

The Spirit of the Computer

A history of software
in the Netherlands

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"Sad case there . . . brilliant computer man—took a six weeks vacation and fell too far behind in his field."

© DATAMATION

Cartoon in
Informatie (1968)



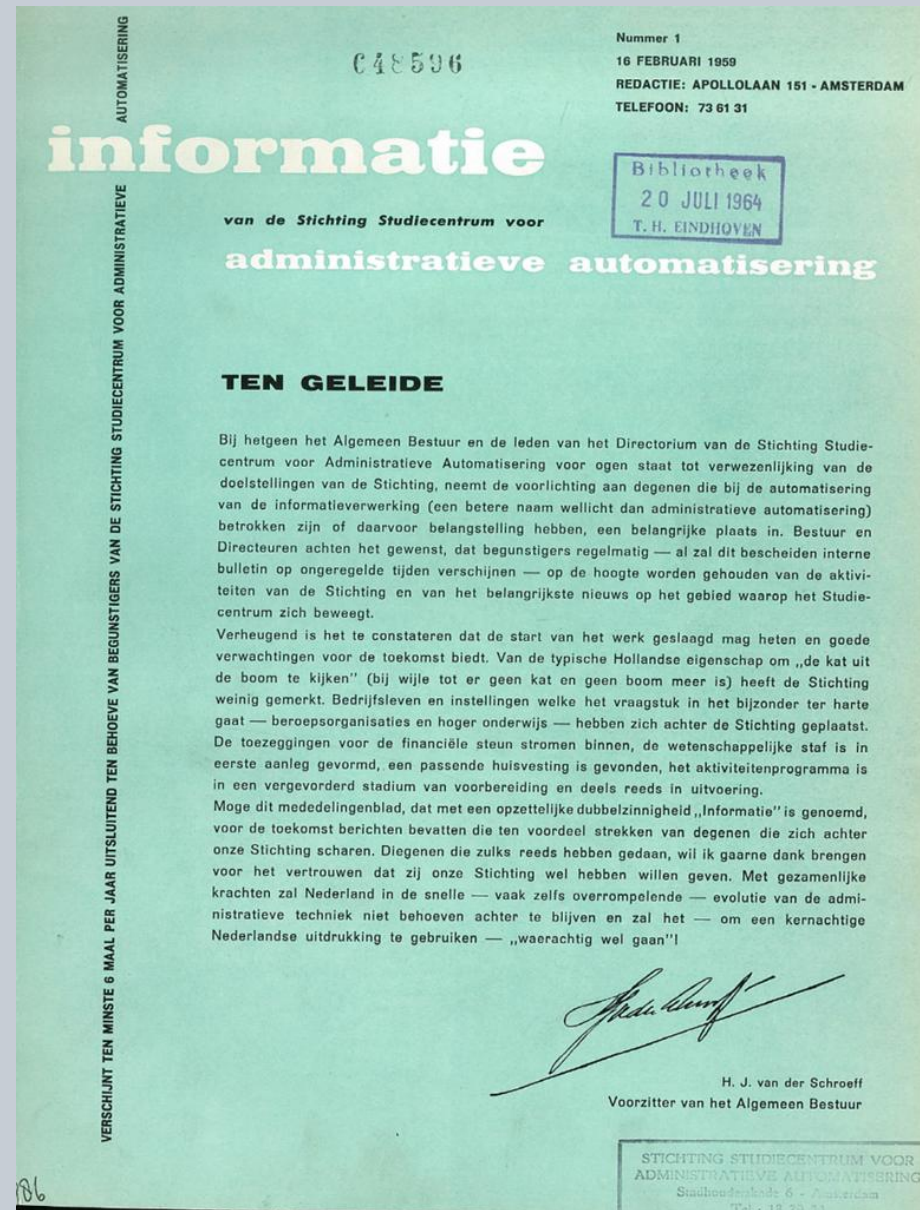
Memotron

Autologistron

Informatron

?

1958: Foundation Study Centre for Automation of Administrations (SSAA)



“The Spirit of the Computer”

Why a book on software history?

What do we want to tell in the book?

Who is our audience?

How are we going to tell?

Why?

