The "Personal Computer": A Fully Programmable Pocket Calculator

This 11-ounce battery-powered marvel has the computing power of an advanced scientific pocket calculator and is programmable as well, so it can adapt to any number of specialized uses.

by Chung C. Tung

A N ENGINEER OR SCIENTIST in need of an on-the-spot answer in the laboratory, a pilot making an in-flight course correction, a surveyor running a traverse in the field, a businessman estimating returns-on-investment during a conference, a physician evaluating patient data—it isn’t difficult to think of everyday examples of people whose professions require certain types of calculations over and over again. Were one available, a computer or programmable calculator would obviously be of great assistance to such people. Unfortunately, you can’t carry one of those around in your pocket, can you?

You can’t, unless it’s battery-powered, weighs only 312 grams, and measures only 8.1 x 14.7 x 3.4 cm, like the HP-65 Pocket Calculator. This new computing device is a combination of electronic calculator and general-purpose small computer. It offers the convenience and easy operation of a calculator, but its programmability makes it versatile enough to fit the needs of a wide variety of disciplines, including science, engineering, finance, statistics, mathematics, navigation, medicine, surveying, and many others.

Although the HP-65 is designed to operate in a logical, easy-to-learn way, it is capable of sophisticated computations. It has 51 built-in mathematical functions and data-manipulation operations, a four-register operational stack, nine addressable data registers, and five user-definable keys. It can run programs that have as many as 100 steps. There are two program flags and four comparison tests for program branching.

Perhaps most significant is that within its small package the HP-65 contains a tiny magnetic card reader and recorder. Users can store their programs on magnetic cards for later use, or they can take advantage of hundreds of preprogrammed cards containing programs commonly used in various disciplines.

Keyboard Design

The HP-65 inherits its size and shape from its ancestor, the HP-35. However, its keyboard layout is quite different. Thirty-five keys control more than eighty operations (see Fig. 1).

In the interests of logical operation and simplicity, many different techniques were used in designing the keyboard layout. Keys of the same nature are grouped into clusters. Some nomenclature has been placed on the lower side of the keys to reduce busyness. Nomenclature for multiple-keystroke operations is color-coded to make the keystroke sequences associative. All functions are classified as immediate (+,-,x,\(\div\)), direct, inverse, or miscellaneous, and are grouped and color-coded accordingly. Key sizes, colors, value contrast, and nomenclature have all been chosen to guide the user.

Arithmetic operations (\(+\),\(-\),\(\times\),\(\div\)) and data entry keys are in the same locations as on the
HP-35. Data entry keys include the digits 0 through 9, the decimal point, the ENTER key used for entering values into the four-register operational stack, and the EEX (enter exponent) and CLx (clear display) keys.

Keys in the top row, labeled A, B, C, D, and E, stand for user-definable functions or subroutines. In the second row, the GTO (go to), LBL (label), RTN (return), and SST (single step) keys are used for programming. The DSP (display) key is used for formatting the display. Numbers can be displayed either in fixed-point notation or in scientific notation with a selected number of digits after the decimal point.

Keys in the third row, labeled f, f⁻¹, STO, RCL, and g, are all prefix keys. They have to be followed by one or two more keystrokes to complete a command.

At the lower right corner of the HP-65 keyboard is the R/S (run/stop) key. Pressing it begins program execution. Execution of a running program halts if an R/S step is encountered in the program.

User-Definable Keys

When power is first applied to the HP-65 the top-row keys (A,B,C,D,E) call for the functions 1/x, √x, y^x, x⁻ʸ, and R↓ (roll down the operational stack). However, the functions of these keys can be changed, either by keyboard programming or by inserting a previously recorded magnetic card into the HP-65's reader slot. The new functions of the keys can be written on the card and the card inserted into the window above the top row of keys to show the new functions.

With the five definable keys, the user can readily change the HP-65 into a specialized calculator tailored to his needs. For example, Standard Pac program 11A, a compound interest program, changes these keys to n (number of periods), i (interest rate), PV (present value), FV (future value), and COMPUTE, similar to keys on the HP-80 financial calculator (see Fig. 2). Standard Pac 06A, a π-network impedance-matching program, converts the HP-65 into an electrical engineer's calculator. Given input and output resistance, frequency, and Q, the program computes the values of the two shunt capacitors and the

Cover: In the background is Model 9100A, HP's first calculator, a huge success when it was first introduced in 1968 at a price of $4900. The HP-65 in the foreground rivals the 9100A in computing power, but it fits in your pocket and costs only $795.

Of course, the HP-65 doesn't work with a printer or other peripheral devices. Perhaps that's the next step.

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Fig. 2. Users may write their own programs and store them on blank magnetic cards, or may take advantage of many preprogrammed cards. This compound interest program converts the calculator into a financial calculator.
A lossless network is often used to match between two resistive impedances, $R_1$ and $R_2$, as shown.

Given the values of $R_1$ and $R_2$, the frequency $f$, and the desired circuit $Q$ (center frequency/desired half-power bandwidth), the values of $C_1$, $C_2$, and $L_1$ can be found.

Notes:
1. $R_1$ must always be greater than $R_2$ and
   
   $$Q > \sqrt{R_1 R_2}$$

2. Circled numbers on the magnetic card designate the register in which a variable is stored.

**HP-65 User Instructions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
<th>Input Data/Units</th>
<th>Keys</th>
<th>Output Data/Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Enter program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Initialize</td>
<td></td>
<td>RTN</td>
<td>LS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Input $R_1$</td>
<td>$R_1(t)$</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and $R_2$</td>
<td>$R_2(t)$</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>$R_2(t)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and $f$</td>
<td>$f(t)$</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and $Q$</td>
<td>$Q(t)$</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Compute $C_1$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Compute $C_2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Compute $L_1$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Recall inputs (optional)</td>
<td>$R_1$</td>
<td>RCL</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and/or $R_2$</td>
<td>$R_2(t)$</td>
<td>RCL</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and/or $f$</td>
<td>$f(t)$</td>
<td>RCL</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and/or $Q$</td>
<td>$Q(t)$</td>
<td>RCL</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>For new case change appropriate</td>
<td>input in step 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A Self-Clocking Two-Track Recording Technique**

When the HP-65 records a program on one of its small magnetic cards, it places two side-by-side tracks of varying magnetic flux on the card. One track represents the logical 1's in the binary data stream coming from the program memory, and the other track represents the logical 0's. The 1 track contains a flux reversal for each 1 in the data sequence and no flux change for each 0. The 0 track contains a flux reversal for each 0 and no flux change for each 1. The diagram shows an example.

The technique is self-clocking because there is a flux transition for each bit. Thus no separate clock track is needed.

The scheme also maximizes the system's tolerance to head skew and motor speed variations. The data can be recovered correctly even if a transition in one track almost overlaps a transition in the other. By contrast, other two-track schemes usually have one clock track and one data track, and may misread data when there is only minor misalignment of clock and data transitions.
has a data-register circuit. New in the HP-65 are a program storage circuit, a card-reader control circuit, and a card read/write circuit. Fig. 4 is a photo of the components and Fig. 5 is a block diagram.

