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Computer Love: Replicating Social Order Through Early Computer Dating Systems

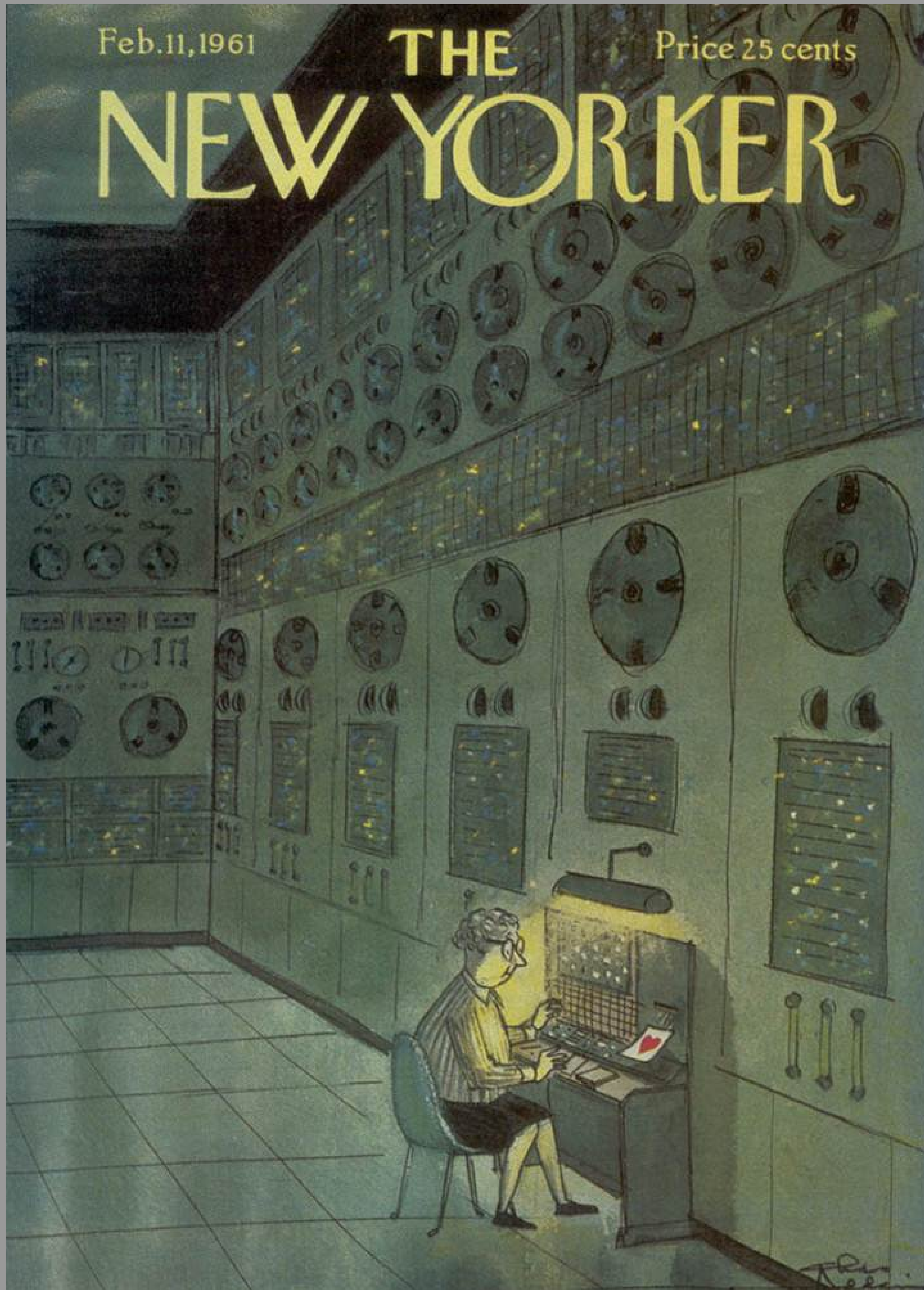
Mar Hicks

Abstract: Although online dating has only recently become culturally acceptable and widespread, using computers to make romantic matches has a long history. But rather than revolutionizing how people met and married, this article shows how early computerized dating systems re-inscribed conservative social norms about gender, race, class, and sexuality. It explores the mid-twentieth century origins of computer dating and matchmaking in order to argue for the importance of using sexuality as a lens of analysis in the history of computing. Doing so makes more visible the heteronormativity that silently structures much of our technological infrastructure and helps bring other questions about gender, race, and class into the foreground. The article connects this history to other examples in the history of technology that show how technological systems touted as "revolutionary" often help entrenched structural biases proliferate rather than breaking them down. The article also upsets the notion that computer dating systems can simply be understood as a version of the "boys and their toys" narrative that has dominated much of computing history. It shows that, contrary to what was previously believed, the first computerized dating system in either the US or the UK was run by a woman.

Introduction

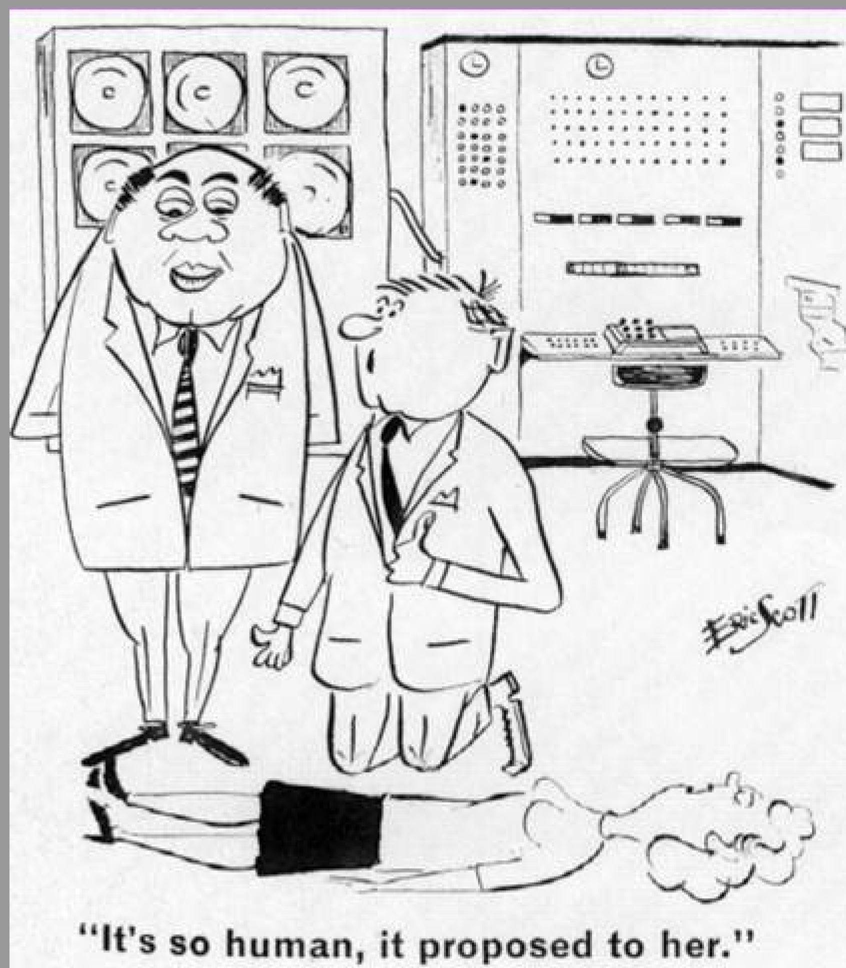
For Valentine's Day, 1961, the cartoonist Charles Addams—of Addams Family fame—drew a futuristic cover for the *New Yorker*. It showed a massive, wall-sized computer, with hundreds of blinking lights, ejecting a tiny paper card with a red heart on it for its operator, who was dwarfed by the computer's hulking form.[1] The drawing of the computer was supposedly based on the huge SSEC (Selective Sequence Electronic

Calculator) mainframe that IBM had shown off in its Madison Avenue showroom in New York City from 1948-1952.[2] But the reason that it was making an appearance on the cover of the New Yorker almost a decade later had less to do with the specific computer in question, and more to do with what computer technology was coming to represent by the early 1960s: a potential challenge to the capacities and talents of human beings.



