From Airline Reservations to Sonic the Hedgehog: A History of the Software Industry (History of Computing)

By Martin Campbell-Kelly

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From its first glimmerings in the 1950s, the software industry has evolved to become the fourth largest industrial sector of the US economy. Starting with a handful of software contractors who produced specialized programs for the few existing machines, the industry grew to include producers of corporate software packages and then makers of mass-market products and recreational software. This book tells the story of each of these types of firm, focusing on the products they developed, the business models they followed, and the markets they served.By describing the breadth of this industry, Martin Campbell-Kelly corrects the popular misconception that one firm is at the center of the software universe. He also tells the story of lucrative software products such as IBM's CICS and SAP's R/3, which, though little known to the general public, lie at the heart of today's information infrastructure.With its wealth of industry data and its thoughtful judgments, this book will become a starting point for all future investigations of this fundamental component of computer history.

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Editorial Review

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When writers look at the birth of the computer age, they generally focus on the tangible hardware achievements of the likes of IBM and Intel and almost solely on Microsoft when it comes to software. Campbell-Kelly tells us that in the larger perspective, Microsoft is not the center of the software universe and indeed today makes up only about 10 percent of that industry. Mass-market "shrink-wrap" software is the retail version of a much larger sector that contributes to our lives constantly, running everything from airline reservations to bank transfers, credit-card transactions, and most corporate and government functions, including the space program. This is an area that is often ignored because *software* is hard to define; it is the nearest product we have that is virtually pure thought. Campbell-Kelly is the first historian to give us a comprehensive overview of this hidden industry, which spawned the first user groups when companies had to write their own programs for early IBM mainframes. He includes everything from the information infrastructure of IBM's CICS and SAP's R/3 to the ever-popular gaming software. *David Siegfried Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved*

Review

This book presents an exceptionally clearheaded overview of one of the most important industries of the twentieth century. No other work covers the business dimensions of the software industry so comprehensively or so clearly. It should be the starting point for anyone interested in the history of the software business.

(Steven Usselman, School of History Technology and Society, Georgia Institute of Technology)

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"A well-rounded look at the software industry from a business perspective. Highly recommended." Colleen Cuddy Library Journal

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"In his incisive, panoramic book... Martin Campbell-Kelly delivers all three: context, insight, even occasional humor." Steve Lohr The New York Times

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"In his incisive, panoramic book...Martin Campbell-Kelly delivers all three: context, insight, even occasional humor." Steve Lohr The New York Times

"...Provides a smooth, very readable ride through the growth of one of the last half century's most important industries." Cal Clinchard PC Today

From the Inside Flap

"This book is a major step forward in documenting the software industry's history. It contributes structure and content as well as insight and analysis."
--Burton Grad, President, Software History Center

"From a disparate array of sources, Campbell-Kelly deftly and neatly teases out a compelling history of the emergence, structure, and development of the computer software and services sector of the US economy."
--Arthur Norberg, Director, Charles Babbage Institute, University of Minnesota

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"Campbell-Kelly is the first historian to map the terrain of the software industry, from contractors through corporate products to personal computer software. This pathbreaking book is packed with data and insights that will be valuable to historians of business and technology, as well as analysts of the contemporary software industry. It lays to rest a variety of myths and distortions about the software business, including the over-emphasis on Microsoft that has dominated writing about it to this time."
--JoAnne Yates, Sloan Distinguished Professor of Management, MIT

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