The data register circuit is made up of ten addressable data registers of 56 bits each, enough to store 14 digits each. Data register 0 is used to implement a LSTx (last x) function and always contains the previously displayed number. Registers 1 through 9 are addressable from the keyboard. Addresses and data are transferred between the data register circuit and the arithmetic and register circuit by way of a bidirectional BCD bus.

The program storage circuit stores the user's program. Each program step is stored as a six-bit word. There are 100 words of storage.

The program memory is designed to act like a carousel. The memory is implemented in a dynamic shift register. Program words, a pointer, and a beginning-of-memory marker circulate continuously in this register, a complete circulation taking approximately 3½ milliseconds. The pointer always points to the next program word and can move freely within the memory. Thus program steps can be inserted into the program or deleted from it at any point, without re-keying the other steps. Addressing is symbolic rather than absolute, and label-searching hardware is built into the program storage circuit.

When the calculator is in use, every keystroke places a corresponding keycode on the IA (instruction address) bus. This code is stored in the buffer of the program storage circuit. If the calculator is in W/PRGM mode, the code is then inserted into the program memory. If the calculator is in RUN mode, the keystroke is executed.

When a stored program is executed, the pointer points to the next executable memory word and the buffer contains a copy of that word. The buffer contents are decoded and placed on the IA bus as a microinstruction that causes the calculator to enter a subroutine in the ROM to service the key that was pressed.

Card Reader Circuits

The card-reader control circuit and the program storage circuit together form a complete memory circulation path. When the HP-65 is used as an ordinary calculator the card-reader control circuit merely short-circuits the data-in and data-out lines of the program storage circuit.

When a card is being read, the card-reader control circuit places the outputs of the head sense amplifier onto the data-in line of the program storage circuit. When a card is being written the card-reader control circuit takes the memory words in sequence and transforms them into recording signals for the head write amplifiers.

When two unsynchronized sequential memories like the program memory and the magnetic card are working together, timing and control are critical.
Therefore, during reading or writing the card-reader control circuit assumes control of the program memory and controls the movement of the pointer. Thus only limited handshaking is needed between the card-reader control circuit and the program storage circuit.

The magnetic-card read/write circuit is a bipolar LSI (large-scale-integrated) circuit. It serves as the interface between the magnetic read/write head and the card-reader control circuit. There are two identical channels on the chip, each consisting of a read amplifier, a threshold detector, a latch, and a write amplifier.

The read amplifier takes a one-millivolt signal from the head, amplifies it approximately 200 times and feeds it into the threshold detector. The detector removes noise and triggers the latch to provide a logic signal to the card reader control circuit. The write amplifier takes logic information from the card-reader control circuit and transforms it into a recording current that flows through the inductive head and generates the flux that magnetizes the card.

The read/write circuit also provides a dc motor control circuit that regulates the widely varying battery voltage so the card-reader motor runs at constant speed.
Acknowledgments

The HP-65 is the creation of a large number of people who contributed their efforts with great enthusiasm and engineering professionalism. The support of the IC departments of the Loveland and Santa Clara Divisions, and of the Loveland hybrid circuit department, was indispensable. Special acknowledgments are due Bill Hewlett for his encouragement; Tom Whitney and Paul Stoft for their direction and help in administration and coordination between a number of departments; Tom Osborne for valuable discussions and suggestions; Allen Inhelder, Darrel Lauer, and Ed Liljenwall for industrial design—their consistent human engineering consideration is particularly valuable to a simple, elegant keyboard design; Dave Cochran for card read/write circuit design; Rich Whicker for the design of the card-reader control circuit; Bob Schweizer for valuable suggestions on the design of the read/write principle and circuits and for help on system breadboarding and simulator design; Clarence Studley and Bernie Musch for packaging and mechanical part design; Bob Taggart for his creative design of the card reader mechanism, with the able assistance of Dick Barth; John Bailey for help on the motor and head switches; Bill Boller for his close liaison with Manufacturing Division; Homer Russell and his team for applications software support. Special thanks are also due the tool designers of Manufacturing Division, whose creative, outstanding tools made the state-of-the-art plastic parts for the HP-65 possible.

Chung C. Tung

Chung Tung received his BSEE degree from National Taiwan University in 1961 and his MSEE degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1964. As a member of HP Laboratories from 1965 to 1972, he was involved in the design of the 9100 Calculator and the HP-35 and HP-45 Pocket Calculators. He subsequently joined the Advanced Products Division as manager of the HP-65 project and is now engineering section manager there. Chung has done work towards his PhD degree at Stanford University, although he isn't presently enrolled there. He is married, has a son and a daughter, and lives in Santa Clara, California. Music, reading, and table tennis are his principal modes of relaxation.

SPECIFICATIONS

HP-65 Programmable Pocket Calculator

PRE_PROGRAMMED FUNCTIONS:
TRIGONOMETRIC: sin x, arc sin x, cos x, arc cos x, tan x, arc tan x
LOGARITHMIC: log x, ln x, e^x, 10^x
OTHER: x^2, 1/x, x! (cr. x!, x/6), rectangular/polar coordinate conversion, degrees/minutes/seconds, radians or grads
APPLICATIOI{ PROGRAM PACS:
OTHER: y^x, clno1h, o, x^2, n!, rectangular/polar coordinates, conversion, decimal/octal conversion, degree/minute/second conversion, integer/fraction truncation
FEATURES:
DISPLAY: Up to 10 significant digits plus 2-digit exponent and appropriate signs
DYNAMIC RANGE: 10^-99 to 10^99
Primary functions activated by single keystroke; alternate functions use prefix keys
Five user definable keys
Four-register operational stack
Program memory for storage of up to 100 steps
Single step running and/or inspection of a program
Insert/delete editing features
Nine addressable memory registers
"Last X" register for error correction and number reuse
Two flags for skip or no-skip programming or branching to another part of program
x*y, x<y, x=y, x>y relational tests
Magnetic card reader/writer
Built-in counter
Automatic decimal point positioning
Two display modes: fixed point and scientific
Indicators for improper operations and low battery condition

APPLICATION PROGRAM PACS:
Standard Pac (17 miscellaneous programs, 2 diagnostics, 1 head cleaning card, 20 blank cards)
Math Pac I (40 mathematical programs)
Math Pac II (33 mathematical programs)
Stat Pac I (37 statistical programs)
Survey Pac I (34 surveying programs)
Medical Pac I (33 medical programs)
EE Pac I (35 electrical engineering programs)

POWER:
AC: 115 or 230 V, ±10%, 50 to 60 Hz, 5 watts.
BATTERY: 500 mW derived from nickel-cadmium rechargeable battery pack.

WEIGHT: 11 ounces (312 g) with battery pack. Recharge: 5 ounces (155 g).

SHIPPING WEIGHT: approx. 3 lbs (1.4 kg).

