

Menu

- Explore
 - Overview
 - Stories
 - Timelines
 - Collections
 - Playlists
 - Blogs
 - Publications
- Connect
 - Overview
 - Events
 - K-12 Students & Educators
 - Families & Community Groups
 - Colleges & Universities
 - Business & Government Leaders
 - Volunteers
- Visit
 - Overview
 - Make a Plan
 - Exhibits at the Museum
 - Tours & Group Reservations
 - Customize It
 - Venue
- About
 - Overview
 - This is CHM
 - Centers
 - Programs
 - News
 - Leadership
- Join & Give
 - Overview
 - Ways to Give
 - Donor Recognition
 - Institutional Partnerships
- Upcoming Events
- Hours & Directions
- Stories
- Subscribe Now
- Donate

Search for:

Or search the collection catalog →

- Exhibit
- Terms of Use

Timeline of Computer History

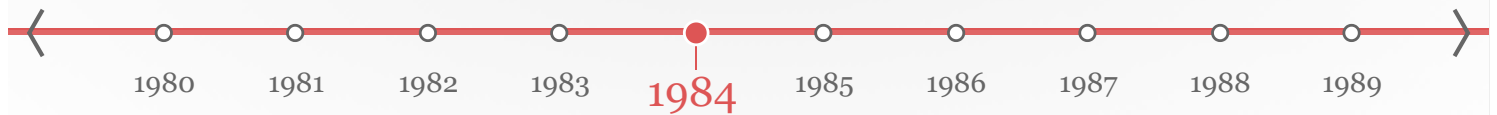
**By Year**

By Category

Search

1980s





Apple Macintosh 1984 commercial

Apple 1984 commercial debuts

• Popular Culture

Apple's "1984" commercial is aired during Super Bowl XVIII on January 22, 1984. Earlier that month, Apple's Macintosh computer was already the most anticipated personal computer release ever. As a part of the rollout, Apple commissioned director Ridley Scott to direct a one-minute commercial for the Mac. The commercial, which cost at least three hundred thousand dollars, was based partly on George Orwell's novel *1984*, with the role of Big Brother being filled by a man dictating to the masses from a giant screen, only to have a hammer-wielding woman run up and destroy the screen, freeing the people. The "Big Brother" motif was a veiled reference to IBM, Apple's main competitor. The commercial, shown only once, is considered a major turning point in the marketing of computers.