Source: *The New Yorker*, February 14, 1961, cover.

By the early 1960s, mainframes had crept into the popular consciousness through news reports and advertising. They were still poorly understood by the public at large, and many people were unsure about what these new machines could actually do, as well as what sorts of tasks they *should* do. "There are fewer and fewer operations today that a man can do which a well educated computer cannot do faster and more accurately," a columnist in the London *Times* wrote, synthesizing the growing anxiety about computers in the culture at large.[3] Newspaper articles, which referred to computers as "giant brains" early on, often fanned the flames of competition between man and machine by comparing what a computer could do in a certain amount of time with what a person could do. By the 1960s, popular discourse on technological change highlighted concerns that computers would eventually take over most intellectual tasks, and perhaps even more than that.

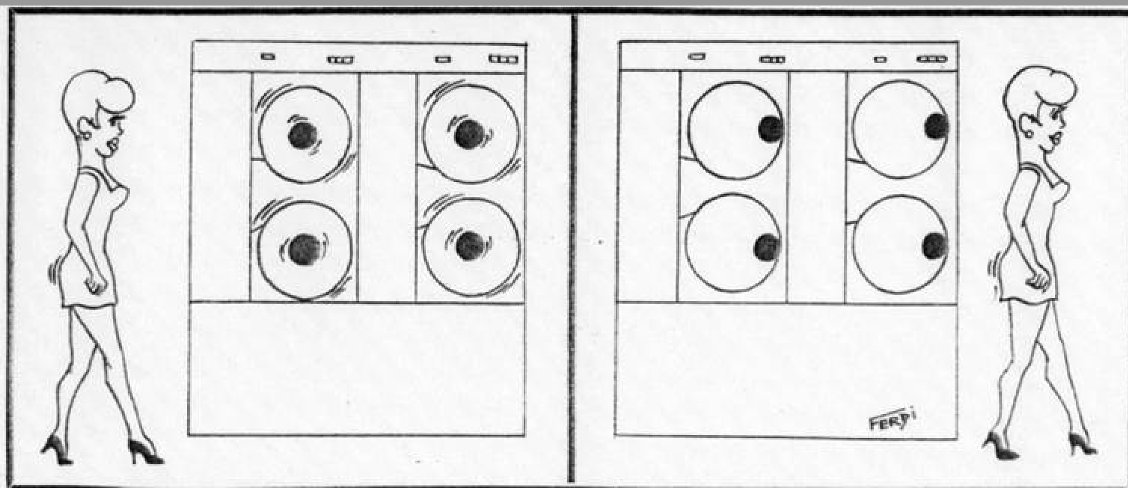


Source: *ICT House Magazine*, July 1965.

Emulating Humans

The flip side of these fears about what computers might do was the fact that early computers still required an enormous amount of labor in order to successfully and completely run programs. Early mainframes were prone to breakdowns and human labor was a key part of the fiction of effortless automation represented in the popular press. The operators who made this possible in the Anglo-American world tended to be women.[4] The machines, on the other hand, were coded as masculine and aligned with the male innovators who designed them.

The idea that these masculine-identified machines might sexually harass women workers as proxies for real men often figured into jokes and cartoons of the era (see cartoon below). A reminiscence from a worker at LEO, an early British computing company—and the company which created the first dedicated electronic business computer—described how LEO bucked the norm of hiring female operators and hired men instead. The tape reels were so high, he related, that if a woman operator reached up to change them it might "might snap her bra straps!" But the reason LEO's computer operator jobs were earmarked for men had everything to do with the particular career opportunities they afforded, rather than having anything to do with women's needs. In addition, employing women on overnight shift work with men was perceived as unseemly. Heterosexual men's career requirements, as well as their fantasies and fears about women's sexuality, often shaped how women were viewed in machine rooms and whether or not they were allowed to work in certain jobs at all.[5]



Source: *ICL News*, 1970

Paradoxically, the same sexual strictures that hurt women's employment chances also meant that women were ideal fodder for a new type of computing project. A growing interest in inserting new electronic computer technology into men and women's lives as romantic middlemen was beginning to gain momentum. Written and designed by men,

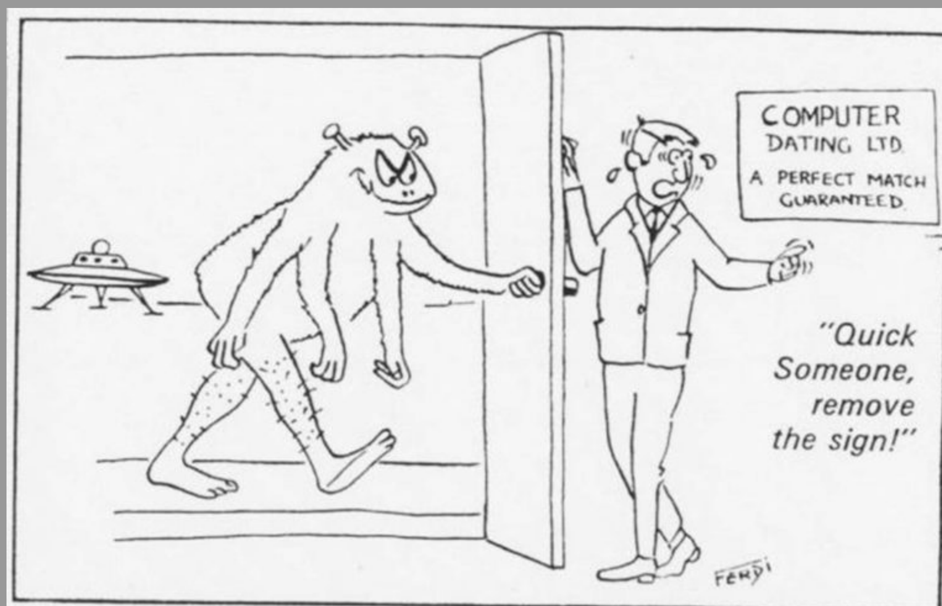
these computer dating programs promised to take the messiness of human interaction out of the process of meeting women. At first glance, the approach seemed novel and potentially progressive, part and parcel of the context of growing sexual permissiveness in American cities during the 1960s and the "swinging sixties" in London.