DIMENSIONS:
LENGTH: 8.8 in (14.7 cm).
WIDTH: 3.2 in (8.1 cm).
HEIGHT: 0.7 to 1.4 in (1.8 to 3.4 cm).

TEMPERATURE RANGES:
OPERATING: 32°F to 104°F (0°C to 40°C).
CARD READER: 50°F to 104°F (10°C to 40°C).


MANUFACTURING DIVISION: ADVANCED PRODUCTS DIVISION
19310 Prunieridge Avenue
Cupertino, California 95014 U.S.A.
THE HP-65 CALCULATOR uses the same reverse Polish keyboard language, the same four-register operational stack, and the same architecture as its predecessors, the HP-35,1 the HP-45, and the HP-80.2 It also has two important features that are new to hand-held calculators. One is its greatly expanded function set, and the other is programmability, complete with conditional and unconditional branching, user-definable functions, and magnetic-card program storage.

Function Set

Thirteen HP-65 keys are for data entry. These are the digits 0 to 9, the decimal point, CHS (change sign), and EEX (enter exponent). Numbers may be entered with or without a power-of-ten exponent.

Keyed-in digits set the value of the X register, which is also the display, in the four-register operational stack.* The Clx (clear x) key allows corrections. Any other key except SST and R/S terminates entry of a number.

The four arithmetic functions (+, -, x, ÷) operate on x and y, the contents of the X and Y registers. Operands are loaded into the stack with the ENTER key; they may then be operated upon by the function keys. Operations execute immediately and results appear in X.

Thirty-three other functions derive from using three prefix keys (f, f⁻¹, g) to condition eleven suffix keys (digits 0-9 and decimal point). The two gold-colored prefix keys, labeled f and f⁻¹, access the functions printed in gold above the suffix keys and the inverses or complements of these functions. The blue prefix key, g, accesses the functions printed in blue on the angled lower side of the suffix keys. (The no-prefix meanings of the suffix keys appear on their top faces.) All of these functions execute immediately, operating on x, or x and y, or the entire operational stack. Thus, for example, the key sequence f 4 obtains sin x in the display, f⁻¹ 4 obtains sin⁻¹ x, and g 4 obtains 1/x.

Computations requiring more data storage than is provided by the operational stack may use any of nine data storage registers. For example, pressing STO 4 stores x into register four, leaving x unchanged. Pressing RCL 4 recalls r₄ to X, leaving r₄ unchanged. Arithmetic accumulation to any storage register is accomplished by inserting the desired operation key between STO and the digit key that addresses the register. Thus the key sequence STO <arithmetic operator><digit n> gives rₙ,<arithmetic operator>x in register Rₙ and leaves x in the display.

The user can change the display format as required by the particular problem. The key sequence DSP <digit n> rounds the display value to n digits after the decimal point in scientific notation,* while DSP.<digit n> results in an absolute display rounded to n digits following the decimal point. For example, 12.366 gives 1.24 01 in DSP 2 mode and 12.37 in DSP..2 mode. Display rounding does not affect internal values.

All functions involving angles, that is, sin, cos, tan, R→P (rectangular to polar conversion), →D.MS (conversion to degrees, minutes, seconds), and the inverses of these functions accept arguments or produce results in degrees, radians, or grads, set by the key sequence g ENTER or g CHS or g EEX, respectively. These settings remain in effect until changed.

On the theory that users should be able to correct key-sequence errors with minimal effort, any prefix key overrides any previous prefix key, and the sequence f ENTER clears any prefix keys. Thus, for example, the key sequence STO + f g g 4 gives 1/x.

*Capital letters are names of registers and lower-case letters are register contents.

*One digit to the left of the decimal point with power-of-ten exponent, e.g., 2.54 × 10^2.
while \( g \times \text{ENTER} \uparrow 4 \) gives the value 4 in the display.

By now it must be clear how key conditioning with color-coded keys and legends has been used to provide access to many functions with a limited number of keys on a small keyboard. Although another level of conditioning would further expand the function set (e.g., \( f \times g \) or \( f^* \) or \( g \times 4 \) or \( g \times 4 \) could possess functional meanings), this would greatly increase keyboard complexity, keyboard busyness, and internal control programming. For these reasons, most of the key conditioning remains at the one-prefix level.

HP-65 functions are listed on page 14. Fig. 1 shows an example of a problem solution.

**Programming**

All operations described so far apply when the switch in the upper right-hand corner of the HP-65 keyboard is in the **RUN** position. When this switch is in the **WPRGM** position, the keystrokes are stored in the 100-step program memory instead of being executed. Twenty-five frequently used two-keystroke sequences merge into a single memory step; thus the program memory may actually contain more than 100 keystrokes.

**Problem:**

Evaluate \( V_b = \frac{kT/q}{\ln(I_b + 1)} - R \) for \( V_b = 8 \) volts, \( kT/q = 0.026 \) volts, \( I_b = 6 \times 10^{-3} \) amperes, \( I_b = 10^{-10} \) amperes, \( R = 1200 \) ohms

**Solution:**

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Keystrokes} & \text{Display} & \text{X} & \text{Y} & \text{Z} & \text{T} \\
\hline
\text{8} & 8. & 8. & 8. & 8. \\
\text{ENTER} \uparrow & 8.00 \times 10^4 & .026 & 8. & 8. \\
\text{.026} & 8.026 & .026 & 8. & 8. \\
\text{ENTER} \uparrow & 2.60 \times 10^{-2} & .006 & 8. & 8. \\
\text{.006} & 2.60 \times 10^{-6} & .006 & 8. & 8. \\
\text{ENTER} \uparrow & 6.00 \times 10^{-3} & .006 & 8. & 8. \\
\text{EEX 10 CHS} & 10^{-10} & .006 & 8. & 8. \\
\text{+} & 6.00 \times 10^7 & .026 & 8. & 8. \\
\text{1} & 6.00 \times 10^7 & .026 & 8. & 8. \\
\text{E} & 1.79 \times 10^1 & .026 & 8. & 8. \\
\text{x} & 4.66 \times 10^{-1} & 8. & 8. & 8. \\
\text{−} & 7.53 \times 10^{-1} & 8. & 8. & 8. \\
\text{1200} & 1200 & 7.53 \times 10^{-1} & 8. & 8. \\
\text{ENTER} \uparrow & 1.20 \times 10^3 & 1200 & 7.53 \times 10^{-1} & 8. \\
\text{.006} & 1.20 \times 10^3 & 1200 & 7.53 \times 10^{-1} & 8. \\
\text{x} & 7.20 \times 10^2 & 7.53 \times 10^{-1} & 8. & 8. \\
\text{−} & 3.34 \times 10^2 & 7.53 \times 10^{-1} & 8. & 8. \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

**Fig. 1.** An example of HP-65 use as a scientific calculator.

**Fig. 2.** User programs may have as many as 100 steps. These twenty-five keystroke sequences merge into a single step. Thus programs may contain more than 100 keystrokes.

