

The PDP-6 Computer Delivered to UWA in May 1965

This computer was manufactured by Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) of Boston, USA, and bought by The University of Western Australia in May 1965.

It was a revolutionary computer at the time. Users submitted and controlled their tasks on the computer from remote “terminals” over data communications lines located remotely from the PDP-6, operating at 110 or 300 bits/second. Multiple users could be accommodated at the same time. This was the first “time-shared” computer to be delivered anywhere in the world. This characteristic led to it being used not only by many departments around the University (over telecommunication lines), but also by other educational institutions in WA and government departments (especially for engineering applications), who could also use the computer remotely over phone lines.



Photo (above) of PDP-6 computer in the Boston plant of DEC, prior to delivery to UWA.



The PDP-6 after delivery to UWA, 1st floor, Physics building (above). In photo, R to L: Ron Smart (DEC General Manager), Professor C J Birkett-Clews (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Dennis Moore (Computer Centre Director).



Photo (left) of part of the PDP-6 in the Telecommunications Museum at Wireless Hill, Melville. Now in storage at the Australian Computer Museum Society (WA Inc) – see <http://www.aceware.com.au/acms/default.htm>

Memory: core memory in 36-bit words (32,768 of them); each word could hold 2 instructions, or one 7-digit floating-point number, or five 7-bit characters (bytes).

Speed: cycle time was 2 microseconds, and it could perform addition and subtraction in 4 μ secs.

Later replaced at UWA by a compatible but bigger & faster PDP-10 (KA10), then by a bigger & faster PDP-10 (KL10).