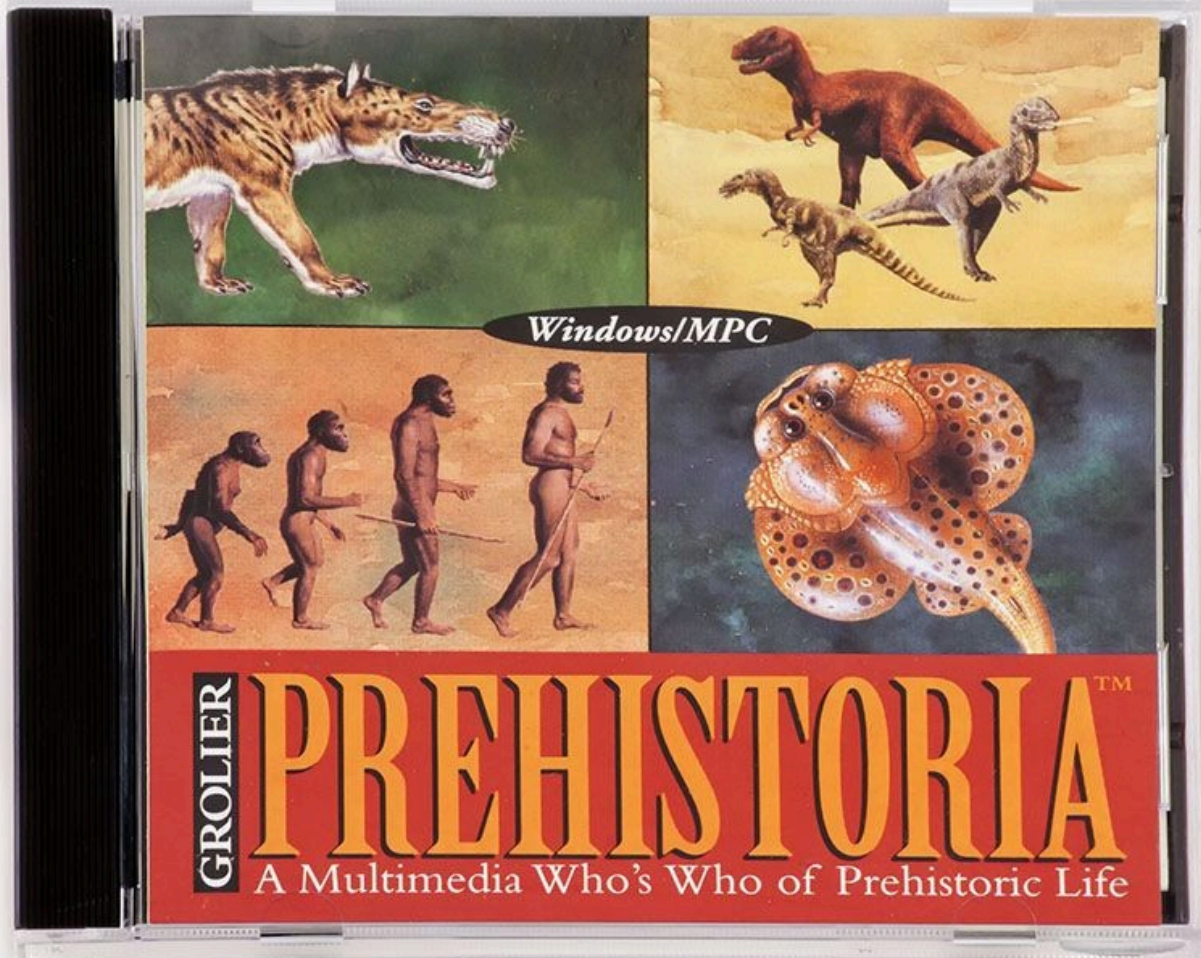


Apple Macintosh

Apple Computer launches the Macintosh

• Computers

Apple introduces the Macintosh with a television commercial during the 1984 Super Bowl, which plays on the theme of totalitarianism in George Orwell's book *1984*. The ad featured the destruction of "Big Brother" -- a veiled reference to IBM -- through the power of personal computing found in a Macintosh. The Macintosh was the first successful mouse-driven computer with a graphical user interface and was based on the Motorola 68000 microprocessor. Its price was \$2,500. Applications that came as part of the package included MacPaint, which made use of the mouse, and MacWrite, which demonstrated WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) word processing.



Grolier Prehistoria CD-ROM

CD-ROMs introduced, multimedia takes off

- Networking & The Web

For music, the CD (Compact Disk) had come out in 1981. For data, the big date is 1984 when Phillips introduces the CD-ROM (the last part stands for Read Only Memory). In the late '80s and early '90s, affordable computer CD-ROM drives will enable multimedia encyclopedias, games, novels and reference information on CD, often with hypertext links for navigation. This content will turn out to be basically ready-made for the Web, and many publishers will simply port it over directly. For content that uses a lot of video or images, CD-ROMs will remain an important adjunct to Web browsing throughout the early Web era.



CompacTape cartridge

CompacTape

• Memory & Storage

CompacTape is introduced. Originally developed by Digital Equipment Corporation for its VAX family of computers, the drive wrote 22 data tracks back and forth on 1/2-inch wide tape and originally held 92 MB of data. It replaced the 1960s-era DECtape, and its usage grew rapidly in the mid-1990s. It evolved into Digital Linear Tape (DLT), and was widely used in medium and large-sized Local Area Networks. The DLT technology was purchased by Quantum in 1994, and nearly 20 years after its introduction, "SuperDLT" could hold up to 800 GB of data.



Fujio Masuoka

Flash memory

 • *Memory & Storage*

Fujio Masuoka invents flash memory in 1984 while working for Toshiba. Capable of being erased and re-programmed multiple times, flash memory quickly gained a loyal following in the computer memory industry. Although Masuoka's idea won praise, he was unhappy with what he saw as Toshiba's failure to reward his work, and Masuoka quit to become a professor at Tohoku University. Bucking Japan's culture of company loyalty, he sued his former employer demanding compensation, settling in 2006 for a one-time payment of ¥87m (\$758,000).