The memory itself contains no absolute addresses. Instead, it is a circulating shift register organized into six-bit words. One word is a marker that denotes the boundary between the beginning and the end of the memory. Another word is a pointer which denotes the last step executed in run mode, and the last step filled in program mode. As a program runs, this pointer is moved down through memory. Branching is accomplished by moving the pointer to the location of the destination label. User-defined function calls are implemented by leaving the main pointer at the call and activating a second pointer at the function location (see Fig. 3). When the return to the calling location occurs, the second pointer is deactivated and the first pointer reactivated. Neither the marker nor the pointers subtract from the 100 user steps.

Programs may contain three types of tests to allow conditional execution of all operations. These are x-y comparisons (\( x \neq y \), \( x \leq y \), \( x = y \), \( x > y \)), four flag tests.
Problem:
Find the diode current $I_D$ in the circuit shown. Also find its sensitivity with respect to $V_B$ and $R$, i.e., $\partial I_D/\partial V_B$ and $\partial I_D/\partial R$.

Equations:

$$V_B = \frac{kT}{q} \left( \frac{I_D}{I_S} + 1 \right) + R I_D$$

$$\frac{\partial I_D}{\partial V_B} = \left[ \frac{kT}{q} \left( \frac{1}{I_S + I_D} + R \right) \right]^{-1}$$

$$\frac{\partial I_D}{\partial R} = -I_D \left[ \frac{kT}{q} \left( \frac{1}{I_S + I_D} + R \right) \right]^{-1}$$

$I_S$ = diode saturation current in amperes

$R$ = resistor value in ohms

$V_B$ = battery voltage in volts

$kT/q$ = thermal voltage in volts

Algorithm:

For Newton-Raphson iteration,

$$I_D(n + 1) = I_D(n) - \frac{f[I_D(n)]}{f'[I_D(n)]}$$

where $I_D(n) = n$th guess

$f[I_D(n)] = \text{function evaluated for } n\text{th guess}$

$f'[I_D(n)] = \text{first derivative of function, evaluated for } n\text{th guess}$

Let $f[I_D] = V_B - \frac{kT}{q} \left( \frac{I_D}{I_S} + 1 \right) - R I_D$

Then $f'[I_D] = -I_D \left[ \frac{kT}{q} \left( \frac{1}{I_S + I_D} + R \right) \right]^{-1}$

Specify convergence criterion: if $|I_D(n + 1) - I_D(n)| < C$ the algorithm halts.

Program halts after ten iterations. The user may then start ten more iterations.

Example:

$I_S = 10^{-10}$ A
$R = 1.2$ k$\Omega$
$V_B = 8$ V
$kT/q = 0.026$ V
$C = 10^{-4}$ A

Results:

$$\frac{\partial I_D}{\partial V_B} = 6.278 \text{ A/V}$$

$$\frac{\partial I_D}{\partial R} = -5.213 \mu\text{A/}\Omega$$

Time required to compute $I_D$ (step 3): 11 seconds.

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Fig. 4. An example of HP-65 programming. A common problem in many disciplines is the solution of irreducible equations, such as $x = \ln x$. Finding the answer requires a clever first guess at the solution and, based on the results of the first guess, an even more clever second guess, and so on. The iterative procedure, tedious if done manually, can often be automated. In this example the Newton-Raphson method is used to solve an electrical engineering problem.
Program:

**HP-65 Program Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Instruction</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>GTO A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>CLX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>STO A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>CLX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>STO A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<th>Notes</th>
<th>Data/Units</th>
<th>Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Enter Card 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Inputs (Any Order)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Compute Diode Current</td>
<td>If display <em>9,999999999 x 10^3</em>, do 4 and 6, otherwise skip to 6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Display Present Diode Current</td>
<td>R/S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Continue (Go to 3, Here, or more times)</td>
<td>R/S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Either calculate voltage sensitivity or resistance sensitivity or calculate f(i) or calculate f^2(i)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Goto 2 or re-enter any or all inputs for a new problem.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(there are two flags, each of which may be set or cleared and then tested for set or clear), and decrement and skip if zero (DSZ). Except for DSZ, each test, if false, causes program control to skip the next two memory steps; otherwise, execution continues normally. The DSZ operation decrements data-storage register R_6 by one, using integer arithmetic, and if the result is zero, program control skips the succeeding two steps.

Literal labels with the GO TO function implement branching. Thus **LBL <n>** is the destination for **GTO <n>**, where n is a digit or a key A-E in the top row.

The HP-65 user may store two types of programs in the program memory. First, he may precede a section of memory containing various functions with **LBL <m>**, where m is A, B, C, D, or E, and terminate the section with **RTN** (return). Thereafter, pressing key A, B, C, D, or E in the RUN mode causes that memory section to execute immediately. Any or all of keys A to E may be defined but the sum of memory steps for all functions cannot exceed 100. These user-defined functions behave exactly like the preprogrammed functions described earlier, yet the user may create the functions to fit his special needs.

The user's second option is to precede a block of code with a label definition and terminate it with the R/S (Run/Stop) key. In RUN mode this key stops an executing program; if no program is running, pressing the R/S key starts execution. Pressing **GTO <label name>R/S** then starts program execution, and the program halts at the R/S in memory. If the program starts at the beginning of memory no label is needed; in RUN mode control can be transferred to the beginning of memory by pressing **RTN**. Programs defined in this way may call any of the functions A through E; the desired key is simply entered into the program definition.

The **SST** (single step) and **DEL** (delete) functions implement debugging and editing. In **WPRGM** mode, each depression of **SST** advances the memory pointer one step and displays each memory step as a two-digit key code. These codes represent digit keys by their values and all other keys by a row-column index of the key position referenced to the upper left-hand corner of the keyboard. For example, the decimal-point key is in the eighth row, third column, so its code is 83. In the RUN mode, each depression of **SST** advances the memory pointer one step and executes the adjacent memory step.

The key sequence **g CLx** in **WPRGM** mode deletes the displayed memory step and moves up the next step to fill the gap. Any keys entered in **WPRGM** mode are automatically inserted following the displayed memory step. Thus the replacement operation consists of a delete operation followed by the desired key.

The sequence **f CLx** clears the entire memory.
Firmware

Programs can be stored on magnetic cards for later use. Cards can be recorded and rerecorded as many times as desired. To protect a recorded program on a card, further recording can be prevented by clipping the notched tab on the upper left corner of the card. Users may write on the card and place it in a slot above the keys A through E, thereby labeling any specially defined keys.

Fig. 4 shows an example of HP-65 programming.

**Firmware**

To direct the various computational and control functions of the HP-65, 3072 words of read-only memory (ROM) are used. Each ROM word contains ten bits and constitutes a calculator microinstruction. Microinstructions grouped together in blocks perform the various external functional tasks of the calculator. A task may require one block of words or several blocks woven together. For example, the Clx function requires only a few words, while the sin function uses the tan function, which uses the add function, and so on.

