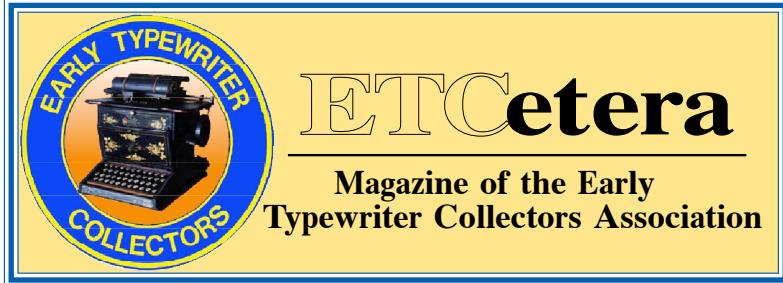


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No. 38 --- March, 1997

KEYBOARDS PAST . . .



. . . AND FUTURE

ETCetera

Magazine of the Early
Typewriter Collectors
Association

March, 1997
No. 38

Editor

Darryl Rehr

2591 Military Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90064

(310)477-5229

FAX (310)268-8420

E-mail dcrehr@earthlink.net
or darryl_dehr@lamg.com

ETC Home Page
<http://home.earthlink.net/~dcrehr/etc.html>

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Don't look now, but the Early Typewriter Collector's Association is now officially 10 years old!. Though my records are incomplete, I believe the group was formed during a meeting at Richard Dickerson's home on Feb. 28, 1987. ETCetera did not appear until the end of that year, so our magazine's "anniversary" edition will not be due until December.

Among the features I'd like to include is an article surveying machines which have model "No. 10" attached to them. Do you have a "No. 10" machine... particularly a rare one? If so, send in a photo.

†††

This little notice has appeared before in this column, but I'll do it again for those who missed it. I'm no longer doing up personalized ETC stationery for every early renewing subscriber. However, if you really

want a letterhead, just drop me a line and enclose a 55-cent stamp. I'll make one up for you using the ETC logo and mail it back.

FACES 'N' PLACES

Clack, clack, clack, ding...



Pat Berg, shown four years ago, poses from her collection of typewriters at a collecting rendezvous in Merrill, Wisconsin. Her hobby provides a welcome respite. The Clackety, dingy in the 1900s (left) is a Monroe Comptograph (center), and at right is the century's Blickensderfer.

Merrill woman's the collecting type

By Meg Dedolph
Wausau Daily Herald

MERRILL — Pat Berg, 40, a reporter and teller of stories—whether it comes from her typewriter or her husband's typewriter—has collected typewriters for about 10 years.

But her typewriters are different because they're not collectible antiques. They're collectible because they're still working.

Page 4A

■ Rodger M. Johnson

Weekly series



Pat Berg, of Merrill, Wisconsin was the right face in the right place at the right time for the *Wausau Daily Herald*. She was the subject of the paper's *Faces and Places* feature on Dec. 1, 1996. In the article, reporter Meg Dedolph quotes Pat as saying "There are typewriters out there that are hundreds of dollars, by my price is free, or \$5 or \$10." No wonder she has that cute smile in the photo! If the Blick, Chicago and Bennett seen there came at those prices, Pat's putting us all to shame! Thanks to Pat's husband Tom for sending in the clipping.

†††



Here's another ETC member who got his picture in the paper. That's Steve Sperber of Sherman Oaks, California hid-

ing behind his stack of portables. Steve was among several collectors and groups (including ETC) featured in an article by P.J. Huffstutter of the *Daily News*, the major paper serving the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles. The article was headlined "Collecting Clunkers: Typewriters get ironic sales boost on Internet."

†††

Günter Pschibl, of Vohenstrauß, Germany paid a visit in January, along with his wife and two other friends. The group stopped in LA midway through a tour of the US, which included other stops in Chicago, Las Vegas, San Francisco and Hawaii! I suggested going out to dinner and was accepted "only if you will be our guest!" There's a condition hard to turn down! We had a fun time at a local LA eatery, trying to explain the fine points of Margaritas and Chinese Chicken salad. Yes, language was a barrier... but not much of one.

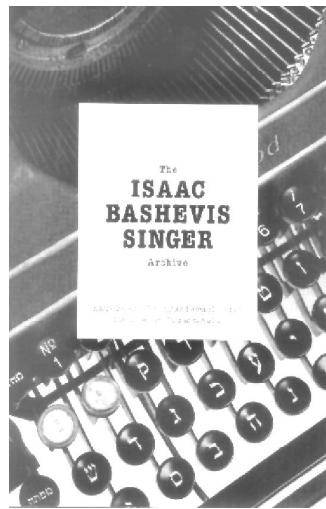
†††

Juan Marquez was another international visitor in January. Marquez is an airline pilot who collects typewriters and calls Mexico City home. He brought along a photo of the Chieftain ribbon tin as well as a number of Mexican tins which we display in this issue's Color Gallery. He also contributed a couple photos showing model No. 10 machines, which we'll put into the file for our 10th anniversary issue in December.

†††

We all get strange letters from time to time, the writers trying to describe their old machines. I thought this sketch that came in one of them was pretty charming. It was provided to show me what the writer's old Underwood looked like:





ABOVE: Isaac Bashevis Singer. ABOVE MIDDLE: Singer's first Underwood with Yiddish keyboard. ABOVE RIGHT: Cover to exhibit guide for Singer Archive on display at University of Texas. RIGHT: Underwood portable also owned by Singer.

A Typewriter and its Partner

A flurry of e-mail reached ETCetera in early 1996 from an intriguing lady named Lisa Jones, of the University of Texas at Austin. This Nice Gentile Girl is curator of an exhibition of the *Isaac Bashevis Singer Archive*. For those who don't know, Singer was a giant of Yiddish literature. A Nobel laureate, he is probably best known today, because he wrote the work on which Barbra Streisand's movie *Yentl* was based.