Heathkit Hero Jr. robot

Hero Jr. robot kit

- AI & Robotics

Heathkit introduces the Hero Jr. home robot kit, one of several robots it sells at the time. Hero Jr. could roam hallways guided by sonar, play games, sing songs and even act as an alarm clock. The brochure claimed it “seeks to remain near human companions” by listening for voices.



IBM 3480 cartridge

IBM 3480 cartridge tape system

- Memory & Storage

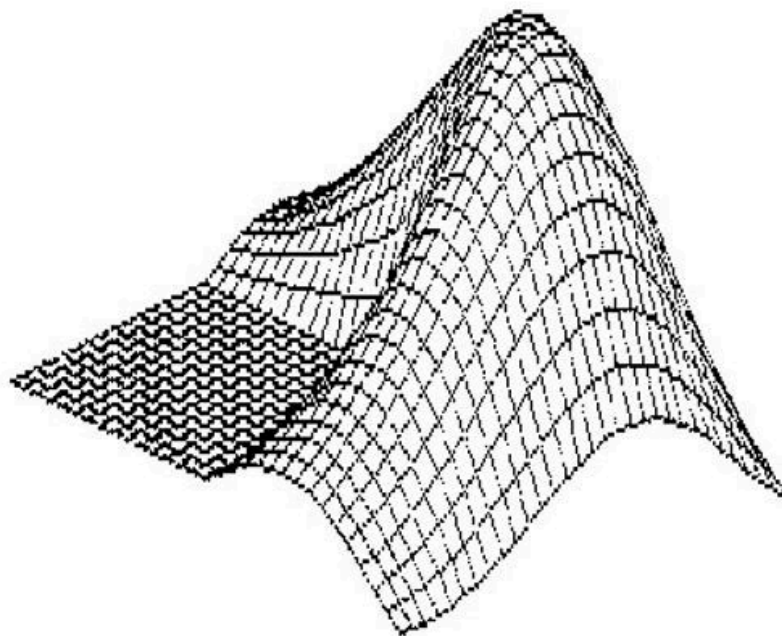
Announced in March 1984, IBM's new 3480 cartridge tape system sought to replace the traditional reels of magnetic tape in the computer center with a 4-inch by 5-inch cartridge that held more information (200MB) and offered faster access to it. IBM withdrew the system in 1989 but the new format caught on with other computer makers who began making 3480-compatible storage systems for several years after that, offering increased storage capacity in the same physical format.



IBM releases its PC Jr. and PC/AT

• Computers

The PC Jr. is marketed as a home computer but is too expensive and limited in performance to compete with many of the other machines in that market. Its "chiclet" keyboard was also criticized for poor ergonomics. While the PC Jr. sold poorly, the PC/AT sold in the millions. It offered increased performance and storage capacity over the original IBM PC and sold for about \$4,000. It also included more memory and accommodated high-density 1.2-megabyte 5 1/4-inch floppy disks.