Although production of efficient microcode is an iterative process, the first step is the choice or design

---

**Fig. 5.** An example of the HP-65's internal microprogramming. Even such a seemingly trivial operation as digit entry requires careful design so it seems trivial to the user. Values must be displayed as keyed in, yet be normalized to a standard internal form. This is the normalization routine and the flow chart and ROM listing for it.
of an algorithm. This may involve such constraints as accuracy, execution speed, microinstructions required, or even available design time. Next, a functional flow chart is drawn to outline the sequence of various operations and any conditional operations. This flow chart is then expanded to sufficient detail that it can be translated to microinstructions and implemented on a calculator simulator. More often than not there are implementation errors to correct; sometimes the entire algorithm is faulty, requiring a new design. When the design is complete, integrated-circuit read-only memories are produced.

Where possible, the HP-65 uses the proven algorithm implementations from the HP-35 and HP-45 (trigonometric, logarithmic, and exponential routines). This saved development time and reduced implementation error probabilities.

Many HP-65 algorithms would provide interesting descriptions here, but one that demonstrates appreciable complexity is the digit-entry routine. Designing this seemingly trivial function so as to seem trivial to the user required considerable patience and careful thought. Usually, any entry will produce an undesirable result unless the designer specifically accounts for it. Values must be displayed as keyed in, yet they must be normalized to some internal form. The table below lists some of the design constraints on this algorithm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USER ACTION</th>
<th>DESIRED RESULT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than ten mantissa digits</td>
<td>Ignore all digits after tenth digit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First key of new entry</td>
<td>Overwrite existing x if key follows <strong>ENTER</strong> or <strong>CLX</strong>; otherwise do automatic <strong>ENTER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra digits after EEX</td>
<td>Shift exponent left; new digit becomes least significant digit of exponent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple decimal point</td>
<td>Ignore all decimal points after first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decimal point after EEX</td>
<td>Ignore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading zeros keyed in</td>
<td>Accept and display leading zeros, zero normal form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EEX</strong> first key of new entry</td>
<td>Enter one in mantissa; following digits enter exponent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decimal point first key of new entry</td>
<td>Display only decimal point; zero normal form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digits after decimal point</td>
<td>Continue appending digits; no effect on internal exponent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such an algorithm was explained in a previous issue. Fig. 5 shows the flow chart and ROM listing for the normalizing routine.

Acknowledgments

Many people of course, contributed ideas to this effort. Particular acknowledgment is due the following: Paul Stoft and Tom Whitney for bringing together the necessary technical resources and people; Dave Cochran, for the trigonometric and exponential routines used in the HP-35, and for help in understanding the HP-35 architecture; Francé Rodé for further explanations of the HP-35 architecture; Peter Dickinson for suggestions and criticisms concerning algorithm implementations, particularly the extension of the HP-35 algorithms; Tom Osborne for helpful advice and suggestions regarding the function set and the external behavior of the HP-65; Homer Russell and Wing Chan for helpful suggestions and criticisms for the function set, and for
patiently keeping up with numerous daily changes; Steve Walther for providing the microinstruction language compiler; Darrel Lauer and Al Inhelder for crystallizing the keyboard layout from a myriad of suggestions; Ed Heinsen and Lynn Tillman for extending the simulation software to accommodate the increased complexity of the HP-65.

References

R. Kent Stockwell
Kent Stockwell joined HP four years ago. As a member of HP Laboratories for most of that period, he’s done program development, modeling, and numerical analysis for computer-aided circuit design and, more recently, the firmware development for the HP-65. Kent studied electrical engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating in 1970 with SB and SM degrees. A native of Kalamazoo, Michigan, he now lives in Palo Alto, California, where he’s currently remodeling his house and putting his woodworking skills to good use. He also plays trombone and baritone horn, and enjoys backpacking in the mountains of California and Colorado.

APPENDIX

HP-65 Programmable Pocket Calculator Functions and Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arithmetic</th>
<th>Other Preprogrammed Functions and Operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>add</td>
<td>extract integer or decimal portion of a number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subtract</td>
<td>factorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multiply</td>
<td>recall value of x to 10 significant digits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>divide</td>
<td>convert decimal-base integers to or from octal-base integers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logarithmic</td>
<td>&quot;roll down&quot; or &quot;roll up&quot; numbers in operational stack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural logarithm</td>
<td>clear display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural antilogarithm</td>
<td>clear operational stack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>common logarithm</td>
<td>clear all nine addressable memory registers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>common antilogarithm</td>
<td>recall last input argument from separate &quot;last-x&quot; storage register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigonometric</td>
<td>store or recall numbers from any of the nine addressable memory registers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set operating mode</td>
<td>register arithmetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(degrees, radians, or grads)</td>
<td>display formatting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sine</td>
<td>Program Structure and Edit Functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cosine</td>
<td>clear program memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arc sine</td>
<td>user-definable keys (A-E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arc cosine</td>
<td>label</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tangent</td>
<td>go-to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arc tangent</td>
<td>return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>add or subtract</td>
<td>run/stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degrees/minutes/seconds</td>
<td>no-operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convert angle from</td>
<td>set flag 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degrees, radians, or grads to degrees/minutes/seconds</td>
<td>test flag 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vice versa</td>
<td>set flag 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convert polar</td>
<td>test flag 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coordinates to</td>
<td>x = y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rectangular</td>
<td>x = y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coordinates and vice versa</td>
<td>x ≿ y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exponential</td>
<td>decrement and skip on zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>square</td>
<td>delete program step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>square root</td>
<td>single-step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raising a number to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a power (x^n)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reciprocal (can be used with y^n function to extract nth roots)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Designing a Tiny Magnetic Card Reader

Here's how it was designed and how it works.

by Robert B. Taggart

One thing we had was an abundance of ideas for tiny card readers. The HP-65 card reader project began in the electronic research laboratory of HP Laboratories before the introduction of the HP-35. The basic design goal for the card reader was to propel a magnetic card the size of a piece of chewing gum at a constant speed of 3 3/4 to 6 1/2 cm/s. Of course, it also had to fit inside the HP-35 package.

Many schemes were tried, including music box mechanisms, hand feed, gravity feed, and dashpot systems. Motor-driven schemes didn't generate much enthusiasm at first. But one day while digging through a file on motors that was about to be discarded, I found a brochure describing a Swiss-made motor less than 1 1/2 cm in diameter. Within a day we obtained two samples. They had ample torque and their unique construction provided very low brush noise. The motors had a tested lifetime of over one thousand hours.

These tiny motors turn at speeds in excess of 10,000 r/min. The problem of reducing this high speed down to 6 cm/s was solved by using a worm gear, which provides a large speed reduction in one stage. Other schemes were tried but the worm and wheel combination proved best.

Gripping of the card under all conditions was another problem that had to be solved. The card is very small and would be handled extensively. Even grease could not be allowed to stand between a card and good gripping. Plastics and rubbers of various kinds and textures were tried. We tried to put tire-like treads into the rubber and even put ridges in the card for better grip. But finally we found a polyurethane rubber with the right texture that grips even when the card is coated with oil.