Today, the idea of being matched with a potential romantic partner via computer has been normalized to the point of seeming quotidian. In the early days of computer dating, however, machine-mediated romantic interactions were often considered untoward or slightly shocking, for reasons similar to the ones that kept women from working alongside men at night. The idea that women and men might meet casually, for sex, instead of within a social context that positioned marriage as the objective, hindered computer dating. In order to limit the "sleaze factor" associated with match-ups made by machines, early computer dating services focused on transferring the social mores that structured non-computerized dating and mating onto these new machine-aided systems. They cultivated predominantly white, straight, middle-class user bases in the hope that the perceived respectability of this user base would transfer onto the new technology. Services also aimed to pair people up using the most conservative measures of compatibility—matching like with like in the realm of social class, race, and religion, and focusing exclusively on a demographic constructed as, and assumed to be, heterosexual.

Because sexuality structures our technological interactions as much as it structures our social ones, sexuality intersects with the history of computing in important ways. Technology is itself an extension of society and social organization. Yet, the field of computing history has been slow to integrate sexuality into its historiography or theorize how sexuality plays an important role in computing's past. The history of computer dating is a good point of entry because it is a topic whose very nature requires a discussion of sexuality. Much of the historiography of gender in computing relies on an implicit understanding of the power of heteronormativity in structuring women's lives and careers. Up to this point, however, historians of computing have paid relatively little attention to the ways in which sexuality molded outcomes and determined patterns of change in the history of computing.[6] Similarly, attention to how computing has historically shaped our understanding of sexuality has so far been limited. Donna Drucker's work on computing's role in defining the Kinsey Scale and Jacob Gaboury's work on gay male computing pioneers have recently begun to remedy this, showing how sexuality has important material impacts on computing, as well as the reverse.[7] In addition, scholarship in STS and media studies has also begun to

complicate the sociotechnical progress narratives that have long been attached to computer dating.[8]

Computer dating is also a topic whose popular history fails to address or theorize the relationship between sexuality and computing, instead focusing on describing the various “firsts” of young, mostly American men who “revolutionized” dating by adding another set of machines into the mix. By investigating the discourses surrounding early British and American computer dating, it is possible to model one way of applying the insights of sexuality studies to computer history. Dating and mating were already intertwined with technology by the mid-twentieth century—everything from cars, to telephones, to movie theatres, to photography and postal mail. But electronic computers seemed to represent a totally new kind of technological intervention in men’s and women’s social lives because they promised to take the responsibility of choice out of the process of dating and marriage, and to do so using means that would be scientific and therefore somehow inarguably correct.



Source: *ICL News*, 1970

The hidden side of this history, however, is the fact that conservative cultural and technological undercurrents structured this technology and made it relatively popular from very early on. This seemingly revolutionary use of computing power was in fact anything but, and was predicated upon reinscribing conservative social norms into a new set of technological systems. Inattention to this history has the effect of obfuscating the origins and assumptions of present-day technologies used for similar purposes. By investigating how sexuality structured computing in the past, we can gain greater insight into how identities and technologies are co-created, and the ways in which

computing has played a progressively larger role in structuring sexual norms under the guise of offering greater objectivity.

Reconsidering Traditional Starting Points: Operation Match

As long as there have been computers capable of it (and even before, actually: some of the earliest computer matchmaking services did not use a computer at all, but secretly paired up respondents' questionnaires manually), enterprising lonely hearts have tried to create matchmaking programs. In some respects, this was nothing new: from personal ads to marriage bureaus, technologies for finding mates existed long before computers. What was new, however, was the idea that computerized dating and marital matchmaking could somehow make a messy and imperfect emotional process into a clean, scientific, and rational one—one in which both parties could find their perfect complement and shift with ease into a long-term relationship, secure in the knowledge their match had been electronically vetted. Currently, the online matchmaking industry is a multi-billion dollar industry, promising to match up participants better than they would be able to do themselves. Yet most online matches do not deliver on the promise of perfection in compatibility: online matchups account for fewer than 5% of all marriages for instance, according to the Pew Research Center. [9]

The most popular entry point into the history of computer dating is the Operation Match program started by two Harvard students (Jeffrey Tarr and David Crump), and an outside partner (Douglas Ginsburg), in 1965. The three initially came up with the idea while "discussing the irrationality of two particular social evils: the blind date and the mixer." They recalled that "somewhere in the conversation one of them asked if computers might not be useful in solving the problem." Interviewing the young men about their business model, the *Harvard Crimson* student newspaper proclaimed that this "21-year-old and 19-year-old have plotted since last spring to overthrow a whole way of life. Their banner reads 'SEX,' their creed is written on the circuits of a computer, and their initial organized uprising is called Operation Match."[10]

But there was nothing revolutionary in the conduct of Operation Match or in the attitudes of its founders, who hewed to socially conservative ideas about how men and women should—and shouldn't—interact. Although these young men are often depicted as socially progressive, or at least socially adventurous, in popular historical accounts of computer matchmaking, the *Crimson* reporter who interviewed them at length

described them as “fairly conservative.”[11] The young men weren’t, for instance, keen on the idea of letting Radcliffe students into the main, and at that point men-only, undergraduate library. Nor were they interested in sharing any other Harvard amenities with women, like the better, more centrally located dining halls and dormitories reserved for Harvard students.

Radcliffe women were consigned to less well-appointed living spaces in the Radcliffe Quadrangle, a 15 minute walk away from the classrooms and academic buildings of Harvard Yard and a 20 to 30 minute walk away from most of the men’s dormitories and dining halls. As such, they were kept at a distance from the centers of social life within the Harvard community.[12] At the same time the founders of Operation Match were devising their business, women were campaigning to be let in to the large parts of the Harvard campus that were still reserved for men; the University did not go fully co-educational until the 1970s. The president and vice-president of Operation Match—incorporated under the name Compatibility Research Corporation—apparently saw no irony in wanting to keep women undergraduates banned from most communal and social spaces at Harvard while developing a computerized system to help themselves and other young men find women to date.

7. Dating someone of my own religion is:
(1) unimportant
(2) slightly important
(3) moderately important
(4) very important

Answer “1” (yes) or “2” (no) to each of the following five questions

My date’s religious background may be:

8.	Protestant	(1) Yes	(2) No
9.	Catholic	(1) Yes	(2) No
10.	Jewish	(1) Yes	(2) No
11.	other	(1) Yes	(2) No
12.	unaffiliated	(1) Yes	(2) No

In answering the following three questions refer to the table at right

13. My college class is:

14. The ideal college class for my date is:

15. Men: I would consider dating a girl whose college class is as low as (indicate lowest acceptable college class):

Women: I would consider dating a man whose college class is as high as (indicate highest acceptable college class):

(1) first year in college
(2) second year in college
(3) third year in college
(4) fourth year in college
(5) graduated from college this year
(6) graduated from college one year ago
(7) graduated from college two years ago
(8) graduated from college three or more years ago

Source: Sadie Stein, "Before OK Cupid, There Was This," **http://jezebel.com/5747934/the-original-social-networks** (http://jezebel.com/5747934/the-original-social-networks)

This contradiction points to a deeper issue at play in the design of most early computerized dating services. Such services did not simply encourage the pairing up of men and women, they also centralized control over matchmaking in the hands of the mostly straight, white, and privileged young men who designed the systems.[13] These men came up with the "relevant" questions and designed the questionnaires and algorithms that would make matches. They determined the parameters of what made a good date and who should be matched with whom. These young bachelors were anything but impartial: many started dating services in part because they wanted to use their own systems. The topics and emphases of the questions they posed to users were filtered through their own particular worldview and priorities, both as businessmen and as potential users of the system. A thinly-veiled form of misogyny lurked under the design of their system and their business model: in the case of Operation Match, these young men wanted a way to "get" women without actually having to spend time in women's company. Their service implicitly positioned women as a product, and assumed that men were the users around whose needs the service should be built.