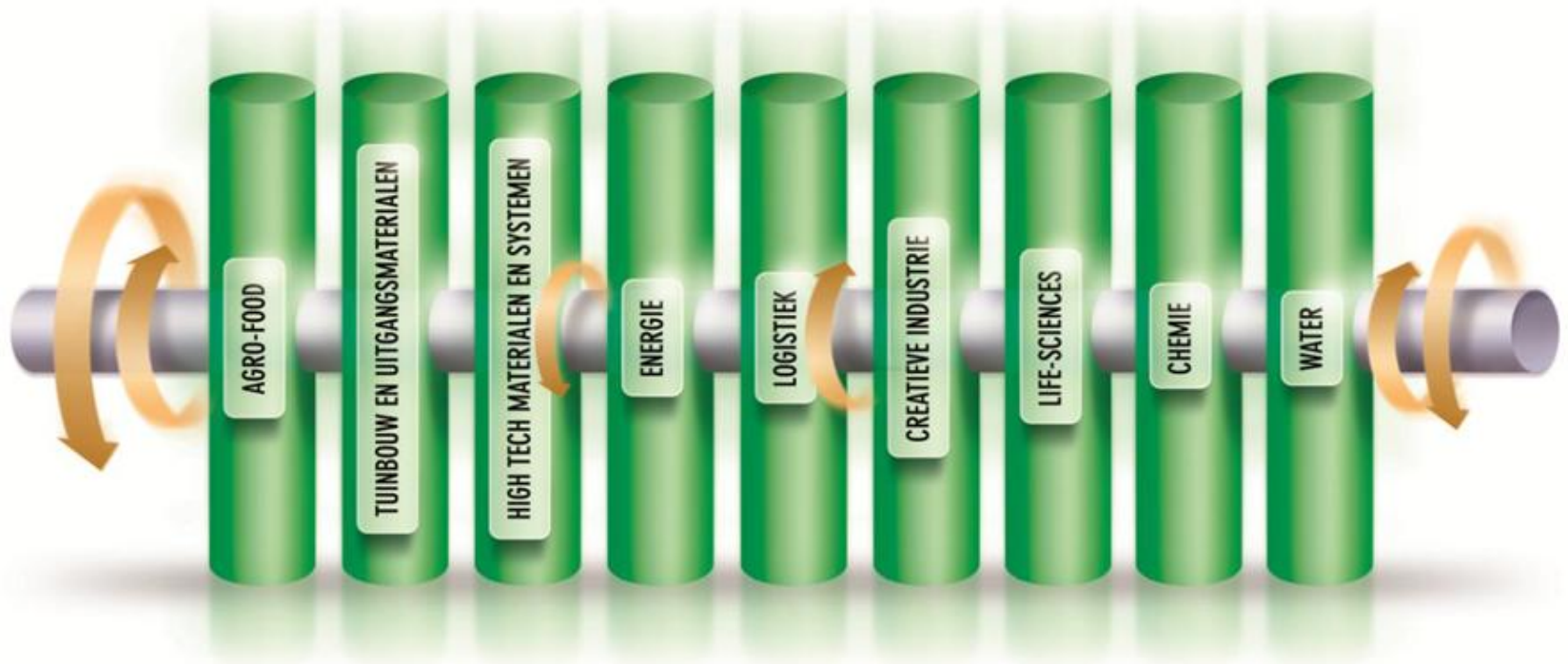
- Information technology has been a **game changer** on every societal domain in the last 50 years.
- Software is **underexposed** within the history of IT (internationally and in the Netherlands)
- The Netherlands has an **interesting** contribution to software-development (pioneers are ageing)

What do we want to tell?