The major problems we faced were caused by trying to squeeze so much information onto such a short card. If the card could have been longer the design would have been much easier. However, having a short card offers the user the convenience of labeling the top row of keys with the program card. This restricted the length of the card to less than the width of the calculator. All kinds of things become critical in trying to read and write on short magnetic cards in such a small machine at 300 or more bits per inch. Azimuth alignment of the magnetic head at 400 bits per inch must be accurate within ± 1/4 degree. The best way to align heads with this precision is under a microscope. But can you align a head to this kind of accuracy in a molded plastic part? Based on the HP Manufacturing Division's confidence in the plastic we decided to try. We succeeded, thereby achieving a significant cost saving over using a metal frame. Using such a short card required bunching the magnetic head very close to the drive roller and gear train. This unusual geometry combined with the tight tolerances of ± 0.001 inch on some dimensions made the reader frame a complex challenge.

The short card and higher bit density created numerous problems related to keeping the vibration of the drive train to a minimum. Of all the problems we faced this proved to be the most difficult. Finding the right process for making the worm gear and refining that process to a high degree made it possible. A method was developed to couple the worm gear to the motor and all these ideas combined to provide the necessary precision and smoothness. The bit-to-bit speed variation was held to less than 10%.

Another challenging problem involved inventing the set of switches that turn on the motor when the card is inserted, then turn on the magnetic head when the card is over the head, and finally provide file protection when the card corner is cut off. Three switches are provided. Some of these serve double duty in that they help wrap the card over the magnetic head for better head contact. The geometry of the switches
is unusual and many new ideas were required to fit three switches, a gear train, a drive roller, a backup roller, and magnetic head pole tips in a volume of $1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ cm. This very tight spacing was made necessary by the short card length and high bit density.

The short card and the fact that the recording rate is controlled by the clock in the calculator requires that the speed of the card be kept nearly constant under conditions of varying temperature and humidity. For instance, with a slow clock and a fast card reader it is conceivable that the card might go through the machine before all the program could be recorded on it. Conversely, if the clock were fast and the card slow the bit density could exceed the maximum permitted by the head alignment.

To solve this problem the voltage across the motor is regulated and each machine's card speed is set within ±2% by an external trimming resistor on the bipolar circuit that sets the voltage across the motor. We had decided at the outset to use as large a motor as would possibly fit to maximize the amount of available torque. The greater the available stall torque the less sensitive the card reader will be to changes in load. This eliminates the need for feedback speed control.

Speed control turned out to be a very nasty problem particularly at low temperature. It was discovered that at freezing temperatures the polyurethane rubber becomes hard as a rock. This increases the current drain on the motor enormously and reduces the card speed to almost zero. Numerous other types of rubber were tried, many of which remained softer at low temperature, but none of which griped as well as one polyurethane composition. Eventually by increasing the thickness of the polyurethane we reduced the magnitude of the problem. It was at this point that we appreciated the unique gripping properties of this type of polyurethane.

How the Card Reader Works

Fig. 1 is a diagram of the card reader. As the card is inserted into the right side of the machine, it is forced against one edge of the card slot by one of two tiny leaf springs. This helps align the card with the magnetic head. Pushing the card farther into the machine causes it to activate the motor start switch when the card approaches the rubber drive roller. This turns the motor on.

Each of the three switches in the card reader is activated in the same way. The card displaces a nylon ball resting on the bottom of the card slot. Movement of the ball forces a tiny finger of copper to move upward. The end point of this copper switch finger makes contact with a contact pad on the underside of the keyboard printed-circuit board. The contact point of the switch moves a distance several times the thickness of the card to provide a reliable contact. Each switch is adjusted to the proper contact position during assembly.

When the bipolar motor circuit is turned on a precise voltage is fed to the motor terminals to establish the motor/card speed to within a few percent. The motor turns at a speed near 10,000 revolutions per minute. The motor is directly coupled by a tiny polyurethane sleeve to a miniature worm gear. The end of the worm gear rests against a thrust ball bearing and drives a helical gear. The helical gear is pressed onto the hub of the polyurethane rubber drive roller, which grips the card.

![Diagram of the HP-65 card reader](image-url)
Once the motor is turned on by the motor start switch the user must push the card another small fraction of a centimeter so the rubber roller will grip the card. The card is then pinched and driven between the rubber roller and a fixed tiny idler roller made of nylon. The card proceeds through the machine toward the magnetic read/write head. Little bumps in the plastic support plate combine with the switch balls to wrap the card over the gap of the head.

As the card passes the magnetic gap of the head the leading edge of the card activates a second switch. This switch starts the write or read circuitry, depending on the position of the W/P/PRG/M-RUN switch. Activation of this second switch lets the circuits know that the card is over the head and is assumed to be moving at the proper speed.

At nearly the same time that the second switch is activated, a third switch may or may not be activated depending on whether the corner of the card is cut off. This is the file protect scheme, which prevents the user from writing over a previous program. When the second switch is activated the third switch is interrogated. If the third switch is not activated (the corner being cut off) the machine will not write over that card when the calculator is in the W/P/PRG/M mode. The data is written/read by a two-track recording scheme which is described elsewhere. As the card proceeds out the left side of the calculator it is held against the side of the card guide by a second side-loading leaf spring. When the trailing edge of the card passes the motor start switch the motor and read/write circuits are shut off. The card may then be removed from the machine.

Fig. 2 shows the card-reader parts disassembled.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the following people for their contributions during the design stage: Dick Barth, Bob Schweizer, Bernie Musch, Clarence Studley, John Bailey, Craig Sanford, Bill Boller and the HP Manufacturing Division, Fred Rios and his model shop, the Advanced Products Division model shop, and the APD production tooling groups.

Robert B. Taggart

Bob Taggart is an engineering group leader at HP's Advanced Products Division. He holds a 1967 BS degree in mechanical engineering and a 1968 MS in biomedical engineering, both from Northwestern University, and the degree of Engineer from Stanford University (1970). In 1970 he joined HP Laboratories and for three years was involved in biomedical and pollution studies before moving to APD to develop the HP-65 card reader. Author of three papers on microwave antenna design and five patent applications (two granted), Bob is originally from Pompton Lakes, New Jersey. He skis, plays tennis, and enjoys white-water river running. He and his wife welcomed their first child, a boy, on March 31.

Fig. 2. HP-65 card reader parts:
DESIGNING AN INSTRUMENT for minimum cost means not only that parts and assembly costs are minimized. The time required for testing, troubleshooting, and repair is also critical and must be held to an absolute minimum. Yet too many products are designed without giving adequate consideration to the time that can be spent analyzing and locating any faults that may show up in production testing.

For a high-volume, complex product like the HP-65, computerized testing is the only feasible method. To aid the computer in diagnosing failures and isolating them to the responsible components, it's essential that access be provided to all of the product's pertinent nodes. The HP-65 logic board was designed with this in mind.