The "archive" (of Singer's personal effects) arrived at UT packed in boxes, and consisted of everything from books and magazines to notes, press clippings, a woman's nylon stocking, allergy pills, an errant piece of drywall and, yes, two typewriters. Jones felt it critical to date and identify the two machines, since it seems that one of them was central to the exhibit.

Why would a typewriter be *that* important? Read the first few paragraphs from the exhibit booklet, and you'll understand:

"Every literary archive contains a single object which seems to sum up the life and work of its author. Sometimes a diary chronicles the life from which a famous novel arose. A packet of letters or a photograph, carefully preserved for a lifetime, can contradict the writer's public image. A scrapbook of clippings and mementos, seen in the light of a career, vividly portrays an author's private vision of himself.

"In 1935, Isaac Bashevis Singer purchased, for \$15, a small manual Underwood typewriter with Hebrew characters. On it he typed out the articles, stories, and novels that culminated in a

Nobel Prize for Literature. But he had a conspirator's relationship with the machine, describing it in his stories as a sort of alter ego, possessed by demons who made him type things he shouldn't.

"I have a Yiddish typewriter which is very capricious and hightly critical," Singer explained.

"If this typewriter doesn't like a story it refused to work. I don't get a man to correct it since I know if I get a good idea the machine will make peace with me again. I don't believe my own words saying this, but I've had the experience so many times that I'm really astonished. But the typewriter is forty-two years old. It should have some literary experience, it should have a mind of its own."

Of the two typewriters Jones inquired about, the only one that could have fit was one which appears to be an Underwood No. 5, with a Yiddish keyboard (Yiddish is a dialect of German, but was spoken by Jews worldwide and still is by many. It is written using Hebrew characters). The 1935 purchase date rules out the later portable found among Singer's possessions. The description of the machine as "small" seems to be a mistake or misunderstanding in the commentary. How many of us would call an Underwood No. 5 "small?"

Those interested in more information about the Singer Archive may contact Lisa Jones at The University of Texas at Austin, PO Drawer 7219, Austin, TX 78713-7219.



QWERTY REVISITED

"Now about the change of the key-board... This is the second letter I have tried to write with this machine. When I began, it was as new to me as if I had never learned any one. And there was this against it—I had to unlearn as well as learn. But now, at the close of this letter, I am beginning to become quite familiar with it. Of course, it is better to have them all alike, but the change was better to be made than not."

—James Densmore to C.L. Sholes
November 8, 1872

One-hundred twenty five years ago, Christopher Sholes cast in stone the keyboard arrangement that would remain with us until today. The quizzical, quirky QWERTY keyboard was dubbed "Universal," because, indeed, it was. It still is, and for many good reasons.

Over the years, QWERTY has also become the keyboard people love to hate. It doesn't seem to make much sense, it is difficult to learn and has many other faults. Still, it is a cultural fixture that at least deserves some attempt at understanding it.

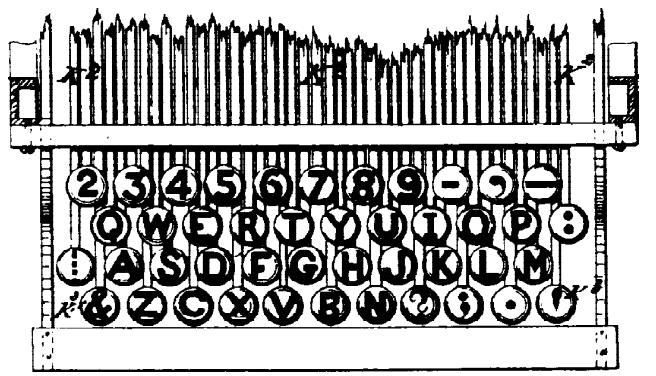
To do just that, we'll set the Wayback Machine to 1868, four years before Keyboard Creation, and we'll visit Kleinstuber's Machine Shop in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where C.L. Sholes and his pals were putting together the first model of their typewriter. On that machine, the keyboard was strictly alphabetic. Of course, the machine had many, many problems, but the one we're concerned with here is the clashing of type bars.

To understand the clashing problem, try wiggling your index and middle fingers. See how they rub together? The same thing happened with any two *adjacent* type bars on Sholes' developmental machine. The internal works were somewhat slow, and one typebar couldn't get out of the way fast enough when an adjacent one was on the way up. Now, wiggle your index and *ring* fingers. Notice how they don't clash at all.

We think Sholes noticed the same thing. So, perhaps, did James Densmore, who became the entrepreneurial force behind the machine. As the prevailing theory goes, someone in this group realized that if you arranged the keyboard with frequent letter pairs (such as ER, TH, IN) mounted as far apart as possible in the type basket, the clashing problem would occur less frequently.

In his new book *Antique Typewriters: from Creed to QWERTY*, Michael Adler tries to "explode" this theory as "sheer nonsense." His claim is the apparent discrepancy that E and R are separated by only one type bar in the type basket. Apart from that fact, the evidence favoring the theory is quite good. Richard Dickerson did a computer analysis of all those letter pairs and type bar positions, and found a remarkable pattern showing that frequent pairs were separated.