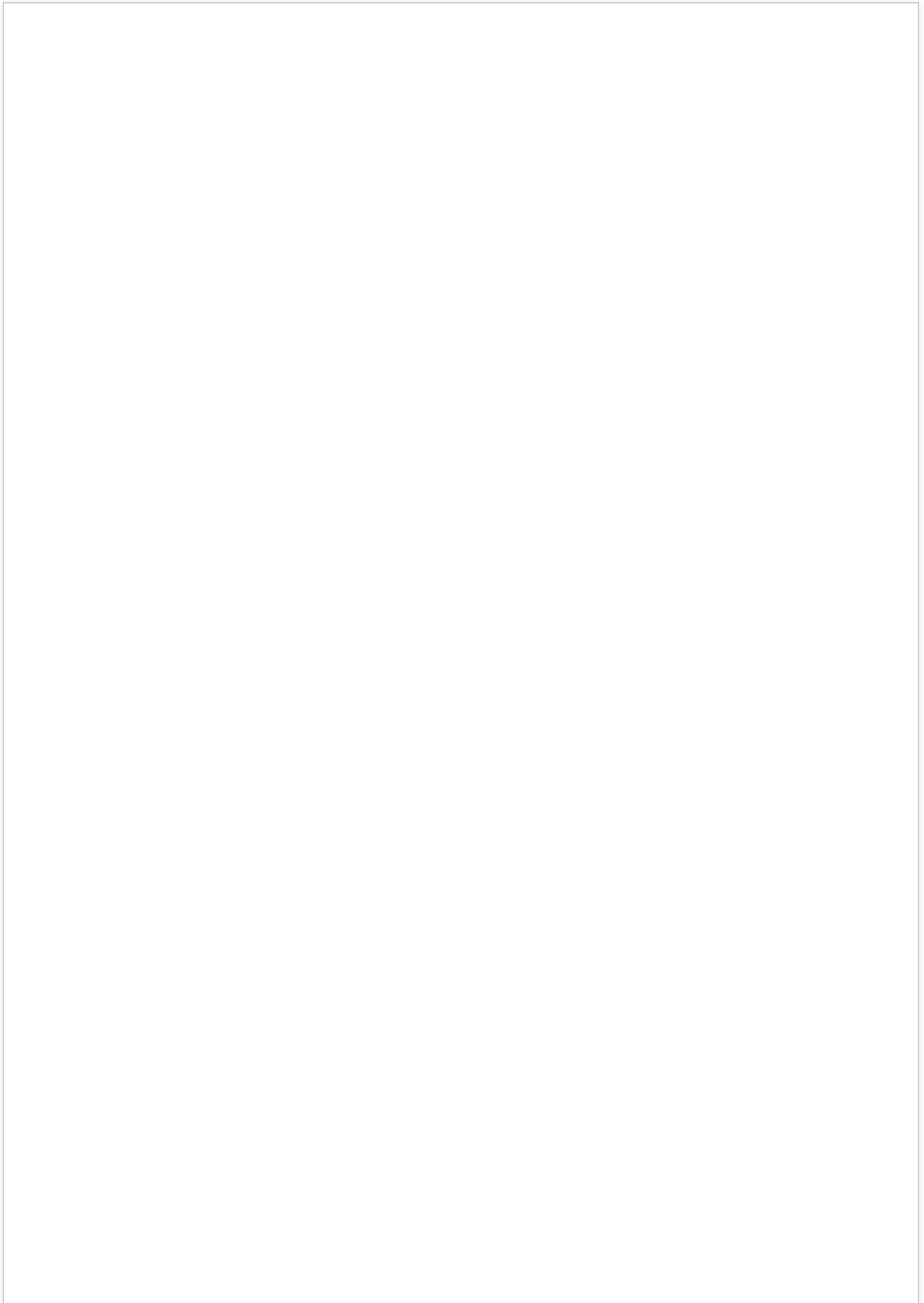


Early version of L-shaped membrane as generated Matlab

Matlab is released

• Software & Languages

Matlab (Matrix Laboratory), a high-level programming language, is released. It was designed by Professor Cleve Moler of the University of New Mexico and was initially intended to help students use mathematical software libraries without requiring knowledge of the scientific programming language FORTRAN. Its roots began in the academic community, but it spread quickly to many other areas of technical computing and is widely used today.