Operation Match soon became a successful business, getting nationwide participation and publicity, and even appearing on CBS television's *To Tell the Truth* in its first year of operation. News media lauded it as an example of American progressiveness, grounded in the ingenuity of young, male technologists. But computerized dating, so often imagined to be a uniquely American invention, had been used in European countries for some time. Across the Atlantic, matchmaking services used computers to arrange special mixers for participants, rather than matching them up one-on-one. The founders of Operation Match actually took their inspiration from these, having heard that these European matchmaking businesses were "making a sizable profit."[14]

In the second year of Operation Match, roughly 70,000 college students all across the US sent completed questionnaires and three dollars per person in to the three founders. Operation Match set up offices in New York, Cincinnati, Chicago, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Bloomington, Detroit, and Boston to advertise their services and distribute questionnaires. In their Cambridge office headquarters they employed three women to do the work of data processing and accounting and bought time on an Avco 1790 computer to collate responses.[15] The founders estimated, perhaps inflating the numbers, that they would take in $1.5 million by March of their second year. "There is

no denying," concluded the *Crimson* reporter, that these young men, "have, before anyone else, developed a very interesting, very profitable by-product of the modern technological revolution."[16] The only problem was that this was not true.

Neglected Undercurrents: The Role of Gender, Class, and Nationality

Across the Atlantic, British women were early adopters of computer dating—both as users and proprietors. The first computer dating company that attained commercial success in Britain was run by a woman. It was not only the first example of computerized dating in Britain, it also preceded Operation Match by a year.[17] The proprietor, Joan Ball, had gotten the idea after hearing about a Swiss computer dating service. Ball already ran a marriage bureau and escort service—women required male escorts in order to attend most nighttime functions; the service was not sexual—so the leap to computer dating seemed logical. She drew on the client base of her marriage bureau business to start the computer dating service, initially running both side by side. Ball came from London's working class East End and bucked social norms at the time both by heading her own business and having a male romantic partner to whom she was not married. Her computerized dating company, the St. James Computer Dating Service, did its first computer run to pair up clients in 1964 and incorporated the following year under a new name after merging with another woman-run marriage bureau to expand its user base and make better matches. In 1965, the newly merged companies rebranded themselves as Computer Dating Services Ltd., or Com-Pat for short.[18]

In some ways, this is not surprising. The heyday of computer dating occurred during a period when British women were still largely reliant on their relationships with men for their economic stability. In the context of the time, one of the most valuable things a woman could have was a man's name. In the 1960s, British women were not afforded the legal protection of equal pay (a national equal pay act did not come into effect until the mid 1970s), and they were—like their American peers—concentrated into sections of the labor force that did not allow them to make nearly as much money or have as many career prospects as men.

Source: Mavis Tate, M.P., Equal Pay Campaign Pamphlet, "Equal Work Deserves Equal Pay," 1954, 8, 6/EPC Box 262, EPCC Pamphlets/Leaflets Folder, The Women's Library, London Metropolitan University.

Women's wages in London in the 1960s were usually not sufficient to pay for housing without resorting to living with family or roommates. Women were also not able to get a mortgage without a male relative to co-sign even if they qualified for a loan. Marriage was an economic necessity for many women. Yet marriage could also hurt women's employment prospects. Fewer than twenty years had elapsed since the change in the law that had barred women from working while married in the Civil Service. The government had failed to remove their formal marriage bar until after World War II, when the main clerical union vociferously supported the measure because its membership was now majority women.[19] But employers in both the public and private sector continued the practice of an informal "marriage bar" throughout the sixties. The changing contours of women's labor force participation gradually altered the material context of marriage.

The first evidence of Com-Pat advertising in the *Times* of London appears in the August 22, 1966 issue, but—for reasons that will be discussed below—this is not an accurate indication of its earliest date of operation.[20] Com-Pat was unique not only in being the earliest computer dating service in the UK or US, but also because of the fact it was run by women. Ball was a thirty-something who kept her marital status private, and her business partner Marjorie Smith was in her sixties with an adult daughter who also worked at the bureau. Their service had only 2500 clients at the outset, and catered to a slightly older crowd, including people who had been divorced or widowed. It seemed to take its role as a matchmaking intermediary somewhat more seriously than services targeting younger demographics, like Operation Match. Ads for the service read: "Com-

Pat Computer Dating: Well-known, Well-established," and traded on its past as a marriage bureau.[21]

Nonetheless, Com-Pat faced a respectability problem early on, which hurt its ability to advertise in major publications. Many newspapers and magazines would not sell advertising space to either marriage bureaus or computer dating firms on the assumption that these businesses were fronts for immoral or illegal activities. Com-Pat therefore owed its initial survival to another technology at the margins of the establishment: the illegal rock stations that operated from ships off the coast of England in the 1960s known as the pop pirates. These stations sold Com-Pat advertising when no other respectable venues would, and Ball noted the great debt she owed to them. Being associated with the youth culture of the pop pirates also made Com-Pat's computerized dating service seem cool and cutting edge, rather than a sad last resort advertised in the back pages of sleazy magazines.[22]

PERSONAL

Computer Dating

Meet your kind of people through Dateline, Britain's most sophisticated and successful computer dating service.

Ring 01-937 0102 or write for free questionnaire to:

Dateline (NSA)
23 Abingdon Rd., London W8.

Dateline

DARLING DO YOU LOVE LIVING?

COM-PAT Computer Dating loves to liven you up. COM-PAT (SC4) Ltd, 213 Piccadilly, London, W1V 0DX. Tel: 01-437 4025.

DATAMATCH computer dating is the reliable and inexpensive way to meet others who share your interests. Free details from Datamatch (SN), Box 642, 40 Ives Street, London, SW3. 01-584 3663.

Source: *New Scientist*, May 4, 1972, 303.

Nonetheless, Ball, who soon became Com-Pat's sole director, blamed other technologies for getting Britons to a point where they needed her service. She believed people were not socializing as much due to an increase in television watching. Com-Pat focused explicitly on making matches for marriages, and this represented an important division between the two types of dating services operating in the industry at the time. Services like Operation Match and Com-Pat's nearest British competitor, Dateline, were started

by bachelor men in thrall to their own potential success at making computers serve them women. These tended to focus on making a profit through providing a dating service with heterosexual marriage as the implicit goal. In practice, users might go on many dates and never find a spouse. Smaller Com-Pat, which came out of the marriage bureau industry, did not scale up their profits by collecting a massive user base and pairing up people with lots of partners. Instead, it earned more modest returns attempting specific pairings designed to lead to long-term relationships.