So, do we throw out the theory based on the one discrepancy? Maybe we don't have to. Start wiggling your fingers again to figure



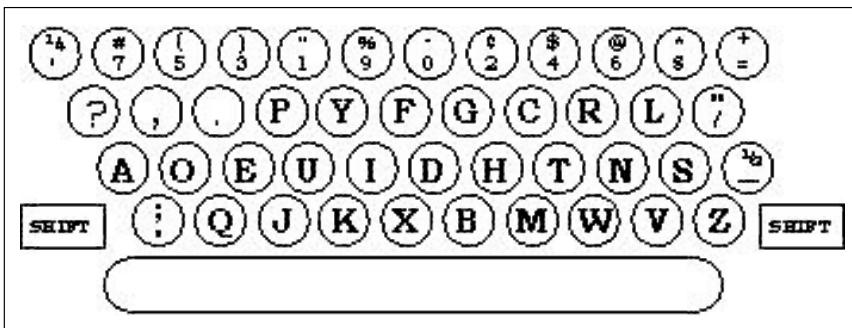
ABOVE: 1878 patent in which the QWERTY layout was claimed as a patentable feature. OPPOSITE PAGE: Dvorak keyboard layout—QWERTY's most serious challenger.

out why. It appears that all Sholes needed to do was separate the letter pairs by at least one type bar. As long as they were not adjacent, they didn't clash. If you've ever had the opportunity to fiddle with a Sholes & Glidden, you may have a feel for how this works. Type keys for two adjacent type bars quickly in succession and they'll clash and jam all day. Try to same thing for two type bars that are one position apart (like E and R), and they won't clash unless you intentionally hit them both at the same time.

So, it appears all we need to do is revise our theory slightly, and it need no longer be discarded. We can save the "nonsense" label for the *other* QWERTY stories. Among those is one that says Sholes separated often-used letters to slow typists down (because of the same clashing problem we've mentioned). Another story says all the letters in the word "typewriter" were put on the top row, so salesmen could type it quickly for prospective buyers. Yet another story has the "ERTY" as a contribution of James Daugherty (inventor of the Daugherty Typewriter in 1893), who wanted the machine to quickly type his own name!

The problem in all this is that we have no specific document, no letter, no note, no patent, no *anything* which tells us for sure why Sholes did what he did. Professor Richard Current, author of *The Typewriter and the Men Who Made It*, tells ETCetera he found no such source among the cache of Densmore papers that formed the basis of his fine book. Current, however, feels that Sholes was very conscious of keyboard design. He points out as others have, that both Sholes and Densmore had worked as printers and knew that an alphabetic arrangement, at least, was not necessarily the most efficient. Being open to other arrangements, they tried them. Current also notes that key words like "the" and "and" are typed by alternating fingers on QWERTY. Alternate-hand strokes have been deemed desirable by later designers of more "efficient" keyboards.

No matter how Sholes arrived at his design, it was the market's first (in the U.S.), and this seems to have given it a powerful competitive advantage over all others. As Densmore noted in his letter, anyone typing on one keyboard would have to *unlearn* it before *learning* another. The QWERTY layout became standard on the Remington machines succeeding the Sholes & Glidden and became *Universal* for the industry at-large.



The first competing keyboard appeared on the Caligraph, a full-keyboard machine with a key for every character (no shift keys). In Dickerson's article, he shows evidence for thought behind the Caligraph arrangement based on letter frequency, at least for capital letters. The lowercase arrangement is much like QWERTY, though not identical. Had the Caligraph been truly better than Remington, we might be using its keyboard today. However, few collectors who have had their hands on both machines will claim the superiority of Caligraph.

Many other keyboards have appeared along the way to challenge QWERTY. Blickensderfer's "Scientific" keyboard featured the 10 most-used letters (DHIATENSOR) in the bottom row (closest to the user). Hammond's "Ideal" keyboard was semi-circular, and featured vowels and often-used consonants in the position right of center, where the right hand would rest. While each of these may have had merit and did achieve some popularity, the continued success of QWERTY eventually caused each of these companies to offer their machines with the Universal keyboard.

The underlying theme of keyboard competition in the early days was *speed*. The famous 1888 contest between Frank McGurrin and Louis Taub is given credit by some for giving the Remington (QWERTY) keyboard an advantage, because that's what the winner McGurrin used. The contest, however, was one of techniques rather than hardware. McGurrin was a touch-typist, using all 10 of his fingers. Taub used two fingers on each hand and typed on the full-keyboard Caligraph. McGurrin's 10-finger technique was so superior that it would have won regardless of the keyboard layout. Though 10-fingered typing was taught for full-keyboard machines, the advantage of the shift-key keyboard proved itself in practice. The McGurrin-Taub event *may* have effected QWERTY's pre-eminence by allowing Remington a promotional advantage to further secure its already dominant market position.

Speed claims, by the way, were also made for Hammond and Blickensderfer. However, collectors familiar with those machines know that, despite their other fine points, they simply don't compare with good type bar machines for speed. It has nothing to do with keyboards, but rather the mechanical systems central to those machines. Had the Scientific or Ideal keyboard been tried with a type bar machine early on, either might have superseded QWERTY. This is something we'll never know.

No doubt the most celebrated attempt at building a better keyboard came in the 1930's when August Dvorak, using money from the Carnegie Foundation, developed what is now known as the Dvorak Simplified Keyboard, or DSK. Dvorak placed the most

used letters in the middle row, with vowels on one side and consonants on the other, so that the hands tended to alternate as words were typed. Dvorak's ideas sounded so *good* that they were embraced everywhere... everywhere except the marketplace, that is. Dvorak's failure to take hold has inspired writers for decades to villify QWERTY as an anachronistic beast, with no business persisting on modern machines (much less *computers*, where it is also dominant).

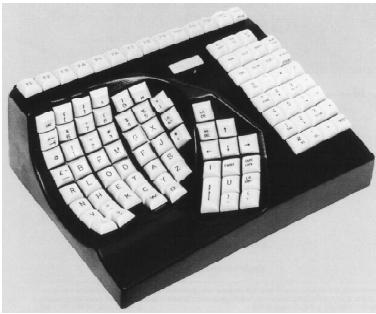
Economists have come up with the phrase "excess inertia" to describe the failure of the marketplace to replace an inefficient standard with a better one. When they write about it, they almost always use QWERTY as their most familiar example. However, in a delightful 1990 paper called *The Fable of the Keys*, S. J. Liebowitz and Stephen E. Margolis put this particular conventional wisdom to rest.