The layout of the HP-65 logic board is shown in Fig. 1. Input and output lines are brought out to two edges of the board. Additional test points are routed to a third edge, giving access to a total of 45 test points.

Test System

A block diagram of the computerized tester designed for the HP-65 logic board is shown in Fig. 2. The tester functionally compares the operation of a known-good unit with that of a test unit. All outputs from the test logic board are interfaced to voltage-comparison circuits to check for proper logic-level thresholds.

As the tester exercises the reference and test units with identical inputs (either on the key lines or on the card reader lines), the units' outputs are captured in two pattern storage registers on each clock time.

---

Fig. 1. The HP-65 logic board is designed for automatic testing. Access to 45 test points is provided.
The patterns are continually compared. If they ever fail to compare, their error condition is frozen in the pattern storage registers and a flag is sent to the computer. The computer can then request all pertinent information from the tester, which keeps a record of events leading up to a failure. For example, microinstructions are saved and decoded to show which chip was talking on the calculator buses when the failure occurred. Other information retained by the tester is the present ROM address, the previous ROM address, the identity of the active ROM (one of twelve), the bit count at the time of failure, and the number of word times since the start of the test sequence.

All this information and the contents of the two pattern storage registers are then sent to the computer. The computer sorts through the data with the aid of a diagnostic table and prints out the nature of the error and the component most likely to have caused it.

**Tester Architecture**

The HP-65 logic board tester has six main parts. The **controller** is a 32-state ROM machine with 16 qualifiers and two-way branching on test conditions. There are eighteen instruction lines. Each state issues instructions that control the condition of other hardware in the tester. The controller also contains the master clock, a crystal-controlled oscillator set to the specified limit of the MOS circuits, 200 kHz.

The **interface circuits** consist of a voltage comparator and buffer amplifier between each calculator's MOS circuits and the input to the pattern storage register, which is a TTL circuit. The voltage comparator checks the upper and lower limits of the logic levels.

The pattern storage and comparator circuit consists of two 16-bit registers of D-type flip-flops with a 16-bit parallel comparison circuit between them to check for parity. If the patterns do not compare after each clock period (5μs) an error flip-flop is set. The clock is then inhibited to each of the 16-bit pattern storage registers and the error condition is saved.

Input/output information is received by the tester and transmitted to the computer over 16 parallel lines. Inputs are stored in a 16-bit buffer register which receives commands and data from the computer. Three of the input lines from the computer are assigned as output select control lines to specify which data to send back to the computer. The other 13 input lines are used to control the logic board: six lines specify the key code (function), four lines simulate switches to the card reader, one line varies the power-supply limits, and two lines are used for status information.

A 16-bit, eight-channel multiplexer controlled by the three output-select lines is used to return data to the computer. A full handshake between the tester and the computer is done; this assures proper data-transmission timing.

Inputs to the logic board are either through the key lines or the card reader control lines. The key lines are made through an 8 x 5 matrix. A six-bit code...
from the computer specifies the key code. There are four lines to the card reader: learn mode switch, motor switch, head switch, and file protect switch.

The read/write test circuit is a 15-state controller with instruction decoding for determining when to shift the read/write data pattern in and out. To simulate the magnetic card, reference write patterns are stored in two 600-bit shift registers. A third 600-bit shift register is used as a counter to keep track of how many shifts have been done.

**Card Reader Testing**

To make the card reader circuit read or write it is necessary to close the motor switch and the head switch. Then the condition of the learn mode switch line specifies whether the unit will read or write. The file protect line specifies the condition of the write enable line.

The test sequence consists of writing a test pattern from each of the two logic boards and comparing the pattern of the reference board to that of the board under test. The reference patterns are stored in two 600-bit shift registers. The next step is to read the same pattern back into the calculator and then write it back out again. The second write sequence is used to verify that the read circuit is functioning properly. The write enable line is tested by making the file protect signal a logical zero on the first write sequence and a logical one during the second write sequence.

**Overall Test Sequence**

The steps in the test sequence are as follows:

- Power off, push start button.
- Turn power on, set time delay (this allows the power supply to rise to the proper level).
- Test power supply and clock for proper high and low limits. Also test if power-on pulse was given properly. If not go to error routine.
- If everything is correct give a pseudo power-on (PWO) signal. This sets the starting address to zero.
- Test if both systems are in synchronism and if not, slow the clock to the unit under test until both systems are in synchronism.
- Release power-on pulse and start comparison test. When display has turned on and no error has occurred, flag computer for first key code sequence.
- After receiving first key code, enable key code matrix and continue to enable until display turns off.
- Wait until calculator display has turned back on again.
- Test if calculator is ready for its next test sequence, which can be through the key lines again or through the card reader lines.
- The test sequences are continued until the computer gives an end code. Then the “good” light turns on.
- If an error occurs the tester generates an error code corresponding to that fault. The computer is then flagged with the error line high.
- The computer then sends back a series of output select codes to specify which information is to be sent back to the computer. After the computer has received all information from the tester, an end code is sent to the tester. The tester turns on a “bad” light.
- The computer then prints out diagnostic messages.

**Test Time**

The time required for testing a logic board is determined by the number of test sequences and the length of time of each function. Typical test time is about one minute for the complete test sequence, that is, for a good board.

**Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank Larry Gravelle and Harry Griffin of Advanced Products Division’s electrical tooling department for all the support they gave, Marlin Schell for writing the software package, and Rich Whicker for some suggestions and ideas on testing the card reader chip.

Special thanks to Ron Bernard, Sue Gross and Carl Forsyth for their help putting the prototype together.

---

**Ken Peterson**

Ken Peterson, a member of HP Laboratories since 1965, has worked on the 2116 Computer, the 9100 Calculator, and all of HP’s pocket calculators. Ken was a radar technician in the U.S. Air Force and later studied electronics for two years at a community college. His home is in Fremont, California, just south of his native Oakland, and he frequently attends Oakland Raiders’ professional football games, especially enjoying it when the Raiders beat their rivals, the Kansas City Chiefs. He’s a softball player and a skier, too. He and his wife Carmen have five daughters ranging in age from four months to fourteen years.
ATTENUATORS ARE SIMPLE enough in concept but not so simple to execute for RF and microwave frequencies. This is particularly true when switchability without loss of accuracy is needed.

The usual way to switch attenuation levels at microwave frequencies has been to replace a short section of coaxial line containing an attenuator pad with another section. The need to make an RF leakproof contact to the outer conductor while making solid contact to the coaxial section's center conductor complicated the design. Variations in center and outer conductor contact impedance led to problems in repeatability.

The repeatability problem was alleviated by the development of the edgeline transmission system. In this system, the center conductor is a flat ribbon suspended between and at right angles to a pair of parallel conducting planes that comprise the outer conductors. The center conductor can be flexed from one contact to another to switch signal paths. There is no need to switch the outer conductors—only the center conductor is switched.

This concept has now been refined, leading to new attenuators (Fig. 1) that are small enough to place inside compact instruments and inexpensive enough for general bench use wherever the level of RF or mi-
Microwave power needs to be controlled accurately.

