Correspondence: Harnessing technology to meet increasing case needs

In a letter to the Prime Minister, the Council for Science and Technology (CST) explores how technology could help address the specific challenges affecting care and support. CST make 4 recommendations for government and industry to consider.

Recording of the week: Britain's first supercomputer

This week's selection comes from Tom Lean, Project Interviewer for An Oral History of British Science.

It has been 55 years since the commissioning of Atlas at the University of Manchester in 1962, one of the world's very first supercomputers. Developed largely by the University of Manchester and Ferranti, the enormous machine was probably the second most powerful computer at the time and pioneered a number of innovations in hardware and software. Capable of processing about a million instructions a second and with over 670 kilobytes of memory, Atlas had as much computing power as several smaller machines, albeit far less than the simplest desktop machine today. It was said that when Atlas went offline, Britain lost half its computing power. Yet despite this awesome potential, only three Atlas computers were ever built. As Atlas's lead hardware designer Professor David Edwards recalled for An Oral History Of British Science, it was rather difficult convincing the sceptics that Britain even needed a machine that was so powerful:

We only need one computer for the country_Dai Edwards (C1379/11)

The Atlas computer at the University of Manchester, 1963 (Iain MacCallum)

Visit the library's Voices of Science web resource to explore 100 life stories about environmental science, British technology and engineering from 1940 to the present.

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Recording of the week: watching Britain’s nuclear bomb tests

This week's selection comes from Tom Lean, Project Interviewer for An Oral History of British Science.

On 8th November 1957, hundreds of British military and scientific personnel gathered at Christmas Island, a remote speck of land in the Pacific Ocean. They were there for Operation Grapple X, the first successful test of a British hydrogen bomb. At 1.8 megatons, the blast was about a hundred and forty times more powerful than the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, and signified Britain's mastery of the secrets of thermonuclear power. Amongst the witnesses to the mushroom cloud rising above Christmas Island was a 35 year old technician named Frank Raynor. As he recalls, in perhaps something of an understatement, it was “quite impressive” to watch:

Frank Raynor_C1379/76

The tests were also witnessed by Laurance Reed, a naval officer on HMS Warrior. He describes a shipboard atmosphere of excitement, anxiety and awe when the first bomb was dropped.

Laurence Reed_C1503/37

The full interview with Frank Raynor can be found in the Oral History of British Science collection on British Library Sounds.

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Correspondence: Science and technology for economic benefit across the UK

Advice to the Prime Minister on how the government can encourage science and technology to deliver economic benefits that are shared across the UK.

Correspondence: Science and technology for economic benefit across the UK

In this letter to the Prime Minister, CST outlines 7 proposals that the government and others can carry out to deliver economic benefits across the UK. The proposals seek to build on the UK’s science and technology strengths.

The proposals include:

- encouraging local economies to identify the range of science and technology related assets they already have
- maximising their existing assets
- creating the right conditions for further investment
- encouraging greater innovation in businesses across the UK’s sectors and regions