Liebowitz and Margolis combed the research to find out just what there was to prove that Dvorak was as superior as everyone assumed it was. They found, however, that most of the studies supporting Dvorak were done by the good professor himself (who had a financial interest in the outcome), or devotees of his system (and many Dvorak supporters do exhibit some of the characteristics of religious zealots). These Dvorak studies, upon scrutiny, were found to be seriously flawed. Liebowitz and Margolis found a more impartial study done in the 1950's by the U.S. General Services Administration which showed that it really didn't make much difference which keyboard typists used. A good typist types fast, a bad typist doesn't. The GSA study is important. There is probably no organization with as much incentive to improve the efficiency of its typing pool as the U. S. Government. This is the institution, after all, which gave birth to the phrase "red tape" (an expression stemming from the red colored ribbon used to tie patent tags to patent models).

The GSA had a powerful motive to supply the Government with a recommendation to adopt any keyboard which would improve the typing skills of its employees. However, the study gave no significant advantage over QWERTY to Dvorak or any other tested "efficient" keyboard. The cost of converting machines and retraining typists to use a new keyboard would have far outweighed the advantages gained.

The marketplace speaks for itself in the battle between QWERTY and Dvorak. In a day where a minimally priced piece of computer software can change the layout of your keyboard, precious few have chosen to abandon QWERTY. In computerese, it has become the Universal User Interface (rather than *just* a keyboard). QWERTY, you see, really isn't all that bad. It certainly is no worse than anything else. So, why not admire it for its historical impact and baroque charm? That may be far better than fueling your angst when you make a typo, blaming the keyboard rather than yourself.

The direction of keyboard improvement has now turned more to ergonomics, and for us, that provides an exotic inventory of items which well may become *collectibles of the future*. For more on that, turn the page.



The Maltron keyboard (left) comes in four different versions. The one shown is for the left hand alone, using a letter layout different from QWERTY and optimized for one-hand use. A similar unit is available for the right hand. The two-handed version retains the curved cradles for the hands, but the layout is QWERTY (unless you order the special layout designed by Maltron). Maltron's fourth keyboard is made for the handicapped and it controlled by a mouth stick.

When you look at current typing technology, you have to enter the world of computers. And if you think about it, personal computers, as mass-market products have only been around for a couple of decades. So, what we see now is like what we saw in typewriters, say, about 1894.

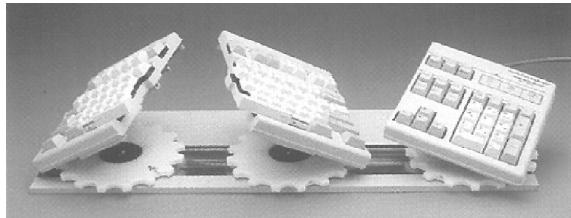
Collecting computers certainly will appeal to some people (it does right now to a few), but there is something out there that much better fits the sensibilities of typewriter collectors... and that's the wonderful variety of alternative keyboards on the market today. An industry source tells ETCetera there is nearly no market for anything but the standard, straight-row computer keyboard, although a few people do prefer the slightly altered ergonomic designs, with rows set at mild angles.

Inventors, however, are never content with the status quo, and we present here a collection of truly strange keyboard alternatives taken from the World Wide Web. These products are the Fords, Fitches and Automatics of the computer age. They've made no market impact so far, and they could well be the "rare" collectors items of the 21st century, if anybody starts to pay attention to them. The keyboards appear on a Web page created by Dan Wallach of Princeton University. The page may be viewed at this address: <http://www.cs.princeton.edu/~dwallach/tifaq/keyboards.html>

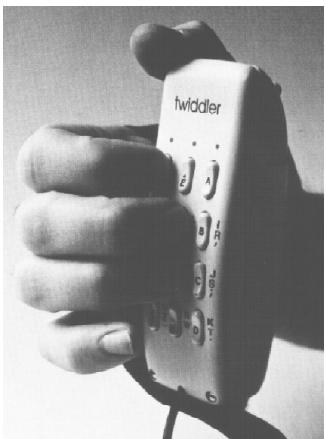
The Twiddler is a one-handed keyboard that types with a chording technique. It also has a "mouse" mode in which tilting the Twiddler moves the cursor.



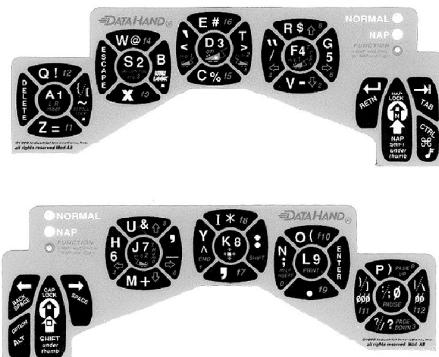
The ergoLogic, Ergo Max and Comfort Keyboard (top to bottom at right) are all variations on the same theme. The keyboard is split into components which can be positioned to the user's liking. If you look at the letter layout, however, you'll find our 125-year-old QWERTY surviving just fine.



COLLECTIBLES OF THE FUTURE



The DataEgg (shown in color on the cover) is actually a self-contained computer, but it can be used as a keyboard when connected to another computer. It's also made for one-hand, using a chording technique... and it was developed by a scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, where they keep track of all the interplanetary missions. This one is cosmic!



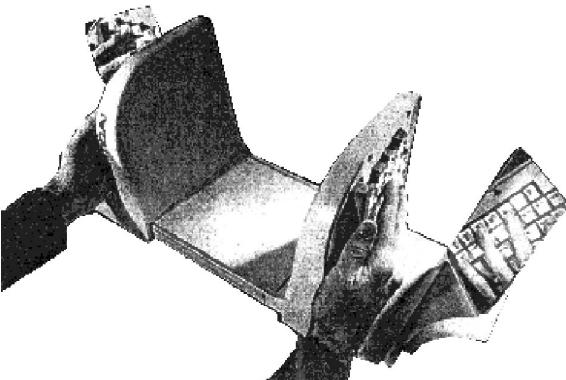
The Data Hand Pro cradles each hand in its own keyboard unit. The touch-sensitive keys require the user to do little more than wiggle his fingers to type. Look closely, though at the letter layout. Does it look familiar? It should, it's QWERTY.