Focus on:

- The *production* of software and the development of the software sector
 - Dutch contribution
- *Institutions* and rules (incl. education)
- The *use* and users of software

IT as an innovation-axis

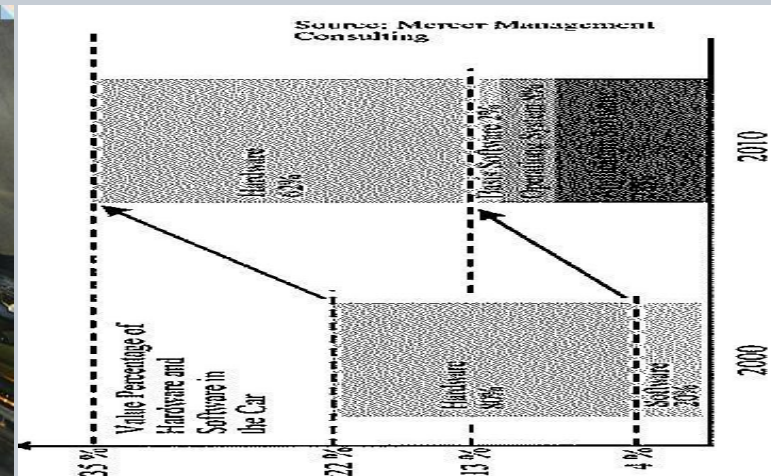


Source: [ICT-office], *ICT en topsectoren. ICT als Innovatie* as (z.p. z.j.), 2.

IT *enables* innovations: new production processes, automation of administrations, etc.

→ IT as an 'innovation axis'

Smart
Mobility



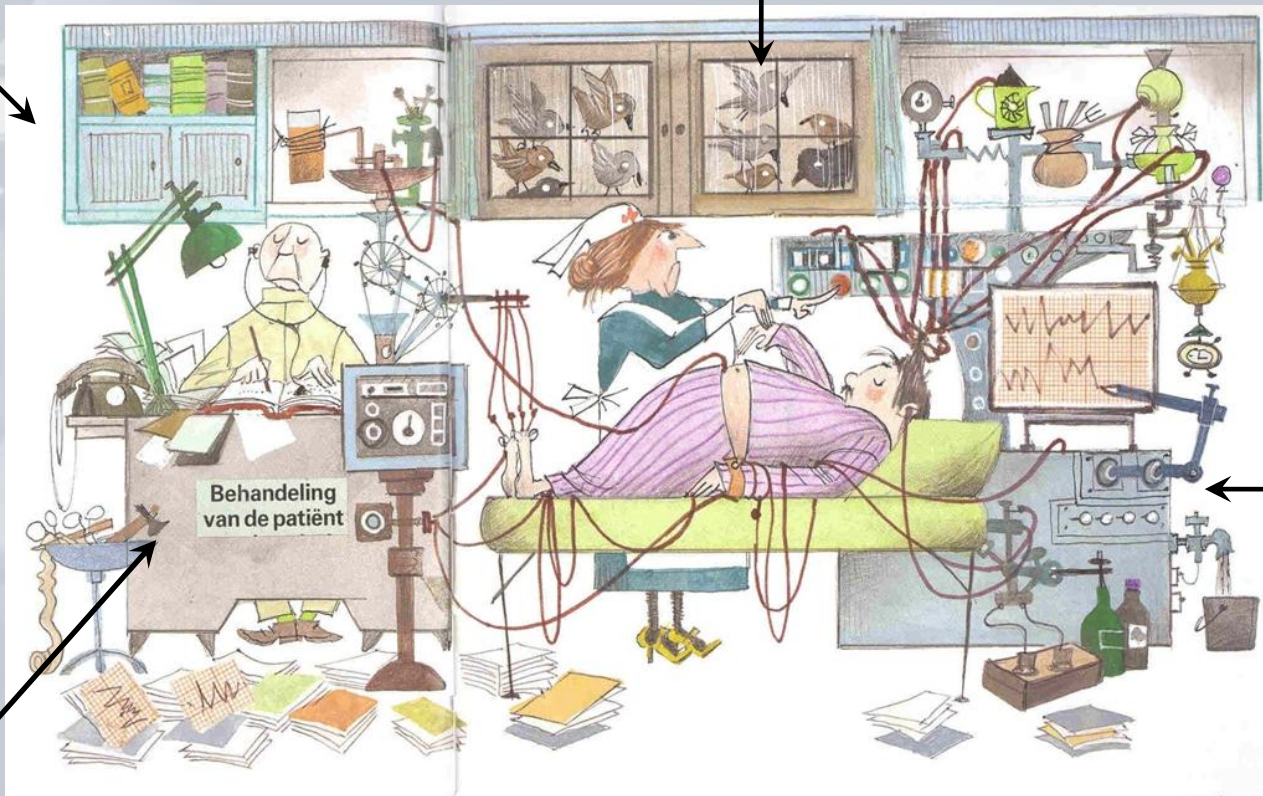
Air-bag system	Antilock brakes	Automatic transmission
Alarm system	Climate control	Collision-avoidance system
Cruise control	Communication system	Dashboard instrumentation
Electronic stability control	Engine ignition	Engine control
Electronic-seat control	Entertainment system	Navigation system
Power steering	Tire-pressure monitoring	Windshield-wiper control

