

## History of Control Data Corporation

The Control Data Corporation was incorporated in Minnesota on 8 July 1957 to produce high-speed, scientific computers. The company was headed by William C. Norris, who had been central to the success of Engineering Research Associates, Inc., a St. Paul electronics firm that was responsible for producing Minnesota's first digital computer. Control Data grew to become one of the top ten computer manufacturers in the world; it produced among the fastest computers of their day, including the CDC 6600, designed by Seymour Cray and generally considered the first supercomputer. The company became known for its aggressive acquisition of other firms, culminating in the purchase of Commercial Credit Corporation in 1967. The company continued its growth until the 1980s when a number of factors began deteriorate Control Data's position in the industry. In 1986, William Norris resigned as CEO. By 1992 the company had split into two firms: Ceridian Corporation and Control Data Systems, Inc.

In 1957 Control Data Corporation was founded in Minneapolis and in less than 14 years grew to become one of the world's leading computer companies with revenues topping \$1 billion and eventually more than \$5 billion. A Celebration of The Legacy of Control Data Corporation will take place on Friday, October 12, 2007 at the Minneapolis Convention Center (1301 Second Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN). This day-long event will feature seminars that journey through how Control Data's supercomputers and its management philosophy impacted and still influence the world today. In addition, a rarely seen exhibit of computer artifacts will be on display. The public is invited to attend this free event. Almost seven hundred people have already pre-registered. To learn more about the event visit: [www.mspress.com/ControlData50YearCelebration](http://www.mspress.com/ControlData50YearCelebration).

An investment in Control Data of \$10,000 in 1957 would realize a return of \$6.3 million by 1968. In the words of founder William C. Norris, "We opened the doors of Control Data in 1957 in the face of what some might have seen as insurmountable odds. We were up against entrenched competitors with vastly superior resources. [Yet] we succeeded to a remarkable degree."

Indeed that degree of success was such that in 1963, IBM's chairman said that he failed to understand how IBM lost their leadership position in supercomputer technology to CDC, "...a company with 34 people, including the janitor." By the 1970s when "green" was still only a color Control Data was anticipating today's focus on alternative energy sources. Its world distribution center in St. Paul used solar power. It backed an innovative small company, Jacob's Wind Energy, which created wind farms from Hawaii to the Caribbean Islands, including some of the earliest wind farms in California. It partnered with its major electric utility company to find innovative ways to cut power consumption, especially at peak periods.

According to CDC's former CEO, Robert M. Price, "Control Data was the Apple Computer of its time; innovation was at the core of Control Data's DNA. There were more than 100 spin off and other derivative companies ranging from Arbitron, which measures radio audiences, to Digital Biometrics, which builds digital fingerprinting equipment. Despite the extreme turbulence in the social, political and economic environments of the late 1960s and 1970s, Control Data achieved a greatness few companies ever realize."