

Microsoft

See how we helped Microsoft use a product anniversary to gain market share and garner media attention for one of its flagship software programs...



In 1993, when Microsoft hired The History Factory to develop a campaign celebrating the 10th anniversary of Word, desktop word processing was still a highly competitive landscape. Microsoft Word had just surpassed WordPerfect in number of users, though it was a dubious distinction considering Word had initially been given away for free in *PC Magazine*. WordPerfect could still claim it was the number-one selling word processing software.

Hoping to solidify Word's place as the true leader in desktop word processing, Microsoft asked us to develop an anniversary campaign to gain media attention and market share.

When the History Factory sent its research team to comb through Microsoft's archives in its Redmond, Washington headquarters, we uncovered original hand-drawn schematics, manuals, and other documentation detailing Word's early days, plus the original Microsoft Mouse prototype.

Using this archival material, The History Factory worked with David Allison at the Smithsonian Institute's Division of Computers, Information, and Society to place Microsoft Word Version 1.0 as the very first acquisition for the Institute's historic Software Collection. The acquisition elevated the 10-year-old product's status to that of a historic landmark and drew international media attention. Coverage appeared in *The New York Times*, Associated Press, *Seattle Times*, and countless other media outlets.

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The History Factory’s campaign also intersected with a major tipping point for product growth. During its anniversary year of 1993, Microsoft Word saw nearly a 20 percent jump in market share, definitively eclipsing WordPerfect, and by 1994 Word dominated nearly 65 percent of the word processing market.¹ By 1996 the number surpassed 90 percent.²

Our anniversary campaign research was repurposed into a beautifully packaged press kit called “10 Years of Word!,” which included 10 full-color, year-by-year leaflets chronicling the product innovations, awards, media exposure, and historical context of Microsoft Word’s story.

Although Microsoft was the first, within a year a number of other companies in the rapidly evolving software industry, including Apple, Hewlett-Packard, Intel, and Sun Microsystems, began official preservation efforts for their historic software programs and associated documentation.³

- 1 Stan Liebowitz, Ashbel Smith Professor of Economics, University of Texas at Dallas <http://www.utdallas.edu/~liebowitz/book/wordprocessor/word.html>
- 2 <http://lowendmac.com/musings/08mm/rise-of-microsoft-monopoly.html>
- 3 “Preserving software’s ‘ancient’ history,” George Tibbits, AP Business Writer, Associated Press, August 10, 1993

The History Factory is a heritage management firm that helps organizations discover, preserve and leverage their history to meet today’s business challenges.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
August 11, 1993
Software history must be preserved

Moreover, they want to make sure that work done on computers today can be retrieved long after these machines and their software are obsolete.

"Historians tell us ... if we don't make a move now, it will be lost," Stephens says. "Some of the early software is gone forever. Some of the early machines are gone forever. Unless we move now, it will disappear."

Microsoft, founded just 18 years ago, has started to assemble memorabilia, documents, photographs, early products and other artifacts of its history. Most major computer and software companies have similar archives or museums, he said.

Last month, Microsoft donated a copy of Microsoft Word Version 1.0, its first word-processing software program, to the Smithsonian. The program, all of 10 years old and long obsolete, was the first microcomputer software acquisition for the targeted Software Collection at the National Museum of American History.

Computers and software may be new, but they don't lose their historical importance, said David Allison, director of the Smithsonian's Division of Computers, Information and Society.

"It's hard to think of anything since World War II that has had more impact," Allison said.

The Smithsonian's collection has focused more on hardware, from abacuses and slide rules to calculating machines and early mainframe computers. But its interest in software has increased as that industry has blossomed.

"In the future people will need to look back and sample some of these things," Allison said.

"There's a lot of value in providing documentation of something that has become a major intellectual enterprise."

And that's a problem, he said. Software is an "art" that moves rapidly and out and that people document well.

Experts: Industry needs RAM
By GEORGE TIBBITS
AP Business Writer

REIDMUND, Wash. — Tim Stephens thinks the software industry needs more memory.

While most of his co-workers at Microsoft Corp. have their thoughts on the future and how to digitalize it, Stephens has his mind on the past. As manager of information resources for the software giant, he's trying to preserve its ancient history — way back to 1980, even 1973.

"The computer and software industry, if you will, have had an impact on this country and the world equal to the automobile or the telephone," Stephens says.

As that impact becomes more apparent, there's a growing interest by high-rich companies and historical societies to ensure information on the Information Age isn't forgotten.

WordPerfect **Word for DOS** **Word for Win** **WP for Win**

Year	WordPerfect (%)	Word for DOS (%)	Word for Win (%)	WP for Win (%)
1986	20	10	0	0
1987	30	15	0	0
1988	40	20	0	0
1989	45	20	0	0
1990	45	20	10	0
1991	45	20	20	10
1992	45	20	30	10
1993	45	20	45	10
1994	40	15	60	10
1995	30	10	75	10
1996	20	5	85	10
1997	15	5	90	10