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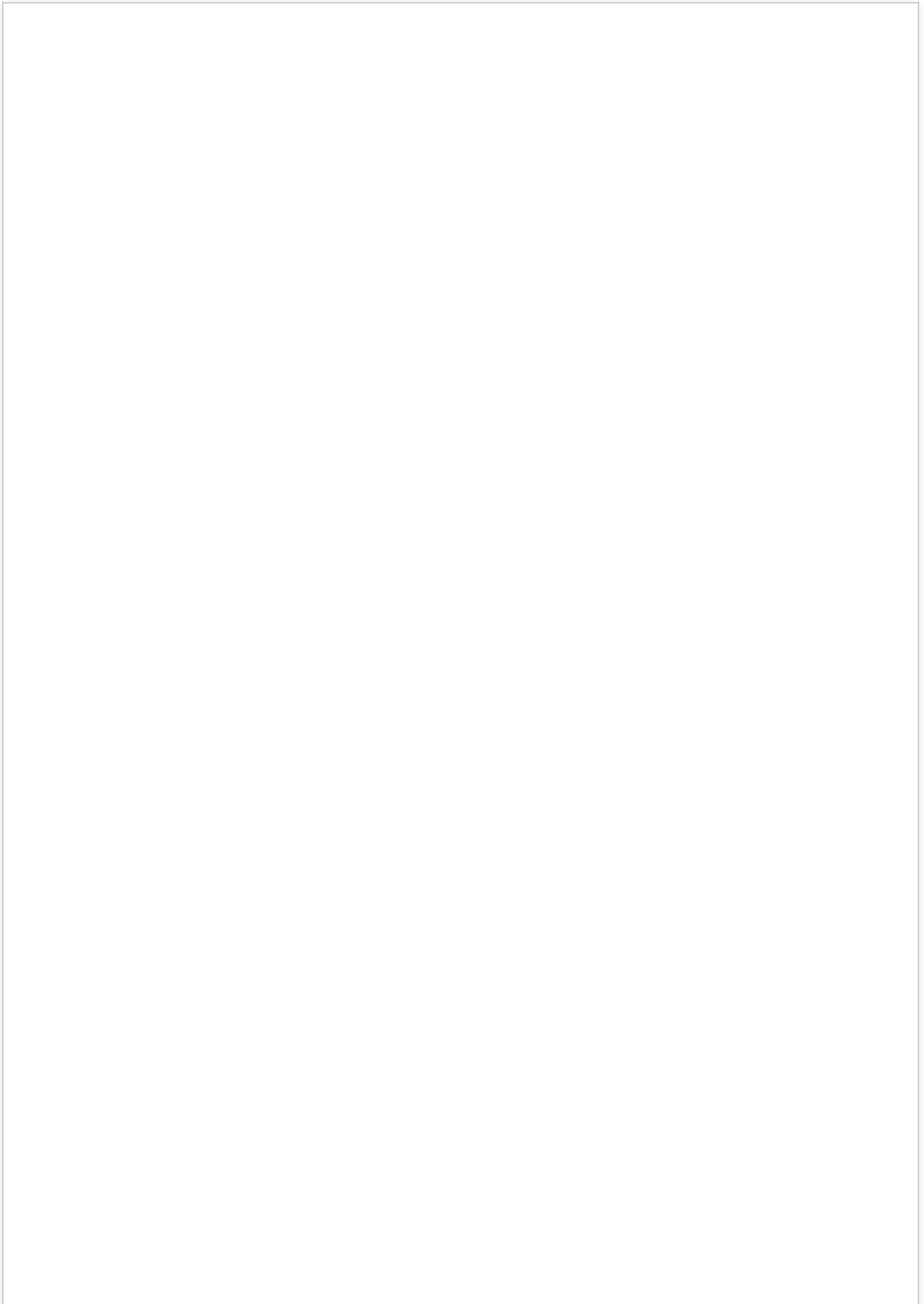
Part of the published OSI standard

OSI standard published: Protocol Wars

- *Networking & The Web*

Many agreed on the goal: to develop a global network of networks, or an "internet" in the parlance of the time. They don't agree on how. By the early 1980s, several different national and corporate protocols are competing with each other. OSI (Open Systems Interconnect) is the first with international backing, and support from the International Standards Organization as an official standard. Begun in 1977 by a member of a team that pioneered internetworking on the French CYCLADES network, OSI is officially published in 1984.

Digital Equipment's DECNET is a strong competitor. IBM's System Network Architecture (SNA) dominates the world of corporate computing, and will carry the majority of the world's networking traffic up through the late 1980s. The dark horse contender is ARPA's Internet Protocols (TCP/IP), defined only by a self-governing community of those who have access to this closed network, mostly U.S. military and computer science researchers.