Accukey Chord Chart AT-11

	Left	Right
a	V - - -	- - - V
b	- - V -	Λ - - -
c	- - - V	- - - V
d	- - - V	- - - Λ
e	Λ - - -	- - - V
f	- - V -	- - Λ -

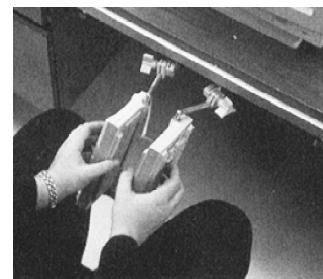
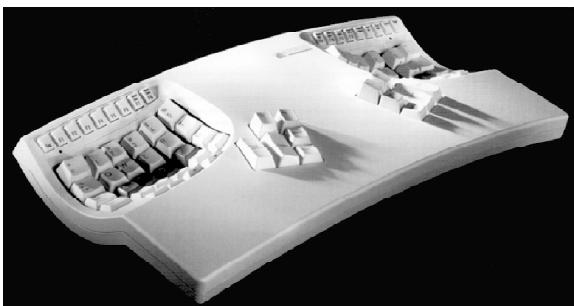
The AccuKey has soft rubber keys which rock forward and backward, giving each key three states. This is a true chording system, with no relation at all to QWERTY. There are no keys for the thumbs, but the manufacturer intends to add a trackball in the future.



The Floating Arms keyboard (right) should make you feel like you're in command of a spaceship! It splits into two halves, each of which mounts on an arm rest of your office chair. You lean back, rest your hands beside you, and type away, hardly moving a muscle! All this technology, but QWERTY all the way.

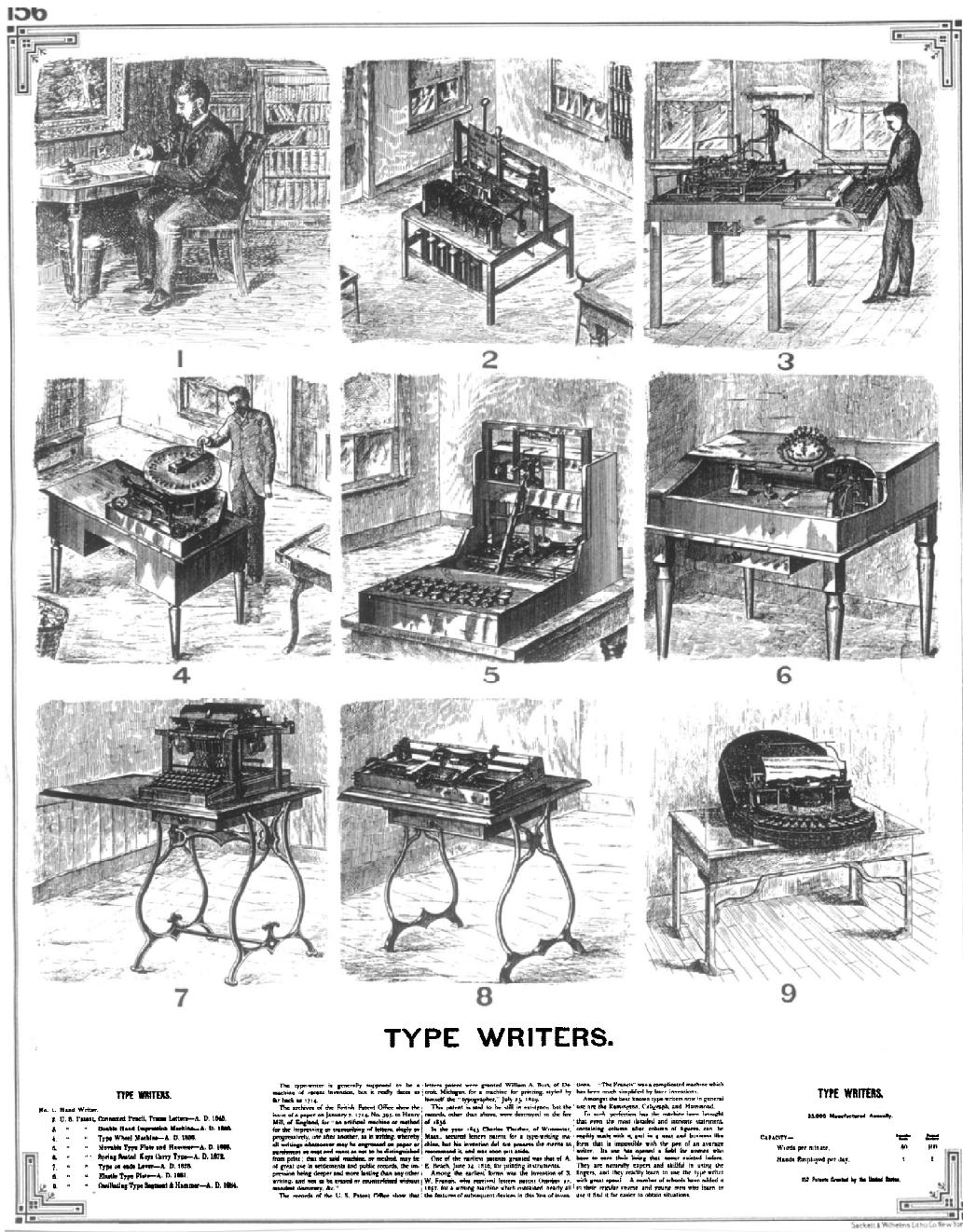


The Vertical Keyboard is another one that's split in half. The designer of this one thinks keeping your hands in vertical position is more comfortable. This keyboard has, without a doubt, the most charming addition of this collection: mirrors on each side, so you can see the keytops without leaning around. This gives new meaning to the concept of "visible" typing.