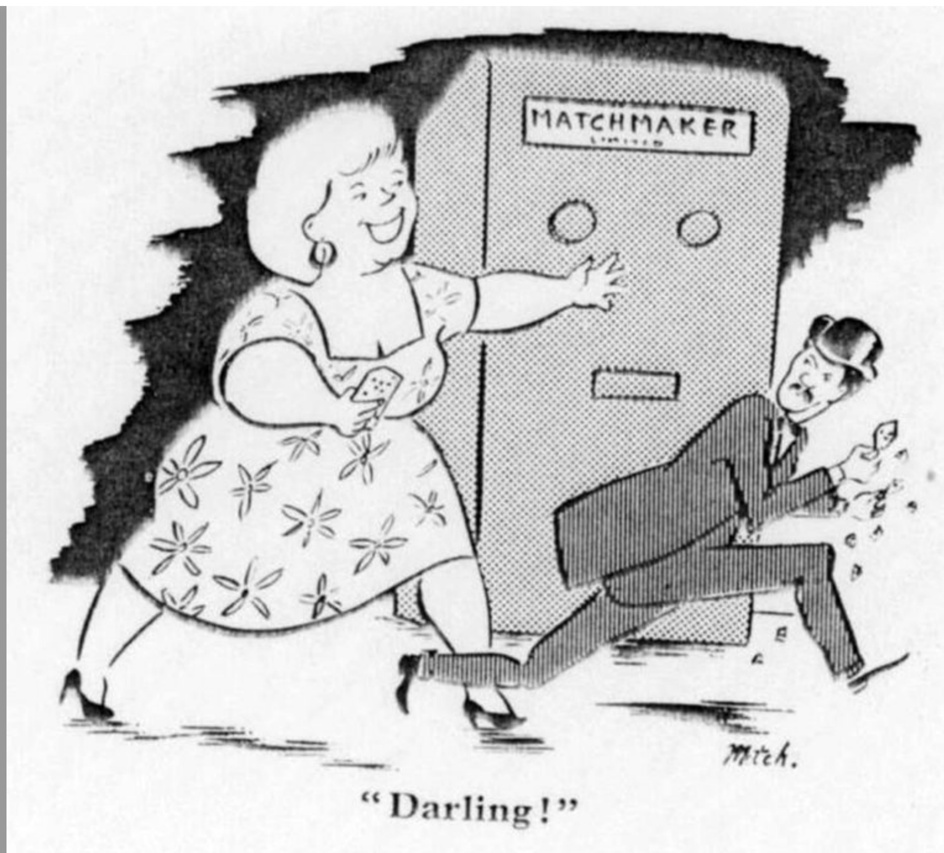
Both types of business were similar, however, in the sense that they each attempted to get people paired up who would "get along" in the sense of not upsetting each other's view of the world or themselves. The conservative founder of the current dating-for-marriage web service eHarmony has said, "opposites attract until they don't."[23] Similarly, early computer matchmaking usually operated on a principle of shunning, and even fearing, difference. The ultimate goal remained heterosexual marriage, in a context where the problem of creating stable marriages and turning back the rising tide of divorcees was an increasing concern. Throughout the 1960s, soaring divorce rates threatened to upend the patterns of straight (or straight-acting) men's and women's lives, and particularly to disrupt the economic lives of young women who still usually had to choose between work and having a family. Although this element of the story has been largely ignored in American narratives of computer dating, it is much more apparent in the British context. By 1971 the number of divorced women had increased by more than 60 percent, peaking in the 35-49 age group, and by the late 1970s one in every 15 British marriages would end in divorce.[24]

One of the earliest reported Com-Pat marriages was a colorful exception that proved the rule. A woman from London married a recently-immigrated Italian man, and the press seized upon this to show the newness and unpredictability of Com-Pat's services, despite the company's attempts to advertise itself as staid and safe.[25] While the computer was not "clairvoyant," Com-Pat's director admitted, she stressed that it could "eliminate the embarrassment of introducing people with the wrong background and nationality and politics and religion." Associations with pirate radio aside, Com-Pat's mandate was hardly anti-establishment. Matching up people of different backgrounds, in British society of the time a euphemism for mixing together people of different classes and races, was the "kind of thing [that] makes bad marriages," said Com-Pat's director.[26]

Com-Pat was so intent on avoiding what Ball considered uncomfortably diverse pairings that its system focused on allowing people to specify the things they would not tolerate in a potential match, rather than simply answering questions about themselves and the things they were looking for in a mate.[27] On the other hand, Com-Pat was far more accommodating of a user base that included those perceived as damaged goods at the time due to being older, having children, or being divorced. Com-Pat flourished with these techniques: by 1967 it advertised "over 7,000 members matched" and by 1969 it made the somewhat fantastical claim of having made half a million match-ups.[28] Still, in an era when Britain's demographics were changing rapidly—with more women joining the workforce, higher immigration, more tolerance for gay and lesbian citizens, and attempts at greater racial equality and integration—the technological progressiveness of computerized matchmaking services often hid its more socially regressive underpinnings.

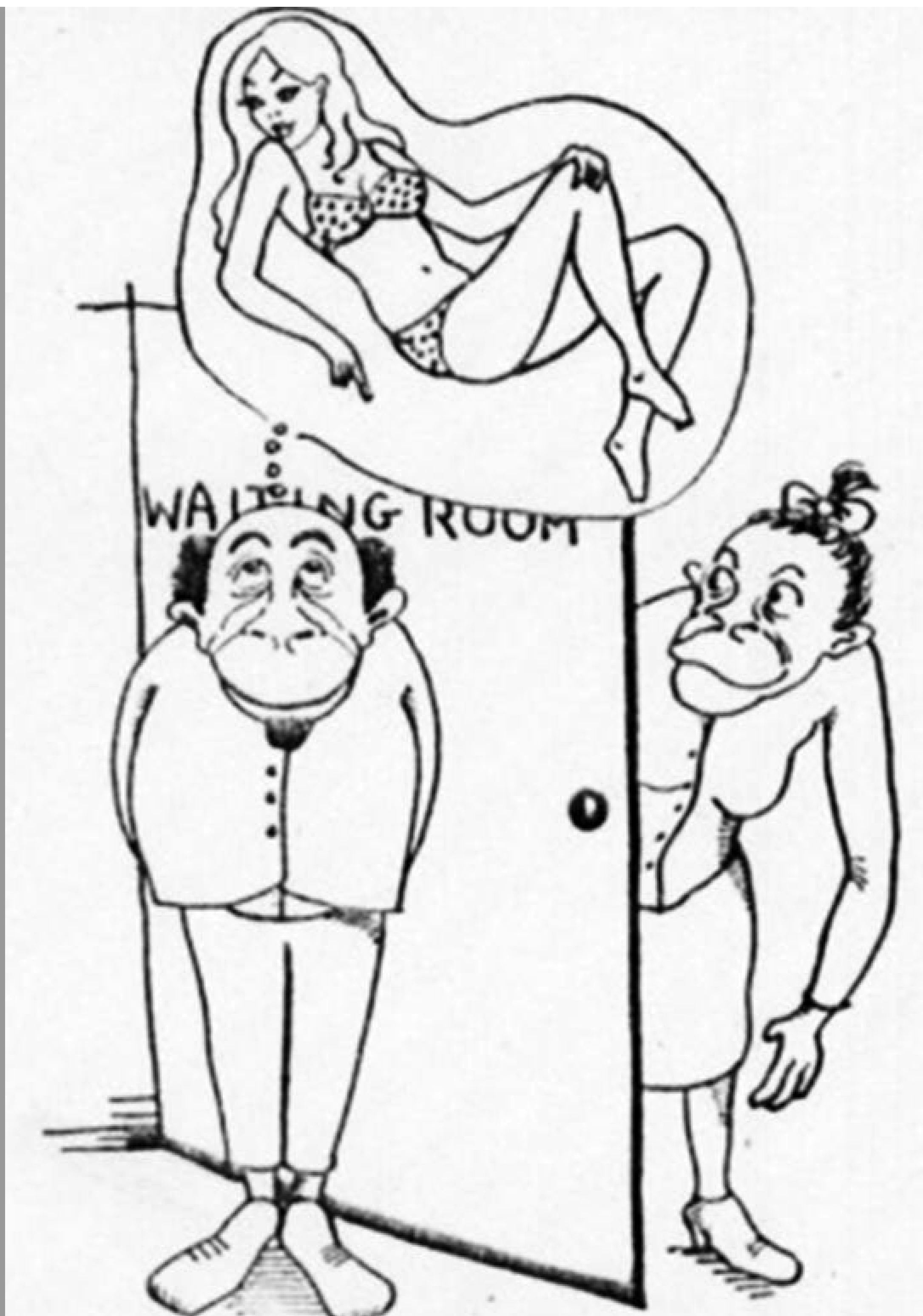
Cartoons at the time often poked fun at this very aspect of computerized matchmaking, showing how pairing up like with like wasn't necessarily a good idea (see images below). For the most part, however, matching people according to race and social class was taken as a given. Matching a white Briton with an Italian might be viewed as surprising, but it was tolerable to most potential white users of the service. Racial segregation and animosity within British society made other matches taboo. The *Evening News* published an overtly racist cartoon that showed an Asian man and a black woman paired up by a "broken" computer dating service. Though many objected to the crude racial stereotypes in how the figures were drawn, in a broader sense the cartoon accurately showed what many people imagined and feared when they thought about computer dating at the time.[29]

