



Before the Computer: IBM, NCR, Burroughs, & Remington Rand & the Industry They Created, 1865-1956

James W. Cortada

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Before the Computer fully explores the data processing industry in the United States from its nineteenth-century inception down to the period when the computer became its primary tool. As James Cortada describes what was once called the "office appliance industry," he challenges our view of the digital computer as a revolutionary technology. Cortada interprets reliance on computers as a development within an important segment of the American economy that was earlier represented largely by such instruments as typewriters, tabulating machines, adding machines, and calculators. He also describes how many of the practices of the office appliance industry evolved into those of the computer world. Drawing on previously unavailable industry archives, the author adds to our understanding of IBM's early history and offers short corporate histories of firms that include NCR, Burroughs, and Remington Rand. Focusing on the United States but also including comparative material on Europe and Asia, Before the Computer will be a unique source of knowledge about the companies that built office equipment and their enormous impact on economic life.

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