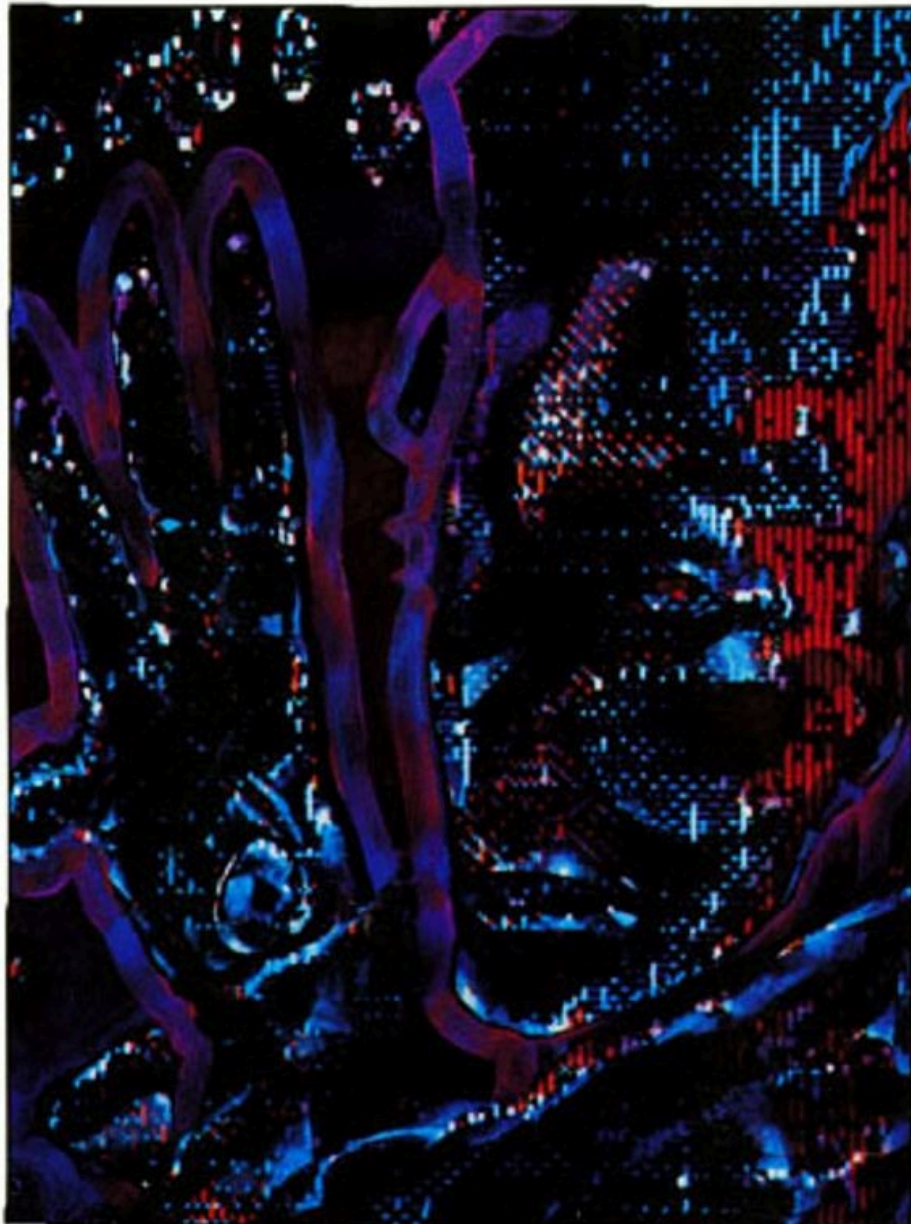




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