Consciously or not, most early users hoped for a match with someone just like themselves when they sought the supposedly perfect, unbiased logic of a computer pairing. By catering to these attitudes, and enshrining them within supposedly logic-driven systems, computer matchmaking services further institutionalized social biases and hierarchies. Tellingly, the Press Council, which oversaw British newspapers and meted out censures for papers that published false or inappropriate material, found nothing racist or problematic about the cartoon mentioned above because they insisted, somewhat amazingly, that there had been no racist "intent."[30] Racial segregation was so normalized at the time that even plainly depicting a scenario of racial integration as a terrible logical blunder was not considered racist by the Press Council.[31]



Source: *Powers-Samas Gazette*, 1959

Source: *ICL News*, 1970



Source: *ICL News*, 1969.

Boys and Their Toys

Com-Pat's only real competition early on was from Dateline, founded in 1967 by a 26-year-old bachelor from an upper middle class background named John Patterson. Patterson, an unemployed college graduate with a mechanical engineering degree,

shared the ideals of the founders of Operation Match. He came up with the idea for Dateline after seeing a Harvard computer matchmaking service, possibly Operation Match or its competitor Contact Incorporated, in operation on a visit to campus in 1966.[32] Dateline ran on an IBM System/3, though the System/3 was introduced in 1969 and it is unclear what machine it used before that. Like Com-Pat, Dateline likely bought time on a mainframe at a computer bureau to run their programs before they were able to afford their own computer.

By 1972, Dateline was gaining close to 500 clients each week, despite charging a fee of £5. For comparison, the salary range for most women office workers in this period was between £500 and £1200 pounds. With a database of 50,000 people, the company had easily pulled in at least a quarter of a million pounds by 1972, in just 5 short years of operation. Patterson claimed his company's revenues actually totaled closer to £200,000 per year.[33]

A veneer of sleaze plagued Dateline. Patterson showed up in the pages of the *Times* in 1969 after he was arrested and given a fine of £300, or nine months imprisonment, for trying to sell several different men "a list of 200 beautiful, sophisticated girls who would act as escorts and provide a night out 'never to be forgotten.'"[34] He was charged with fraud and found guilty of conspiracy for representing the list of women, which was almost certainly cribbed from the user database of Dateline, as providing services of a sexual nature for money. Later, he fought and won a lawsuit that claimed his ever-growing computer dating empire was getting its profits from pornography.[35] Nevertheless, a perception remained that his service, reportedly the largest computer dating firm in the world in the 1980s and 1990s, was built on commodifying women as much as on matching up soul mates.

In 1971 Dateline was advertising on the London Underground, and its advertisements were being seen by hundreds of thousands of people. It reportedly paid its advertising company close to £50,000 for the campaign.[36] Ball, who had had to struggle to find venues that would advertise her business, recalled feeling sick when she first heard about this.[37] Unlike Com-Pat, Dateline ads focused on newness rather than respectability and continuity with the past. "Are You Adventurous? If the answer is yes, you must take part in this great social experiment. Find your perfect match," read Dateline's early advertisements in the *Times*.[38]

The demographics of Dateline users were different from the users of Operation Match, but overlapped somewhat with Com-Pat's user base. A sizable minority of Dateline

applicants—more women than men—admitted to having been previously married. Nearly a third of the women were divorcees. Only a tiny minority of users were people of color. Most lived in London, and most sought matches in the late fall and winter. Users were encouraged to “drop by any time” to “watch their friendly computer in action” and complaint letters to the company were answered by Helen Harper, their public relations director who actually did not exist. In reality, the staff of over a dozen punchers, clerks, and computer operators wrote the replies.

Unlike Operation Match, with its Ivy League pedigree and youthful image, and unlike Com-Pat with its existing client base from its marriage bureau service, Dateline seemed to pursue users, and their money, more indiscriminately. Initially it was relegated to sleazier publications’ personals sections, which advertised questionably legal services, or sexual items like toys and prophylactics that most Britons would not admit to owning. Upon gaining the respectability required to advertise in mainstream publications, however, Patterson immediately did an about-face, and diversified by starting a sibling company that catered to what he called a “trendier, down market image.” That service was slightly cheaper and asked much more explicit questions, including questions about how sexually experienced users *required* their potential matches to be. Even more so than Tarr, Crump and Ginsburg, Patterson pursued the idea of computer dating as big business.

According to the London *Times*, each Dateline user filled in “a 1 or a 0 for nearly 100 questions designed to elicit the kind of information that Big Brother probably only dreams of.”[39]Questions about communism and attitudes towards premarital sex were two of the areas that landed Dateline in hot water with watch-dog groups, along with the fact that the service did not seem to deliver on its promise of providing good matches for young women customers.[40] Dateline’s founder, described as “too busy to really reflect on the sociology of his operations,” did not seem to care as much as Com-Pat’s founder about theories of compatibility or the dynamics involved in matching people up well. Some women using Dateline never received matches and others received matches whose attributes had no connection to their questionnaire answers. Unwilling to talk about the way his service actually paired people, Patterson glibly pointed out that “even if his members have nothing else in common they have at least all joined Dateline.”[41]Dateline would go on to become the largest and most lucrative computer dating service in Britain (and possibly the world), operating from 1967 until Patterson’s death from alcoholism in 1997. Dateline bought out Com-Pat in 1974.