Source: B. Hardung, Th. Kölzow en A. Krüger, 'Reuse of software in distributed embedded automotive systems', in: *Proceedings of EMSOFT* (sept. 2004), 203.

Evidence Based Medicine

Digital disclosing of
medical knowledge
(*Excerpta Medica*)

Computer Service
Sector

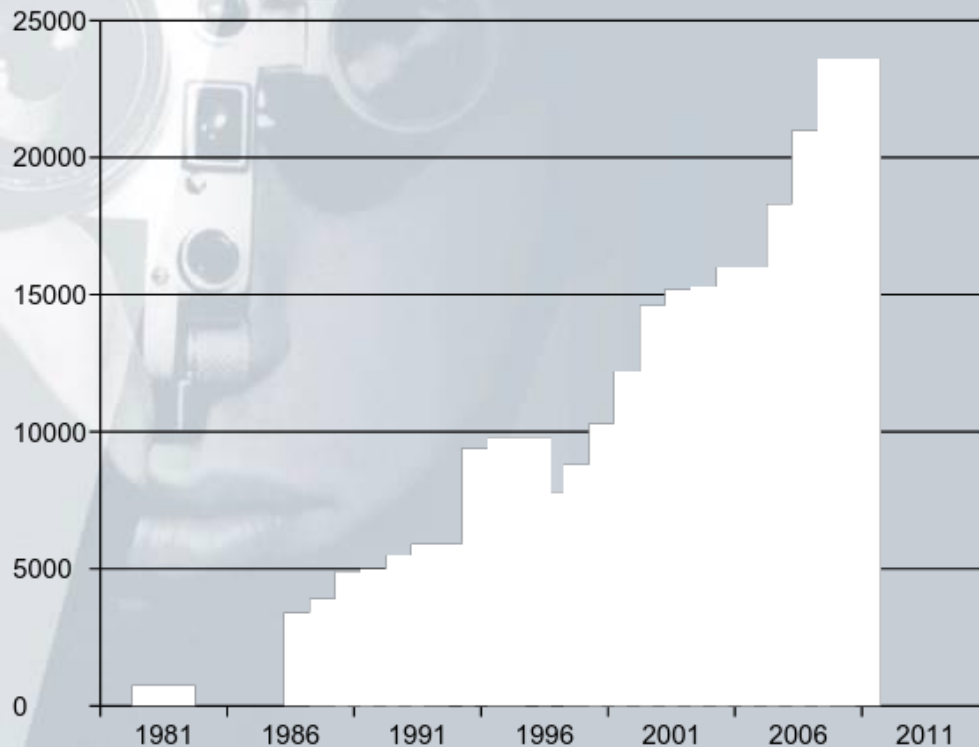


Technical
automation

Administrative
automation

Drawing Fiep Westendorp for the
book *Otje* of Annie M.G. Schmidt
(1980)

Computer Services and Software Bureaus in the Netherlands, 1981-2008



- **The Dutch Software Sector in 2010:**
- **Revenue:** over 25 billion €
- **Employment:** 192000 fte
- **Export value:** 1.7 billion €
- **Gross Dom. Product:** 2.8%
- **Source:** *Dialogic* (2010)

NOT ONLY A SUCCESS- STORY!



Elk jaar gaan er miljarden euro's belastinggeld naar ict-projecten bij de overheid. Effectief bleken ze bepaald niet. Een speciale Tweede Kamercommissie onderzocht dit falen, hield verhooren met hoofdrolspelers en presenteert vandaag haar rapport. Wat hebben we tot nu toe geleerd?