**Single Conductor Switching**

The basic microwave structure of the new attenuators follows the method used successfully in the HP 33,300 series programmable step attenuators. The flat, flexible center conductor is bent in one direction to make contact to a thin-film attenuator pad and in the opposite direction to contact a short length of transmission line that establishes a straight-through path (Fig. 2). Since the internal fields are concentrated along the edges of the center conductor, the switching points are well isolated from each other.

The mechanics of making contact cause a small wiping action that makes good electrical contact without creating the problems of lubrication, wear, and contact contamination associated with other designs. With this switching arrangement, repeatability of attenuation settings is exceptionally consistent over the life of the instrument: within 0.02 dB for at least 100,000 rotational cycles.

**Mechanical Details**

The basic attenuator structure is shown in Fig. 2. Attenuator sections are cascaded and switched in or out in combinations to give the desired attenuation. There is one 10-dB section, one 20-dB section, and one or two 40-dB sections, depending on the model. Each switch consists of a pair of gold-plated, beryllium-copper leaf springs that form the center conductor. These are deflected to one side to contact the attenuator section or to the other side to contact a section of transmission line that serves as a bypass.

The attenuator elements are thin-film π-like pads using tantalum resistive films on sapphire substrates (Fig. 3). The thin-film technique enables the resistive pads to be constructed as part of a transmission-line structure with negligible stray reactance and, hence, with broadband accuracy. Precise control of dimensions assures a good impedance match to the transmission line and good accuracy without hand touch-up (see Fig. 4). With all attenuator pads switched in, accuracy of the 110-dB models is within ±4% up to 18 GHz with respect to (and traceable to) NBS standards. SWR of the same model is less than 1.5 at 8 GHz and still below 1.9 at 18 GHz.

The inherent stability of the sapphire-tantalum combination reduces the power sensitivity of the attenuators to extremely low levels: less than 0.001 dB/dB/watt. The thin-film process also enables the attenuator elements to be dimensioned so that the electrical length of an attenuator section is very close to that of the associated bypass transmission line. Differential phase shift for the 10- and 20-dB sections is thus less than 2° per GHz and that of the 40-dB section is less than 1° per GHz.

In working out the design, the dimensions of the new attenuators were scaled down to the equivalent of a 3.5-mm coaxial line, one-half those of the earlier attenuators. The trade-off was in power handling capability (1 watt average or 100 watts peak for a 10 μs pulse in the new attenuators versus 2 watts average.
Fig. 3. Attenuator pads use the edgeline structure with the outer conductors sandwiched into the walls of the attenuator when assembled. Thin-film tantalum pads behave as true distributed elements with negligible stray reactance.

or 500 watts peak in the earlier ones). The new attenuators, on the other hand, require only 1 ½ square inches of panel area when mounted in an instrument.

Economical Construction

Considerable economies were achieved by molding the center conductor support structure with a process that molds two plastics in one operation, using the second plastic as a hydraulic fluid to control its own gating. The support base is a polyiron and glass filled plastic that anchors the mounting posts for the leaf springs and bypass sections. The glass fill matches the plastic’s thermal expansion to the aluminum housing and the polyiron suppresses higher order waveguide modes within the attenuator. The mounting posts are made with an unfilled plastic.

The leaf springs are depressed by cams acting through rocker arms and plastic rods and returned to the opposite position by springs acting on the rods.

Eight Versions

There are at present two basic attenuators in the new series, one with a range of 0 to 70 dB (Model 8495A/B) and one with a range of 0 to 110 dB (Model 8496A/B). Both switch in 10-dB steps and have a characteristic impedance of 50 ohms. Attenuators with other ranges and step sizes are under development.

Each of the basic attenuators is manufactured in two versions, one that has a frequency range of dc to 18 GHz (B models), and a less expensive version that operates from dc to 4 GHz (A models). Each of these is supplied either with a dial readout and a stand for bench applications, or as a component for built-in applications without the dial and stand (Models 33,321/2A/B). The bench versions are available with a choice of connectors: type N, SMA, or APC-7.

References

SPECIFICATIONS
HP Models 8495A/B and 8496A/8 Coaxial Step Attenuators

CHARACTERISTIC IMPEDANCE: 50Ω

REPEATABILITY: typically 0.02 dB

LIFE: 100,000 rotational cycles

POWER HANDLING CAPABILITY: 1W avg, 0.1W pk (10μs pulse)

POWER SENSITIVITY: 0.001 dB/dBm

TEMPERATURE COEFFICIENT: 0.0001 dB/dB°C

MAXIMUM SWR (at either connector): 1.35
DC-8GHz: 1.5
8-12.4GHz: 1.5
12.4-18GHz: 1.7

ATTENUATION ACCURACY (±dB, referenced to 0-dB setting):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODEL</th>
<th>Frequency Range (GHz)</th>
<th>Attenuator Setting (dB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8495A</td>
<td>0 - 4</td>
<td>0.2 0.4 0.5 0.7 0.8 1.0 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8495B</td>
<td>0 - 12.4</td>
<td>0.5 0.7 0.9 1.2 1.5 1.8 2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8496A</td>
<td>12.4 - 18</td>
<td>0.6 0.8 1.2 1.6 2.0 2.4 2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8496B</td>
<td>0 - 12.4</td>
<td>0.5 0.7 0.9 1.2 1.5 1.8 2.1 2.4 2.7 3.0 3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8496B</td>
<td>12.4 - 18</td>
<td>0.6 0.8 1.2 1.6 2.0 2.4 2.8 3.2 3.6 4.0 4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Numbers in parentheses are OEM versions without knob, dial or stand.

Address Correction Requested:
Hewlett-Packard Company, 1501 Page Mill Road, Palo Alto, California 94304

David R. Veteran (right)
Dave Veteran started out on the production line at Hewlett-Packard, assembling signal generators. This was in 1952. In 1960, he moved to the lab as an engineering aide and with the help of engineering courses at Foothill College, he eventually became a full-fledged engineer. Along the way, he designed numerous coax and waveguide components including high-power loads, attenuators, and coax switches, earning four patents in the process. He was also involved in the design of the 8551A Spectrum Analyzer and the 312A Wave Analyzer. Dave takes his turn with his flying club’s Cessna 172 and he also races an El Toro with the HP sailing club. He and his wife have two daughters, 13 and 15.

George R. Kirkpatrick (left)
At HP since 1956, Bob Kirkpatrick has designed a considerable number of coaxial components, including work on the swivel joints, bias networks, transistor fixtures, and other hardware needed by the HP network analyzer systems. He was also responsible for s-parameter test sets in the 8740 series. Bob earned his BSEE degree at the California State Polytechnic College and his MSEE degree at Santa Clara University. After hours, he serves as president of the HP Easy-Speakers, an in-house equivalent of Toastmasters, and on week-ends he works at tilling and grading the 1-acre of land around his home in Los Altos Hills with a 1928 Caterpillar tractor, with advice from his four children, ages 11 to 16.