

Re: OT: Path dependent keyboard

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.econ/2005-04/msg00201.html>

- *From:* Robert Vienneau <rvien@xxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Wed, 13 Apr 2005 20:34:17 -0400
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In article

<ddfr-176D66.11492413042005@xx>, David Friedman <ddfr@xx> wrote:

> In article <rvien-F9D963.05165413042005@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>,
> Robert Vienneau <rvien@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

>> In article <1113364550.332154.208470@xx>,
>> skearney@xxxxxxxxxxx wrote:

>>> It has been said that the most common letters were taken off the home
>>> row of the first typewriter keyboard to slow down the typist and
>>> prevent jamming.

>> That's a claim that two things have been said. As far as I know,
>> the second is true.

> The statement that "it has been said" is I think true, but not terribly
> interesting.

I certainly don't care what David Friedman finds interesting, except
as for data for the sociology of "knowledge".

I don't see any claim about "slowing down the typist" in the story
below, which, as far as I know, is true. I do see a claim about
"reduc[ing] the frequency of typebar clashes". As far as I know,
that could have something to do with whether successive keys are nearby.

"Many defects in the working of Sholes' 'Type Writer' stood in the
way of its immediate commercial introduction. Because the printing
point was located underneath the paper carriage, it was quite
invisible to the operator. 'Non-visibility' remained an unfortunate
feature of this and other up-stroke machines long after the
flat paper carriage of the original design had been supplanted by
arrangements closely resembling the modern continuous roller-platen.
Consequently, the tendency of the typebars to clash and jam if struck
in rapid succession was a particularly serious defect. When a typebar
stuck at or near the printing point, every succeeding stroke merely
hammered the same impression onto the paper, resulting in a string of

Re: OT: Path dependent keyboard

repeated letters that would be discovered only when the typist bothered to raise the carriage to inspect what had been printed.

Urged onward by the bullying optimism of James Densmore, the promoter-venture capitalist whom he had taken into the partnership in 1867, Sholes struggled for the next six years to perfect 'the machine.' From the inventor's trial-and-error rearrangements of the original model's alphabetical key ordering, in an effort to reduce the frequency of typebar clashes, there emerged a four-row, upper case keyboard approaching the modern QWERTY standard. In March 1873, Densmore succeeded in placing the manufacturing rights for the substantially transformed Sholes-Glidden 'Type Writer' with E. Remington and Sons, the famous arms makers. Within the next few months QWERTY's evolution was virtually completed by Remington's mechanics. Their many modifications included some finetuning of the keyboard design in the course of which the 'R' wound up in the place previously allotted to the period mark '.' Thus were assembled into one row all the letters which a salesman would need to impress customers, by rapidly pecking out the brand name: TYPE WRITER.

...Freed from the legacy of typebars, commercially successful typewriters such as the Hammond and the Blickensderfer first sported a keyboard arrangement which was more sensible than QWERTY. The so-called 'Ideal' keyboard placed the sequence DHIATENSOR in the home row, these being ten letters with which one may compose over 70 percent of the words in the English language."

— Paul David, "Clio and the Economics of QWERTY"

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Mostly economics: <<http://www.dreamscape.com/rvien/#PublicationsForFun>>

r c

v s a Whether strength of body or of mind, or wisdom, or
i m p virtue, are found in proportion to the power or wealth
e a e of a man is a question fit perhaps to be discussed by
n e . slaves in the hearing of their masters, but highly
@ r c m unbecoming to reasonable and free men in search of
d o the truth. — Rousseau

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- **Follow-Ups:**

- ◆ **Re: OT: Path dependent keyboard**

◇ From: skearney

- **References:**

- ◆ **OT: Path dependent keyboard**

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◇ From: Robert Vienneau

- ◆ **Re: OT: Path dependent keyboard**

Re: OT: Path dependent keyboard

◇ *From:* David Friedman

- Prev by Date: ***Re: Will record trade deficits...***
- Next by Date: ***Re: USA Govt Cannot Stop Death***
- Previous by thread: ***Re: OT: Path dependent keyboard***
- Next by thread: ***Re: OT: Path dependent keyboard***
- Index(es):
 - ◆ ***Date***
 - ◆ ***Thread***