Overheid onwetend, kwistig en doof voor kritiek



Ict blijkt bodemloze put

Extern onderzoek naar ict-fiasco's

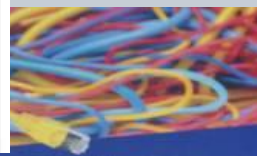
en ict-kneuzen'

gefraudeerd. Het debacle
lloze overheidsinstanties.
rheid. Door Jan Tromp



Eindrapport - Parlementair onderzoek naar ICT-projecten bij de overheid Naar grip op ICT

Er zijn veel
rigoureuze
maatregelen
voor de ICT-
problemen
van de
overheid
nodig dan de
commissie
Elias bepleit



Some conclusions/ hypotheses

- IT as an ‘innovation axis’ **enabled** many innovations (incremental, radical, disruptive) and changed the game at different societal domains.
- From the late 1960s the computer services sector took off as a new important **actor** in IT innovations.
- (This actor – and its relationship with users/clients - evolved over time: e.g. emerge of the product software industry after 1980)
- To make IT successful as an ‘innovation axis’ the turning speed of the axis is important: All actors involved (users, developers, policy makers etc.) have to keep up with the **velocity**.
- Intermediary organizations can fulfil an important role as a **knowledge** hub, linking and monitoring the actors and **controlling** the speed. (Can the proposed “Governamental Bureau for IT Supervision” do the same?)

Regime change in the computer services industry, ab. 1980

	Customized Software / computerservice (“Maatwerk”)	Product Software
Period	From mid. 1960’s – mid. 1990’s	From ab. 1980
Hardware	Mainframes, Minicomputers	Microcomputers, PC’s
Customers	Large companies organizations	SME’s
Earnings model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pay per hour, - Selling the companies’ expertise and craftsmanship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pay per product - Selling the products quality
R&D/ Innovations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aimed at specific problems/solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Efficiency in production - New applications
Leading Companies e.g.	Volmac, Pandata	Grote Beer, Baan, Unit4, Exact



How to reach a broad(er) audience with a book that has scientific pretentions?