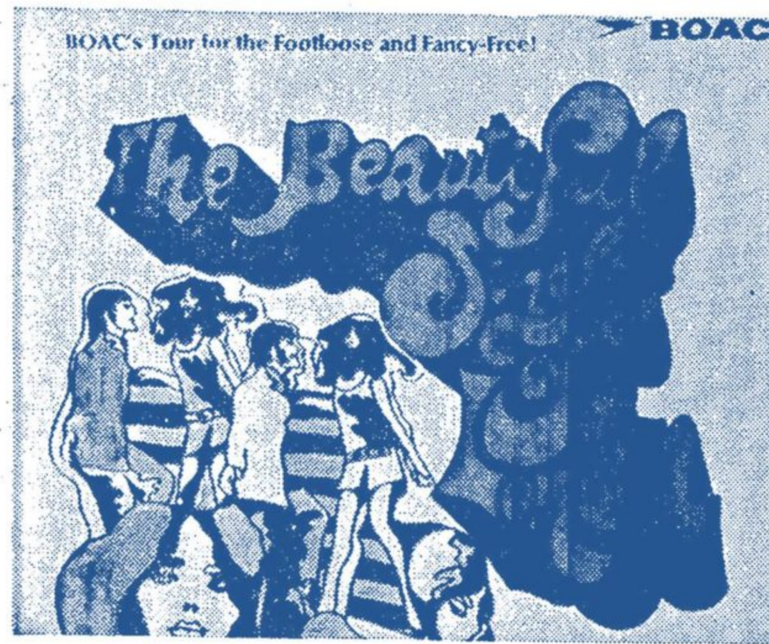
Did It Work? And For Whom?

Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s computer matchmaking came under fire for not doing its job of matching like with like, for purposes of social stability and the replication of the nuclear family. A 31-year old electronics engineer and proprietor of a small computer dating service on the outskirts of London named Peter Small was investigated and forced to shut down after one of his company's questionnaires—which included questions about bondage and domination—became public after it made its way into the hands of a 14-year old.[42] On the other side of the Atlantic, a U.S. computer match-up firm faced similar issues when its questionnaires were distributed to schoolchildren.[43] In shutting down Small's business, the British courts argued that "young people needed to be guarded against this sort of thing," and that, perhaps even more importantly, the business "could break up marriages." Small argued in vain that his business "would have been able to spot a sex maniac" if any had applied, and that the service catered mostly to a clientele of young people from "the professional classes."[44]

Whenever sex became unmoored from the dictates of marriage, even implicitly, the computer dating industry began to run into trouble. British Overseas Air Corporation (BOAC) got embroiled in a Parliamentary investigation for running a dating tourism program that matched up willing British girls with visiting American men by computer. BOAC was accused of functioning as a glorified pimp, because unlike other computer dating services, its aim was not to make matches for marriage but to simply arrange matches where both the visitor and the British woman he met had a good time with each other for a short period of time.

BOAC tried to defend itself by arguing that their program was, in fact, for single young men and that the service was not "providing girls for businessmen."[45] The implication was that the former men were marriageable and the men in the latter group were likely adulterers. Still, their advertising was too subversive for the context of the time: "BOAC Tours for the Footloose and Fancy-Free!" proclaimed one of their posters. BOAC's marketing strategy—to sell flights by using the enticement of exciting dates with foreign women, highlights how computer dating strategies positioned both men and women as commodities, but often objectified and commodified women more. The rest of BOAC's advertising focused on selling flights using women's images to entice men to travel to other countries, so the dating program was simply the next logical step, if a brazen one, in their advertising campaign. Similarly, women abounded in early business computer advertisements and the early office computing labor market was made up primarily of

women.[46] Little wonder, then, that women were quickly positioned as commodities for other kinds of computerized systems.



One of the posters advertising the B.O.A.C. scheme.

Source: "Nothing immoral in tourist dating, BOAC says." *Times* (London), Saturday, September 13, 1969, 3.

Source: British Airways Heritage Centre online collection, **http://www.britishairways.com/en-us/information/about-ba/history-and-heritage/posters/posters-1950-1959.** (http://www.britishairways.com/en-us/information/about-ba/history-and-heritage/posters/posters-1950-1959.)

To BOAC's surprise, more American women traveling to Britain signed up for the service to meet British men than did American men looking to meet British women, even though BOAC had pitched its service primarily at male travelers.[47] BOAC's advertising tactics meshed with the view of many computer dating companies, which often saw women more as a means to an end—the end being profit—than as clients. Women users were expected to draw men users to the service, but were not necessarily accommodated as the primary customers targeted by the service, even when they were the majority of users.

Certain companies even used hoaxes on their too-plentiful women customers in an effort to make money. One company, for instance, charged extra if a match resulted in a marriage proposal, so rather than doing the work of matching women up by computer with eligible men and taking its chances, the company would send its own employees on dates to make fake proposals to unsuspecting women clients.[48] Other companies disregarded women's safety. A U.S. computer service sent multiple women on dates

with a young man who had a long history of mental illness, who repeatedly took dates to his "favorite spot"—a site where a brutal murder had occurred in Central Park. Yet another bureau was run by a man who impersonated a member of the clergy.

Accounts of sexual impropriety also filled newspaper reports about computer dating, like the man who walked into a woman's apartment wearing nothing under his overcoat. Such incidents undoubtedly masked less reported, more serious instances of assault, both sexual and otherwise. Many women also complained of having paid large sums of money, running into the hundreds of pounds (or dollars) over a period of months, and never having received any matches.[49] Throughout the complaints made by users two themes emerge. First, a significant number of computer dating agencies used unscrupulous tactics to make money, often without providing any real services. And second, most of the complaints came from women, who had either been let down or in some cases actively put in harm's way.[50] By 1975, computer dating in the UK had come under scrutiny from the Government's Fair Trading Office, which sought evidence from the public that these dating services actually did what they claimed to do.[51]

Not So Revolutionary

Throughout the sixties and into the seventies government officials and experts in various fields warned against the dangers of computerized dating. A professor who headed the cybernetics research laboratory at the University of Kent ironically characterized such services as "dangerous" and argued that they would render people incapable of being able to make their own choices.[52] But such fears represented a kind of specious moral panic that failed to take into account the fact that the continuities between computer matchmaking and what came before it were far greater than the differences.

For the most part, computer matchmaking encountered very little resistance and was quickly adopted by tens of thousands of people.[53] Its popularity was not based on the fact that it offered anything remarkably new or different. As constructed in the Anglo-American world it was not revolutionary, and it came of age during a time period when discrimination against women and widespread racial segregation meant that computerized systems tended to extend structural discrimination rather upending it.

The fact that women's social and economic position in US and UK society was significantly weaker than men's in this period forms an important background to the history of computer dating. Joan Ball and Com-Pat not only lost out to John Patterson's

Dateline in the marketplace, but she has been effectively erased from the history of computer dating despite her service being up and running even earlier than Operation Match. Supposedly revolutionary firsts of young men in the early decades of computing are touted while the actual firsts of women are submerged. The gendered dynamics are clear, and mirror similar examples of erasure and diminishment of women's involvement in other areas of computing history.