ErgoMaster (above) is a keyboard in two pieces. Its most bizarre feature is the ability to fold it in half, so you can put your hands into a more comfortable position. Note the space bars on the bottom for use in the vertical position.

The Kinesis Ergonomic Keyboard (left) takes QWERTY and sculpts it into two nests, one for each hand, with finger travel cut to the bare minimum. Similar to the Maltron 2-handed design.



Typewriter Poster

The poster shown above was contributed by Peter and Cornelia Weil of Newark, Delaware. The dealer from whom they bought it was unable to identify the source or date. Do any of our readers know this piece? Can you help us?

From the pictures and text, it seems to date from the late 1880's. For some reason the machines are not identified by name. No. 2 is the "Mechanical Chirographer" patented by James Thurber in 1845. No. 3 is the machine patented by

Oliver Eddy in 1850. No. 4 is the John Cooper machine patented 1856. No. 5 is the famous "Pterotype" patented by John Pratt in 1866. Nos. 2-5 were never manufactured, but Nos. 6-9 were. No. 6 is an early version of Malling Hansen's Skrivekugel, No. 7 is Remington's Perfected Type Writer No. 4, No. 8 is the Hall Type Writer (note the distorted scale, making the machine appear larger than it actually is), and No. 9 is the Hammond No. 1.

LETTERS

The contents of ETCetera seem to be the only definitive source of information for beginning collectors such as myself.

Bob Kolba
Fort Worth, TX

Quelle terrifique! The newest [#37] issue of your labor of love is superb, even discounting our little piece. The lead article is really neat—making me truly regret selling that damned monster of a machine. And the This Olde Office article answers a lot of questions even their own catalog does not.

Peter Weil
Newark, Delaware

I finally added a "Pittsburg(#12)" to my collection. It is in fine condition, and I am real pleased to have one from my "home town." It is a real conversation piece when showing it to someone from Pittsburg.

As I have said before... you are doing an excellent job with ETCetera. I am looking forward to getting a copy of your book sometime in the near future. Continue the good work.

Ed Reis
Pittsburgh, PA

We're really enjoying the newsletter—it looks great!

Sylvia & Michael Schwartz
Carmichael, CA

Perhaps with the typewriter almost becoming a nonentity, interest in our heritage increases. Some of us professional writers continue to prefer our Smith Coronas.

Alice Pies
Dallas, TX

I am proud to renew my subscription to ETCetera! I have enjoyed every issue. I added to my collection in 1996: Oliver 11, Remington 11 Noiseless, Remington 7 Noiseless, Royal 10, Woodstock, Underwood Noiseless Portable. I am anxiously awaiting the four issues of ETCetera in 1997.

Kenneth Accord
Long Beach, CA

Thanks for putting together another fascinating issue.

Nice to hear about the spurt in membership. I think that the typewriter collector

community is really growing—at least, there's a growing number of people who have enough interest in typewriters to talk to like-minded others. There are now almost 90 people on the TW-LIST (Internet). I think that as typewriters start to evoke a vanished past, more and more people find them interesting. It's kind of like the phone-collecting phenomenon. I'm sure you've seen ordinary 50's dial phones in antique shops for \$50. And people buy them.

The Printype cop as reproduced by TOO is totally wrong, isn't it? His head looks like a 70's smiley face.

Great job recreating that Moon-Hopkins ribbon tin! You could have fooled me.

Richard Polt
Walla Walla, WA

We are primarily involved in the repair of older machines, and we have access to quite a large stock of parts as well as a technician who worked on some of these typewriters when they were new. We also carry ribbons for most of this equipment. We would welcome any inquiries your members might have about repairs, parts or ribbons. They can contact us at the address and phone number below, or by e-mail at AllIVlyType@aol.com. Hoping to be of some help to your members.

Louise Haynes
All Valley Typewriter
3415 Magnolia Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91505
(818)-848-6224

The package with earlier issues of ETCetera has finally arrived. Well, it is certainly the best investment I've made so far in my short life as a tw collector. It is just great, the tone is right, and the amount of information, at least for a beginner like me, is wonderful. Congratulations to you, and to all who have contributed!!!

Fernando Costa
Saõ Paolo, Brazil

[All back issues of ETCetera are always available. Write to the editor if you need a list.]

ADVERTISEMENTS

TRADE: Faktotum, Lloyd, Stoewer Elite. Thomas Kramer, Kasseler Strasse 30, 34560 Fritzlar, GERMANY. Fax 011-49-5622-70352

SALE: Underwood #5, good cond. Smith Corona in case (blue & white) Carolyn Frisbie, Sylmar, CA. Tel. (818)367-7387. Make offer.

TIPS:

Caligraph (2?), Und. 5. Harold Shapiro. 818-445-1240.

Rem 6 - Viola Pomelek, 28 Old Stirling Rd., Warren, NJ 07059

Rem 6 parts machine. No paper table. - Ralph Hollin, R 8 Box 48, Manchester, KY 40962. Tel. 606-598-6453

Hammond mult., wood case. Sandra McGreal, 24 Delbrook Rd., Morris Plains, NJ 07950

American adder, Royal port. Marian Weeks, 921 Ironwood Dr., Carmel, IN 46033

Blick 5, Phyllis Parum, PO Box 770246, New Orleans, LA 70177

Oliver 3 wide-carriage, fair-poor. Wm. Wilson, 578 North-C.R. 300 East Logansport, IN 46947-7329

Remington 6 - Dolores Propp, Rt. 1, Box 155, Clinton, MN 56225

Corona folding w/case - Mary Lou Calcanas, 10630 Sable Ave., Sunland, CA 91040. Tel. (818)353-7593

COMING SOON?

