What have we lost

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What have we lost

- This is not intended as a pessimistic presentation – quite the reverse
- Richard Nelson has for years been encouraging the HHC community to record everything.
- Jake Schwartz and Eric Smith have been doing just that.
- My comments are on what has not been saved and lessons on what could be done to avoid future loss. A lot is based on my personal experiences.

Lessons from the past

- This is not a new problem. The most famous example of a loss is the great library of Alexandria. Estimated to have held over 30,000 volumes, even its catalog was mostly lost as it was damaged and not supported.
- Yet a lot of it was copied and survived.
- Papyrus manuscripts found in Egyptian deserts sometimes get used for fuel – paper burns so well and keeps you warm.
- Many libraries and artefacts are lost or damaged – or reused, such as the Coliseum in Rome where I was last week.

The HP archive

- The fire that destroyed the HP archive is probably the most spectacular loss our group is keenly aware of.
- Lessons: Keep backups. There are other HP archives, including one in Scotland.
- What could we do? Not much in this case, but we applaud HP's work with a professional archiving company as described at HHC2025.

The HP user library

- HP passed it on to Solve and Integrate. Eric Smith and I visited and offered to take the library from them once it was no longer viable for them. When we asked again after two years they said they had put the library in landfill.
- Lessons: Stay in contact with people who have valuable material.
- What could we do? We should have chased them regularly, on the other hand they had agreed to give us the material but then they junked it.

The European HP user library UPLE

- UPLE had programs in many languages and HP looked for clubs working in those languages. Only HPCC expressed interest and HP offered us only the English language HP-41 part. HP shipped it to HPCC. We picked the most interesting programs and an enthusiastic member took them to send copies when asked. He became ill and his family took the opprtunity to throw away that junk! I still have the less interesting programs in my attic. Everything was lost for all other models.
- Lessons: Keep spare copies.
- What could we do? Stay in regular contact with anyone holding valuable material.

Rare publications

- Eric and Jake continue to look for copies of publications missing from their collections. Some EduCalc issues or special issues of the PPC Journal and of Datafile are good examples of items that were not considered important and were discarded.
- Lessons: Keep copies of everything.
- What could we do? Keep asking if anyone has a copy. Maybe someone here today?

Hardware

- Someone among us has almost every HP calculator ever sold. However prototypes and models that never reached market are of great interest and not all are in our hands. We do have a few HP-95C units but I do not know of anyone with a prototype HP38G with orange rubber feet. Richard had a wonderful prototype HP-41 competitor (from National Semiconductor?) at the PPC club house but Emmett Ingram kept it and it has not been recovered.
- Lessons: Grab any prototype you can.
- What could we do? Ask HP or now Moravia to let us keep prototypes. Or just keep them anyway?

Hardware

- Do you remember the Wall of Fame at HP Corvallis? When they were repurposing the buildings, HP offered the whole lot to a club – HPCC in particular as we continued to be active. I suggested that it would be hard to ship to the UK so it should stay at home in Corvallis. Later I learned they had junked the wall of fame.
- Lessons: Grab anything you can!
- What could we do? Do not refuse offers. Visit the smaller wall of fame at HP Boeblingen?

Hardware

- The photographer in Corvallis who took publicity photos of new HP models kept the units he was given to photograph. Eventually he threw them all away. I visited him a month later offering him hard cash for them, and he said his wife had told him someone would come asking for them.
- Lessons: Don’t delay getting in touch with anyone who has something interesting.
- What could we do? Fortunately he only had shells, not working units, so let’s not worry too much.

Firmware

- Moravia have recently recreated the HP15C and hP16C. They used HP's original firmware – modified to run on modern hardware, which requires beta testing. But for copyright reasons they do not use third party (Eric Smith's?) emulators. So if a model's firmware is lost then Moravia cannot recreate it. At present this is the case with the HP42S.
- Lessons: Hope that developers kept a copy at home.
- What could we do? Keep looking for a former HP employee who had the HP42S firmware - and maybe search HP's archives.

People

- The most valuable asset we have is all of you here in this room – and other people! Look after yourselves! The death of Roger Hill who was with us right up to last year makes this particularly poignant.
- Lessons: Yet we all fall ill and get old. Value our friends while they are still with us.
- What could we do? Remember Roger Hill – over to Richard in the next presentation.

RIP Roger Hill