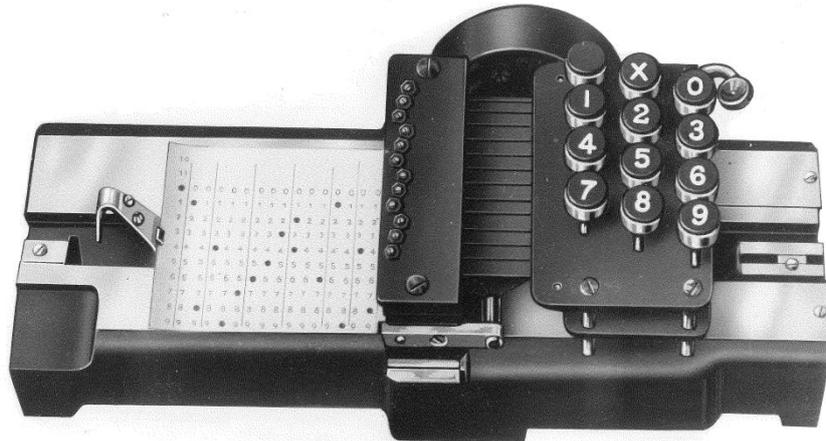


The First Informationexplosion
The Role of Punch Card Technology in the Office Rationalization
in Germany, 1910-1939



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Summary:

The ebook places punch card technology in the context of the office machine industry in Germany and discusses the exciting relationship between the two competitors on the market for punch card technology, Dehomag and Powers, in Germany, 190–1939. The punch card technology was based on electric–mechanical machines. The question is whether the leading role of the United States in the use of office machines frequently cited by Anglo-American authors really applies. How punch card technology in Germany has advanced from its beginnings is discussed under the heading of rationalisation strategies. The technologies of the punching machine, the sorting machine and the tabulating machine are shown and an example of tabulating a sales table is given. At the example of

a chocolate producer a punched card is discussed of how the various products of the chocolate plant are organized on the card.

The keyword of the information explosion will be filled in here. Many examples are given how the use of punched card technology expands the demand for information. The paper gives evidence for the suggestion of Theo Pirker that formalization of information induces the growth of the information department in enterprises so that the rationalization is absorbed by expansion. This process is labeled as information explosion and the paper portrays the first information explosion in history induced by punch card technology. On the basis of the sources, it can be demonstrated in this ebook that the use of punch card technology gave rise to more and more fields of application in the field of commercial data processing. This expansive behavior of information technology can be described by the term information explosion. Just as in the fission of the uranium atom 235, a splitting neutron leads to the emission of two more neutrons, triggering a chain reaction with explosion, the introduction of punch card technology in one field creates a hunger for formalized information in neighboring fields and a further expansion of punch card-based analysis.

It is interesting to note that the initial information explosion occurred in the field of commercial data processing, not in the field of scientific technical data processing. Moreover, punch card technology in the first half of the 20th century was characterized by merely slow technical progress, so that the benefits of information processing had not increased through rapid technical progress, as was seen in the second half of the 20th century with microelectronics. The ebook focusses on evidence of information explosion in Germany. But the arguments apply to other countries as well. Two sources are cited from Bethlehem Steel Work in United States.

The ebook concludes with an overview of how punched card technology fits into the broader debate about the feminisation of the office.

Entries of the table of content are Introductory remarks, State of the literature, Office machines in the context of punch card technology, The office machinery industry in Germany, The liquefaction of information with the typewriter, Sales systems for office machines, Office machines as precision mechanics, Did the USA have a leading role in office machines?, The punched card, The tabulating machine, The sorting machine, The Adders, The Duopoly of Hollerith and Powers, The Duopoly of Dehomag and Powers in Germany, Rationalisation strategies and the information explosion, The feminization of the office and the work of the perforators, Outlook.

For long text see eBook "The first Informationexplosion", Tolino Media 2022.