Directory of Typewriter Displays

Marco Thorne, of San Diego, has volunteered to put together a "Directory of Publicly Displayed Early Typewriter and Business Machine Collections." For this, he'll need your help. Do you know of a museum, public building or place of business that has typewriters on display for the public benefit? If so, please write to Marco and let him know about it. Here's his address:

Marco Thorne
4325 West Overlook Drive
San Diego, CA 92115-6116

Please include the necessary information, including the name, address and phone number of the location. Also, if you know, the hours the display is available, number of machines, general description of the collection and its origin.

This is a highly useful project, and we should be grateful that Marco is willing to do it. Don't let him down by ignoring his effort. Write to him with your tip today.

BOOK REVIEW

Antique Typewriters: From Creed to QWERTY

written by Michael Adler

Published by Schiffer Books, Atglen, Pa.

reviewed by Darryl Rehr

If anyone in the typewriter collecting community has ever had a "tough act to follow," the experience must pale beside the task Michal Adler faced when writing a sequel to his landmark 1973 work *The Writing Machine: a history of the typewriter*. More than 13 years ago, that particular book was instrumental in pushing me over the edge into collecting, and I'm sure it has been equally inspirational to many collectors.

Adler's latest book, *Antique Typewriters: from Creed to QWERTY*, was published in December by Schiffer Publications of Atglen, PA. I first heard of this new book several years ago, when Mr. Adler told me about it, saying he had been searching long and hard for a publisher.

The second work is very similar to the first, although the author need not worry that the prominence of his first book will be challenged by the second. Among the major differences are numerous color photos among the black-and-whites, some information on prices (a "necessary evil" demanded by publishers of collectors' books), and a bevy of details exhibiting new shades and flavors to the telling of the typewriter story.

Perhaps the most important new discovery in this book is evident in its title. "Creed" refers to a Rev. Creed, who in 1747, created a music writing device which, according to Adler, deserves credit as history's first writing machine. This thought-provoking revelation involves a machine in which a roll of paper is positioned below a keyboard instrument. Clockwork moves the paper at a constant rate, and needles attached to the keys make scratches on the paper according to what the musician plays. A writing machine? In a broad sense. Some may be less than satisfied in accepting this as a writing machine, preferring that distinction to the invention of Pellegrino Turri, the Italian nobleman who built a true typewriter so a blind lady friend could correspond with him in the opening decade of the nineteenth century. Adler's reprise of this story in the new book has all the excitement of the first and more. He describes in colorful detail the magic of his feelings as, some 20 years ago, he leafed through history's oldest typewriter documents stored in an Italian archive, and first brought the news to the rest of us.

One element that Adler does *not* provide in the new book is the traditional outline of typewriter mechanisms, explaining how we as collectors describe all the strange and wonderful machines we seek. For this, he refers the reader to his original book, and for that reason, this cannot be said to be a book for beginners. The author states that the modern set of classification terms "was first introduced in *The Writing Machine*" and has since become universally adopted by collectors. Actually a version of the now-familiar classifications appeared nearly a decade earlier in a 1964 booklet by G. Tilghman Richards written for the London Science Museum. Many of us know of this via *Century of the Typewriter*, a 1974 book by Wilf Beeching, which reproduced many of the booklet's illustrations. Perhaps Mr. Adler meant that writing of the mechanisms in his original book was the first time *he* had introduced the subject.

The multi-lingual, globe-hopping Mr. Adler brings an interna-

tional perspective to this new book that is absent from most works on typewriters found on this side of the Atlantic (and that includes my own book, coming out in June). One interesting section describes the early Michela stenographic machine. I wish I had known about it when I called the 1882 Stenograph the "first" shorthand machine in the cover story of *ETCetera* #16. The Michela, with its characteristic piano-style keyboard, predates the Stenograph by at least a few years. Still, the *ETCetera* research on the Stenograph was not all bad, and one wishes Adler had consulted our back issues before listing an 1889 date for that machine. Not that *ETCetera* is the last word in typewriter history, but it is excluded from Adler's bibliography, along with Germany's *Typenkorb & Typenhebel* and *The Type Writer*, the work of the late Paul Lippman. Other prominent collector publications, both past and present, are listed.

In fact, although Adler compliments collectors for correcting many mistakes and false assumptions over the years, one wonders how he could have missed certain facts that have been well-established for years. Perhaps the most glaring factual error in the book is Adler's insistence on using the term "Ideal" to describe the DHIATENSOR keyboard of Blickensderfer. As has been written over and over again, this keyboard was called "Scientific" by Blickensderfer. Adler goes a step farther, in saying that the "Ideal DHIATENSOR" keyboard appeared on the two-row, curved keyboard Hammond. Yes, "Ideal" is the correct term for the curved Hammond keyboard, but has anyone ever seen one with a DHIATENSOR sequence on the keys? This would be a novel discovery indeed.

One of the great strengths of *Creed to QWERTY* is the attention given to the pre-natal history of the typewriter. Besides Rev. Creed, Adler retells in great detail the stories of numerous inventors who produced innovation after innovation, all *before* the work of C.L. Sholes and the introduction of the Sholes & Glidden. One of Adler's favorite topics is that of early *automata*, the novelties that used clockwork mechanisms to make sculpted figures write messages on paper. Fascinating stuff, and not likely to be found elsewhere.

Following several chapters of chronological narrative, Adler repeats his original book's format by adding not one, but *two* encyclopedic sections. One is for devices invented but never produced. The other is for machines actually made and sold. Both sections are serviceable, and any reader will learn from them, but numerous omissions and factual errors mean they are not quite as authoritative as one might have hoped. As the author himself says, a book such as this (and *all* collector books) should be marked up by the reader with notes, comments and corrections as they come to the reader's attention.