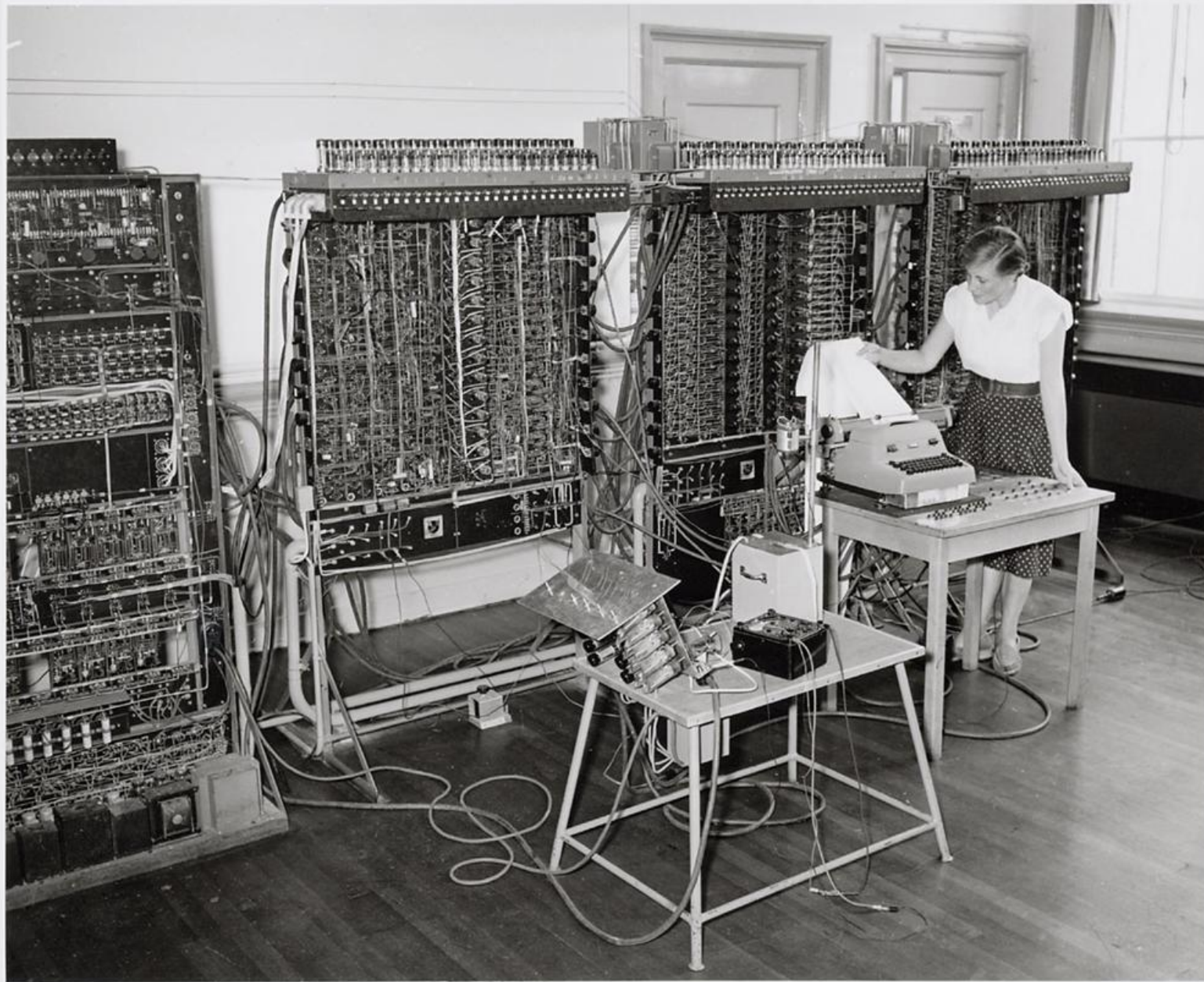
A combination of

- writing
- Illustrations

Computer exhibition, 1972

Old Machinery

Always
fascinating
(preferably
with people)



