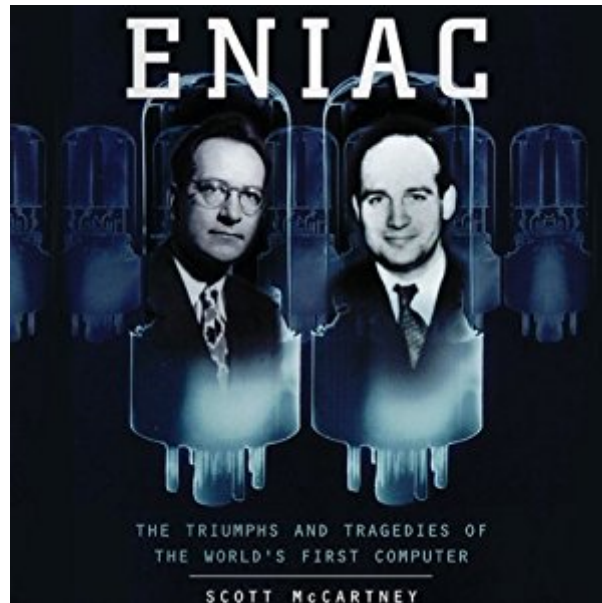


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# ENIAC: The Triumphs And Tragedies Of The World's First Computer



## Synopsis

ENIAC is the story of John Mauchly and Presper Eckert, the men who built the first digital, electronic computer. Their three-year race to create the legendary ENIAC is a compelling tale of brilliance and misfortune that has never been told before. It was the size of a three-bedroom apartment, weighed 30 tons, and cost nearly half a million dollars to build and \$650 an hour to run. But in 1945, this behemoth was the cutting edge in technology, and a herald of the digital age to come. This "little gem of a book" tells the story of this machine and the men who built it—as well as the secrecy, controversy, jealousy, and lawsuits that surrounded it—in a compelling real-life techno-thriller. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a book that needed to be written, and Scott has made it clear that John Mauchly and Pres Eckert did invent and build the first electronic computer. He does describe in rational details the betrayal of John and Pres by Herman Goldstine and John von Neumann. Both deserve a place in the history of the development of computers, but their ambitions overreached their accomplishments. Herman saw the value of their idea for an electronic computer and did sell the idea to Aberdeen to back it and pay for it. Penn professors wanted nothing to do with what they felt to a man would be a failure. Johnny von Neumann never even heard of it until its design was frozen and the machine was nearly built. Although he was a consultant to Aberdeen, nobody told him about ENIAC because its backers also felt it would probably flop. Herman informed him of it on a railroad platform and invited him to come see it. Von Neumann was immediately captivated by it.

When told meetings were already underway for a successor machine called the EDVAC (Electronic Digital Automatic Computer) he asked to join them. They met every couple of weeks. One time, von Neumann said he wouldn't be at the next meeting because he was also a consultant to Los Alamos and was needed there. One day, Goldstine came in with what appeared to be minutes of the EDVAC meetings sent back by von Neumann. EDVAC was a classified project and Herman was the security officer. Pres and John were not allowed to publish articles on either the ENIAC or EDVAC, but Herman managed to distribute von Neumann's notes widely in government and university circles. Von Neumann's note gave scant recognition to Pres or John or anybody, thus the paper appeared to be a product of von Neumann's fertile mind.

ENIAC is a wonderfully written book on the origin of the modern computer. As computers become a bigger part of our lives, the history of the computer becomes more important. It will become like studying ancient Greek and Roman philosophies to understand the origin of modern western democracies. But studying history too close to the events colors the "history" with too many personal bias. The story of the computer is no different. It has been fifty years since the development of the computer, and it is about time that someone with no personal motivation in the story relate the origins of the computer. It would seem that the authors of most of the previous books on the subject had a personal interest in the subject which makes their accounts suspect. Although there may be some technical "errors" in the book, I have seen far more errors in many books that claim to be written by an "expert," and I believe that Scott McCartney can be forgiven for any technical errors since this is not a technical book. The issue is: Are the facts substantially correct? When I look inside my computer, I do not see a rolling drum with capacitors mounted on it. The only thing that I see moving is the fan to keep it cool (a problem to ENIAC also). Nowhere on my computer do I need to "jot" down intermediate results to feed back into the computer. And finally, if I programmed the proper codes into memory that said: IF 2

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