles Babbage Institute Archives is considered the preeminent archival institution of records documenting the technical, social, and cultural history of computing and the high-tech industry. Our oldest items in the collection are inscribed first edition books and journals authored by the institute's namesake, Charles Babbage, while the most recent are a set of zines and print material on the social impact of computing published as recently as last month. Our 300+ collections span a wide range of geographies and include both personal and corporate records, as well as a large variety of AV and digital formats. Some areas of concentration include Cold War computing and political intersections, computer graphics and human-computer interaction, and issues of race and gender within the larger high-tech industry. Keystone collections include those of the Control Data Corporation, the Burroughs Corporation, and the Association for Computing Machinery.

A Brief History of CBI and CBIA:

- 1978: Founded by Erwin and Adelle Tomash as the International Charles Babbage Society; office opened in Palo Alto, California.
- 1979: American Federation of Information Processing Societies becomes principal sponsor of the Society; Society renamed the Charles Babbage Institute; companies and individuals in the information industries offer support.
- 1980: University of Minnesota enters into a legal agreement to sponsor and house the Charles Babbage Institute; a new supporting entity, the Charles Babbage Foundation, is created to govern the Institute as a partner with the University.
- 1989: University of Minnesota assumes all authority for the Charles Babbage Institute; CBI becomes an organized research unit of the University and the Archives are given over to the care of the University Libraries Archives and Special Collections Department.
- 2018: As part of restructuring within the College of Science and Engineering, CBI became a research center of the Graduate Program in the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine.