



SERVICES [Silicon Valley Store](#) | [Events](#) | [Tools](#) | [Help](#) | [Site Index](#)

## News

### Silicon Valley News

- [Breaking News](#)
- [Latest Headlines](#)
- [AP Technology](#)
- [Reuters Technology](#)
- [Reuters Internet](#)
- [In-Depth News](#)
- [Viewpoints](#)
- [Special Reports](#)
- [Tech News Archive](#)

- [Good Morning SV](#)
- [Asia Tech](#)
- [Israel Tech](#)
- [Tech Stocks](#)
- [Internet Daily](#)
- [Australia Tech](#)

- [Dan Gillmor/eJournal](#)
- [Dan Gillmor/Column](#)
- [Stocks comment](#)
- [Wiretap](#)
- [SV Dispatches](#)
- [Term Sheet](#)
- [Modem Driver](#)
- [The Swing Shift](#)
- [E-Business Buzz](#)
- [The Money Manual](#)
- [Work in Progress](#)
- [Tech Test Drive](#)
- [Games](#)
- [Family Tech](#)
- [Solutions](#)
- [Minister of Info](#)
- [Moira Gunn](#)
- [Future of Work](#)

- [Companies db](#)
- [VC Survey](#)
- [Salary Survey](#)
- [Company Watch](#)
- [Apple](#)
- [Cisco](#)
- [HP](#)
- [Intel](#)
- [Microsoft](#)
- [Sun](#)
- [Silicon Valley 150](#)
- [Legal Library](#)

- [Motley Fool](#)
- [Investors Network](#)



Posted at 10:49 p.m. PDT Thursday, July 13, 2000

## Short Takes: Archiving the history of the Mac

ALEX SOOJUNG-KIM PANG is project manager for SiliconBase, an online archive of Silicon Valley historic resources currently under construction in the Department of Special Collections at Stanford University's Cecil Green Library.

A new SiliconBase exhibit, "Making the Macintosh," covering the early development of the Apple Macintosh computer, is scheduled to go live on the Web on Tuesday at <http://library.stanford.edu/mac>. Recently Pang spoke with Mercury News Staff Writer David Plotnikoff about the Macintosh project.

**Q** Aside from historians and Mac aficionados, why should anyone today care about the history of the Mac? What's the broader cultural significance?

**A** The Macintosh is very important as a cultural artifact. One of the things we're doing in the exhibit is examining its cultural history, the ways people sought to turn it from a tool into an icon. This was the first computer that took its marketing cues from other kinds of consumer goods.

Bringing a high-tech product into the world through things like sneak previews and elaborate marketing campaigns at many different levels from Newsweek and Rolling Stone on down to newsletters -- this was something that had never been done before. It set a kind of pattern for high-tech marketing that remains to this day. Think about how many dot-coms bought Super Bowl ads last year.

**Q** Any surprises in the papers you reviewed?

**A** One of the really interesting things is the amount of time (the early developers) spend talking about the Macintosh almost as a network computer. It's very striking in the year 2000 to read how the Macintosh could be used to connect to databases, to do e-mail. The idea that a personal computer was going to connect you to other personal computer users is very striking.

**Q** So what fresh material are you bringing to the discussion? What do you have to say that hasn't already come out in the myriad books and articles that have been published on the birth of the Mac?

**A** There were about 10 people who have gotten an awful lot of attention. But by late '83 and early '84 there were about 100 people working on the project. One of the things I'm trying to do here is record the contributions of the other 90.

Contact David Plotnikoff at [plotnikoff@sjmercury.com](mailto:plotnikoff@sjmercury.com) or (408) 920-5867.

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[TOP OF PAGE](#)

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