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## WELCOME BOOST TO THE HERITAGE OF LEO, THE WORLD'S FIRST BUSINESS COMPUTER

### Funding agreed for new Land LEO archivist post at the Centre for Computing History, Cambridge



Ralph and Frank Land with a montage of LEO photographs from the archive

Funding for a new Land LEO Archivist post has provided a much-needed boost to the preservation and promotion of the history of LEO, the first computer in the world dedicated to business, which began operations in 1951.

A grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund first funded a project to conserve, catalogue, and digitise the LEO collection, which is housed at the Centre for Computing History in Cambridge (CCH). That project was finished in 2023 and made an excellent start, but there is more to do as the archive continues to grow in both size and historical significance. The new post, which is funded for two years by the AIT Trust, allows archival work to continue on this unique and important collection.

The post is to be named in honour of two remarkable pioneers in the history of computing, Frank and Ralph Land. Now 96 years old, the twins both worked on LEO in its very early days, starting as programmers and moving on to more senior roles. Ralph became Export Manager selling LEO machines abroad, including behind the Iron Curtain - for which he was awarded a CBE in 1995 and Frank moved on from LEO to become an academic at his alma mater, the London School of Economics, becoming the first holder of a chair in Information Technology. Frank was awarded an OBE in 2019. After retirement both brothers have devoted themselves to ensuring that LEO's role in computing history is widely recognised.

Catherine Griffiths, Trustee of the AITT said 'The Trust is proud to fund this post in honour of Frank and Ralph Land. Their involvement has spanned the whole history of LEO, the first commercial computing system. This has triggered worldwide development and has increasingly been recognised as a pivotal stage in the use of computers to serve business and society'

Peter Byford, Chair of the LEO Computers Society added 'This is very welcome news. There is a large collection of LEO documentation at CCH which has been donated mainly by people who worked on LEO computers or by their families. It is important that this continues to be properly catalogued and digitised. This will enable researchers to investigate the LEO story, which is an important element in the World's history of business computing.'

Lisa McGerty CEO at The Centre for Computing History, where the Land Archivist will be based, said 'LEO's story really is remarkable and it has been a privilege for us to work with some of the surviving pioneers in cataloguing and digitising the LEO collection. The first LEO computer was an astounding feat not just of engineering but also of vision by a company that had the foresight to recognise just how computers could revolutionise business at a time when computers as we now know them didn't exist. Everyone should know about it and the AIT Trust's generosity will allow us to continue work on this incredible collection.'

END

**The LEO Computers Society**, a charity with more than 750 members worldwide, sees its role as guardian of the history of LEO, recognising its special place in the history of computing. In 2018, the Society formed a partnership with the Centre for Computing History in Cambridge, and together we worked on a National Lottery Heritage Fund project called 'Swiss Rolls, Tea and the Electronic Office.' Visit [www.leo-computers.org.uk](http://www.leo-computers.org.uk)

**The Centre for Computing History** is a charitable museum with a strong focus on learning. Since opening in Cambridge in August 2013, the Centre has helped people experience and understand how tech has shaped our modern world and revolutionised the way we live, work and play through interactive displays and exhibitions, a learning programme, events, and an astonishing collection of computers old and new. Visit [www.computinghistory.org.uk](http://www.computinghistory.org.uk). Follow [@computermuseum](https://twitter.com/computermuseum)

The NLHF-funded project created valuable resources available free including:  
a large digital LEO archive at CCH, (accessible online at <https://www.computinghistory.org.uk/pages/50348/Welcome-toLEO-the-first-business-computer> ),

an award-winning short documentary film (on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rzu68nRVwtE> ), an award-winning online interactive app recreating LEO I (<https://www.leo1.co.uk> ) and a selection of teaching materials aligned to the National Curriculum.

**The AIT Trust** supports its academic journals founded by Frank Land and Igor Aleksander. See <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/jin>

**To request hi-res photographs, please contact Lisa McGerty, [leo@computinghistory.org.uk](mailto:leo@computinghistory.org.uk)**