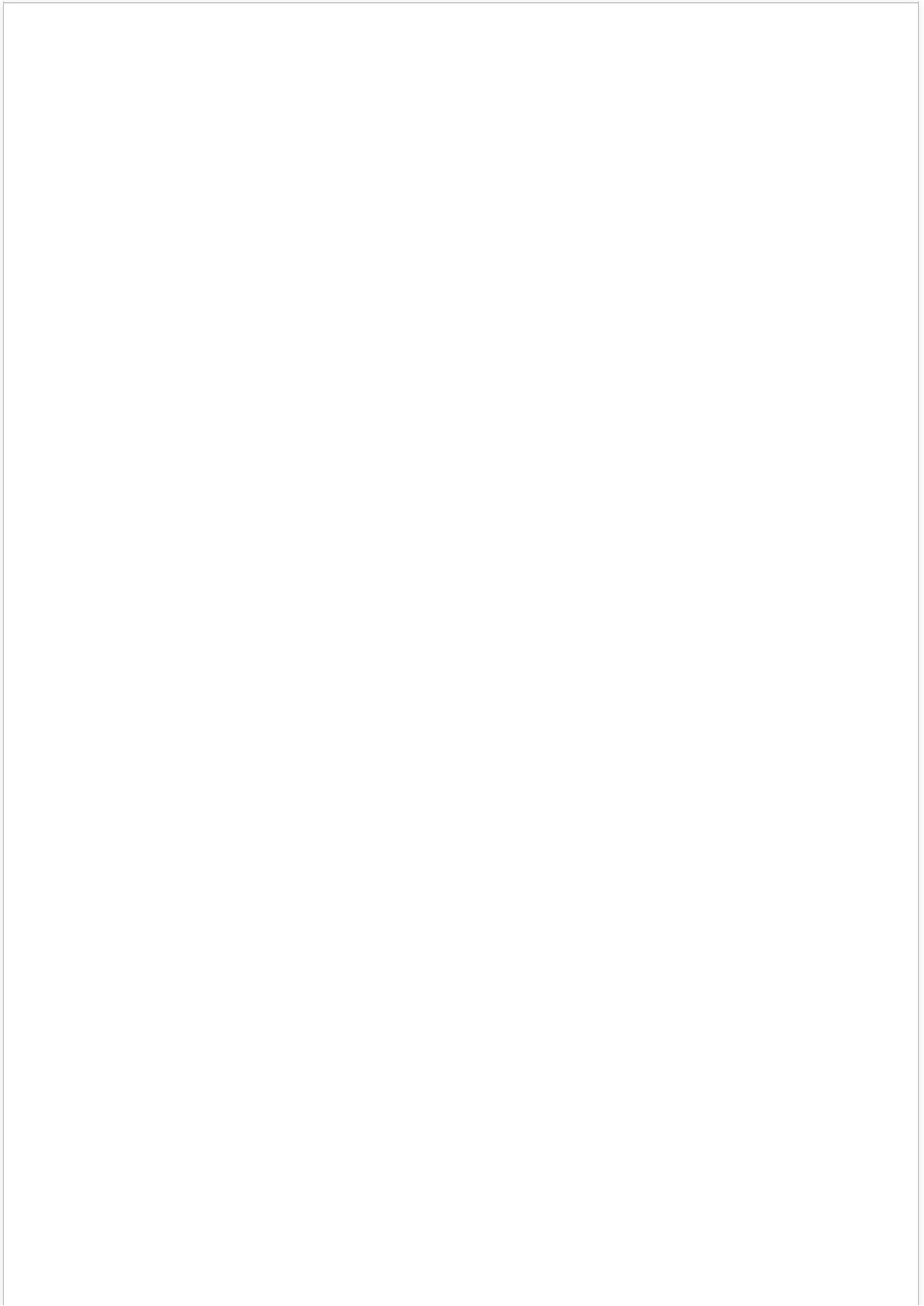
NEUROMANCER