One bothersome detail of the book as a whole is the scattered approach taken to the placement of photos. While pictures in the initial chapters are placed in at least some proximity to the relevant text, later on they are scattered at random, forcing the reader to constantly leaf back and forth to find the photo of the machine about which the author is writing. In addition, the

Gallery Notes

1&2) Oliver Postcards - two in a series of 12 calendar cards illustrating the History of Writing. These examples submitted by Sue Dakin of Albany, NY.

3) Remington Postcard - a message from a pretty Japanese typist, using a Remington, of course. From the collection of Peter and Cornelia Weil of Wilmington, Delaware.

4) Webster advertising mirror - a previously published picture of this fine piece of ephemera did not quite do it justice. Art nouveau ornaments and the Webster "Star" Brand logo. Editor's collection.

5) Baldwin Arithmometer - this little 1874 device was the creation of Frank Baldwin, predating his famous pin-wheel calculator. From the collection of Tom Russo.

6)Fowler's Adding Machine - another item from the Russo collection. The Fowler machine is one of several early "sliding bar" calculators (see ETCetera No. 11, June 1990) to be placed on the market. This one is dated 1863.

7)Ideal/Erika advertising mirror - from the collection of Malta's John Pace O'Shea. This piece illustrates both the office-size Ideal machine as well as a folding Erika.

8)Typewriter for the blind - Eric Meary, of Paris, France, sends us this photo of an unusual French machine which types both Braille and regular text. Eric says it probably dates from the 1870's. He tells us he will write more about this machine for the readers of ETCetera.

INDIAN ribbon tins - shown at 60%. In addition to the photos we've shown in the past, here is a selection of other attractive ribbon tins with the pictures of American Indians.

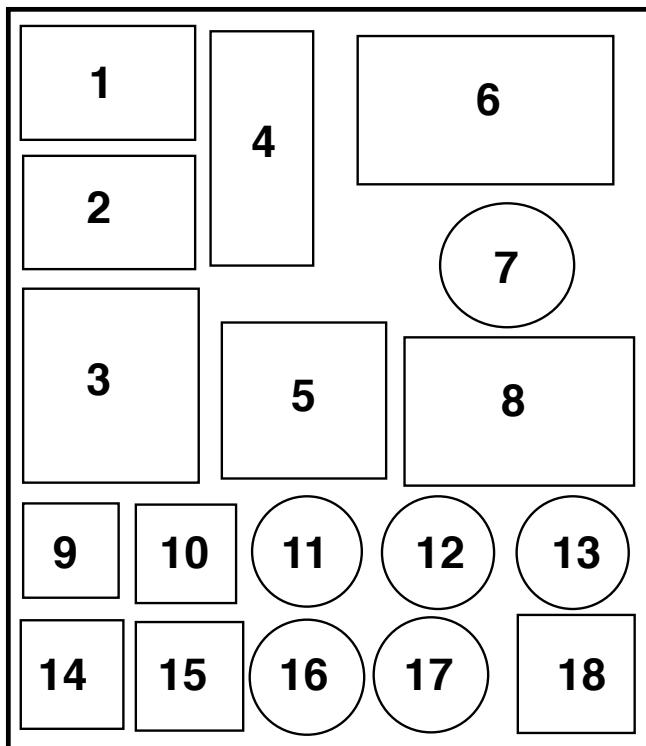
9) American Brand - a later issue of the American Brand from H.M. Storms of New York (maker of the wonderful tall tin shown in ETCetera No. 34). This one was apparently exported to Holland. The reverse shows the American Office Supply Co. of Amsterdam as the sales agent. Editor's collection.

10) Sioux - is it French, German... or both? This red-white-and-blue tin with the all-American theme comes from across the pond. Editor's collection via Peter Muckermann.

11) Copper Chief - notice the True-mark logo below the Indian head. True-mark's hunter and deer appear full-size on other tins. Here, you get two great images in one. From the 50's and/or 60's. Made by Decorated Metal. Editor's collection.

publisher has allowed a number of the photos to slip by with rather unattractive printing errors. No author should have his work handicapped by such defects over which he has no control.

A final word about the tone and view of this new book. It is at times erudite, folksy, funny, exciting, literary, digressive, enlightening and provocative. One smiles when it is apparent that Mr. Adler has abandoned the limitation which must have been the source of much regret in his first book. This, of course, was his exclusion of all 4-row, front-strike typewriters from *The Writing Machine*. Among other aberrations this produced was the omission



12)Soo-Valley - another Decorated Metal tin. This one appears to be a generic design on which the Soo Valley brand was printed. From Will A. Beach Printing Co. of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Editor's collection.

13) Chieftain - one of the most outstanding of the Indian designs. Photo of this tin submitted by Juan Marquez, of Mexico City, Mexico.

14&15) Stafford's Exclusive - speaking of Juan Marquez, he was also good enough to provide us a look at this Stafford's tin sold in Mexico.

16&17) Stafford's Cinta Universal - if you haven't guessed by now, "cinta" is Spanish for "ribbon." This second tin from Stafford's de Mexico also comes from Juan Marquez. What may be the tin maker's logo is shown on the edge: "Fa-mo-sa" of Monterey.

18) Uniformity Brand - from R.G. Dun & Co. of New York. Dun & Co. is the predecessor to the now-famous Dun & Bradstreet. It's an important name in typewriter history, because Dun was one of the first businesses to buy the earliest typewriters, and Dun testimonials were used to help sell the Sholes & Glidden. Editor's collection.

of collector favorites like Daugherty and Pittsburg from the original book. Such is not the case this time around. Adler has broadened his scope from 4-row frontstrikes in the modern era... to machines making musical scratches in the most ancient.

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Antique Typewriters: from Creed to QWERTY is available at \$39.95 plus \$2.95 postage from Schiffer Books, 77 Lower Valley Rd., Atglen, PA 19310.



ETCetera Color Gallery