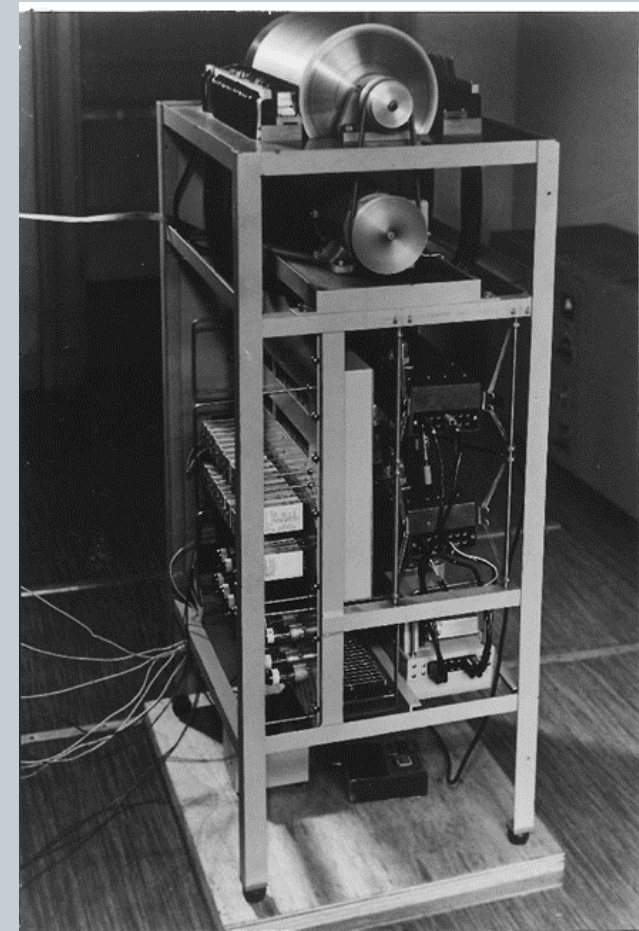
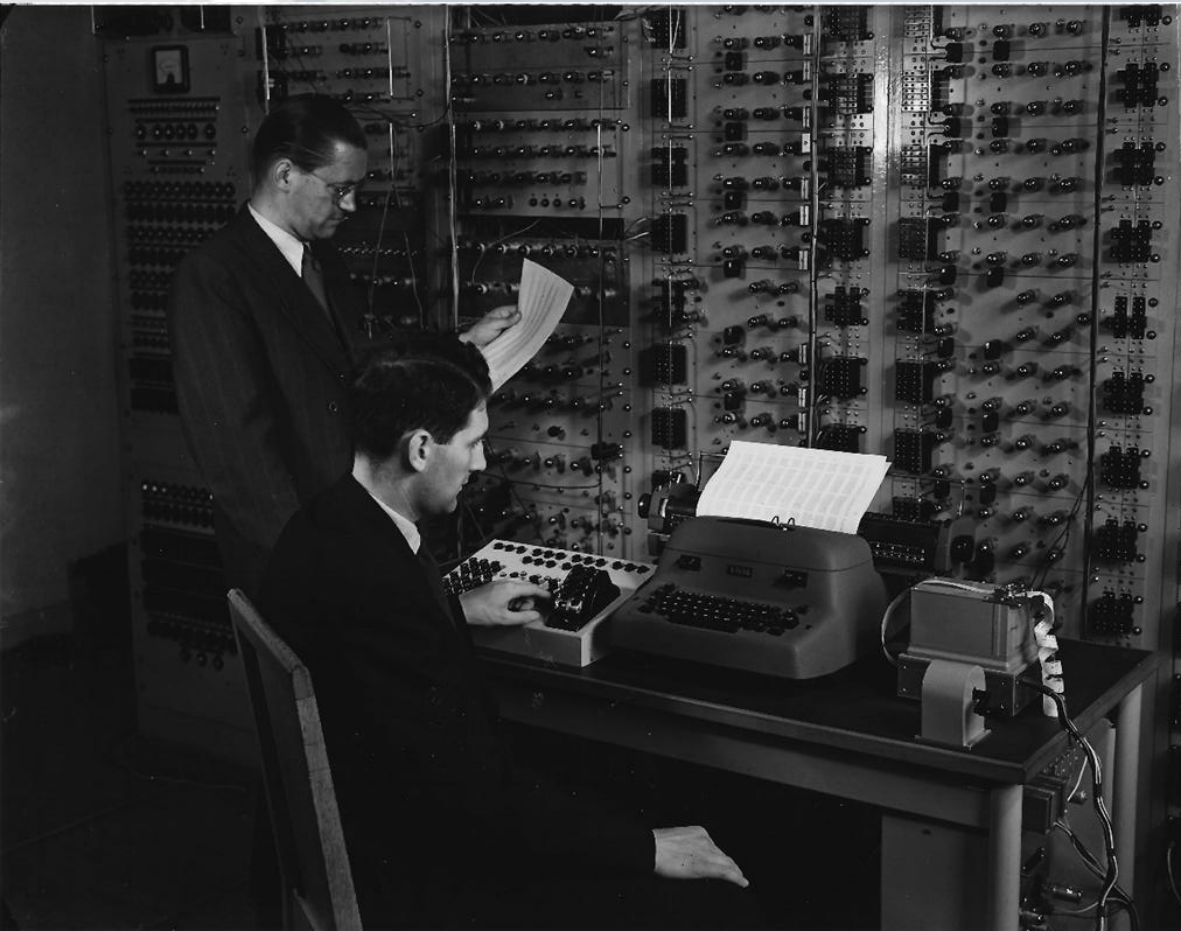
ARRA,
1952

Description (What do we see?)

Explanation (How does it work?)

→ Legitimation (Why is it shown?)

PTERA 1953



1972

technology assessment

ethics and technology

philosophy of technology

history of technology

Curious about the technology





Producers

history of technology



1964



Protests (1)

1971

Protests (2)



1986



1932

technology

philosophy of technology

history of technology



1990

What's new?

Icons of Dutch IT

philosophy of technology

history of technology

Edsger Dijkstra
“curiosities”

1984

1952
Adriaan van
Wijngaarden



1951