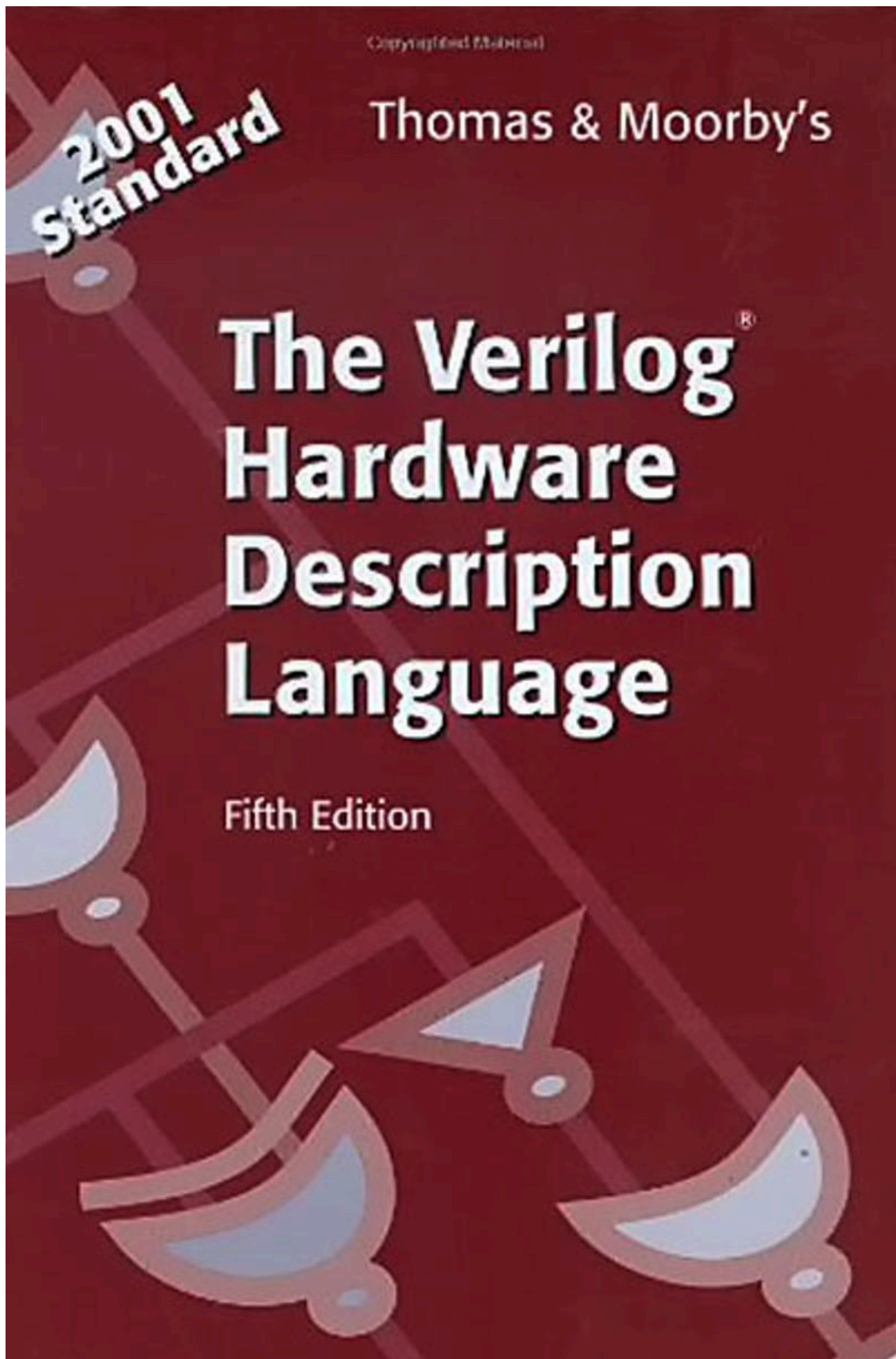
WILLIAM GIBSON

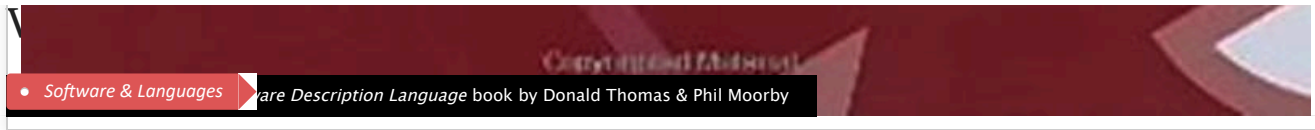




Gibson introduced cyberspace as: *"A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts... A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding..."*







Phil Moorby and Prabhu Goel of Gateway Design Automation create Verilog, a hardware description language that is used in the design of digital circuitry. Initially designed for Gateway's Verilog XL Design Logic Simulator, it was a vast improvement over methods being used by circuit designers at the time.

Gateway Design Automation was acquired in 1989 by Cadence Design, which released the Verilog Hardware Description Language (HDL) into the public domain the following year. Verilog is now one of two hardware description languages used in the world today to design complex digital systems.

Hours and Direction

Hours & Direction

1401 N Shoreline Blvd

Mountain View, CA 94034

+1 650-810-1010

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