As one woman columnist writing in the *Times* in the late sixties put it, "we're in a no man's land between emancipation and equality" right now.[54] She pointedly discussed connections between technological progress and women's civil rights in a satirical article published on Valentine's Day, 1968 called "A Tender Missive To Mr. Wilson." Her article zeroed in on computer dating as a subject of mockery in order to lampoon the way that technology was often offered up as a "revolutionary" way of fixing social problems—and yet rarely did so.

The article was written in the form of a Valentine's Day love letter to then Prime Minister Harold Wilson, a massive booster of technological innovation. Wilson believed that a technological revolution, led by computerization, would produce the social progress needed in British society and help destroy the inequalities of the British class system. The author quips that she is not impressed with the things technology has given women so far, but that there are lots of other things women want, like equal pay, equal opportunity, full coeducation, wages for housewives, and so on. Re-centering the conversation about social change on women's needs, rather than technological imperatives, she notes that computers can't make Prime Minister Wilson her Valentine, but giving women equal rights could win her heart.[55] Technology, she argues, is not the way to fix social problems. Indeed, the focus on a "technological fix" seemed to be drawing attention away from the most pressing problems facing women at the time.

A TENDER MISSIVE TO Mr WILSON

DRAWING BY NIKE WILLIAMS

Source: Sue Puddefoot, “A Tender Missive To Mr. Wilson,” *Times* (London), February 14, 1968, 9.

The conservatism baked into computer dating technology can be viewed not as a bug, but rather as a feature. The purpose of computerized dating services was to replicate existing social patterns and hierarchies more efficiently. Other women who weighed in on computer dating in the pages of the *Times* highlighted how computer dating was nothing new, at its most basic level. The seeming disregard of women’s needs and desires by the two best known and most lauded early computer dating services lends support to this point. Computerized dating was not magical or frightening because, as

one woman columnist noted pragmatically, "one of the chief functions of computers is streamlining an existing service." In this context, the existing service that computers streamlined was the replication of patriarchy and the nuclear family.[56] For this reason it is not surprising that women have largely been erased from the history of computer dating as actors in their own right.

Paradoxically, the successes of computer dating did not spring mainly from the technology. The matching programs, algorithms, and even the questionnaires were all of little importance in comparison with the user base upon which they operated. Most early computer dating services tried to pre-empt the difficulty of matching people by collecting user bases that were relatively homogeneous. Operation Match targeted college populations to produce this homogeneity, as well as to give their business a veneer of respectability. Com-Pat drew on a clientele of Londoners who wanted to get married or remarried and would have previously used the services of a marriage bureau. Another US computer dating service from the same era, Project TACT (Technical Automated Compatibility Testing), focused on Manhattan's east side, chased respectability by trying to establish a client base of wealthy singles. The men behind Project TACT did this in a less-than-respectable way, lying their way past doormen to get into the lobbies of buildings with wealthier residents, and then writing down the names they found on the mailboxes (whenever two people sharing a mailbox had different last names they assumed the residents were roommates and single).[57] Dateline, the most financially successful of all, did not have a self-consciously homogeneous user base, but also did not appear to pair people up to clients' satisfaction. It focused on an ever-increasing user base to make its profits, not necessarily on satisfying customers once they had already paid.

As Nathan Ensmenger has pointed out, Operation Match, just like another social technology that got its start at Harvard—Facebook—focused on a target audience of "Ivy League and associated schools," making it little more than another way to ensure social hierarchies remained strong while offering a slight convenience to certain users.[58] And, just like Facebook, Operation Match was started by young men whose idea of the technological future was grounded in using women's bodies for entertainment and profit. Mark Zuckerberg's first incarnation of Facebook, a site called Facemash, simply downloaded all of the pictures of women undergraduates at Harvard from the university server and then juxtaposed two at a time, telling visitors to the site to rate which one was more attractive before offering up the next pair. It distilled Operation

Match down to its essence: no longer would young men even have to meet young women in order to gain pleasure from them.

Kate Losse, a former Facebook employee who joined the company as employee number 51 in 2005 and worked closely with Zuckerberg, has written that Facebook's driving design principle was one that enabled voyeurism and a kind of privileged judgment: essentially a technological way of replicating the male gaze for its users. This, Losse argues, is a feature so deeply embedded within the structure of the platform that it molds the point of view and behavior of all users who participate on Facebook, whether as viewers or as those who are viewed.[59]

The history of early computer dating technologies in the Anglo-American world begins to show how sexuality, and particularly an assumption of heterosexuality grounded in white, male, middle-class privilege, plays a key role in interpreting computing history. It also begins to shed light on how technologies inhere designers' viewpoints into their structures, replicating and extending particular worldviews as the technology proliferates and is used. It would not be until the 1980s that computer dating technology began to stop taking for granted the idea of a user base that centered the imagined needs of straight men. In the mid 1980s British programmers released a personal computer version of matchmaking software with the BBC micro that included the option for homosexual pairings. And in France in the 1980s a product called "La Drague Electronique" (the electronic pick-up) introduced men and women to what might have been the first iteration of a proximity-based cruising application like Grindr or Happn. This product was comprised of a cigarette-sized box that users carried, which would beep when it came into proximity with a match. Revolutionary for its day, it did not require users to focus on single pairings at a time, and it also allowed users to change their sexual preference as often as they liked via a switch on the side of the unit. The four settings allowed for men and women who wanted to be matched with the opposite sex; men who wanted to be matched with other men; women who wanted to be matched with other women; and couples who wanted to "swing."[60]

Today, computerized dating has branched out significantly. A recently-launched app called Thurst, for instance, bills itself "as the first dating app for queer people of all genders," and is one of the first matchmaking services geared specifically to a genderqueer user base.[61] Thurst co-founders Morgen Bromell and Rosa Pergams have stated that they tried to build the needs and concerns of nonbinary LGBTQ people of color into the technology in order to better reflect their own desires and experiences.

But, a panoply of larger and more powerful social networking platforms continue to represent and replicate problematic assumptions similar to those at work in the earliest computer dating services. The assumption of a white, straight, male default subject still undergirds much of our social and technological landscape.

Source: #FBRAPE campaign, 2013.

Why Does Computer Dating Matter to the History of Computing and Sexuality?

Historians of computing have recently begun to highlight the fact that narratives pointing out the conservative properties of technological change have as much or more explanatory value in the history of computing as narratives focused on progress or "revolution."[62] Time and time again we see the ways computer technology has institutionalized and revived more conservative social and economic models in history,

rendering an uncritical emphasis on innovation and technological revolution at best specious, and at worst, actively misleading. In computing today we see echoes of these historical themes, with many new technological developments that are actively regressive, like the entire industry of software and services designed to skirt labor laws and remove power from the hands of people who are already disproportionately clustered near the bottom of our socioeconomic hierarchies. That these socioeconomic categories overlap with, and are co-constructed by discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, and ability is not a coincidence.

Computing history shows that technology is often not revolutionary socially or economically. It does not tend to upset hierarchies but rather to preserve and strengthen them. Computing is often a force for regressive change and a tool used by those who have traditionally held power. When used in the context of warfare, or even within the confines of business, these elements are easier to see. As computing bleeds into all aspects of our lives in ever more complicated ways, however, it is worth returning to computerization's earlier forays into the realm of culture, and recalling the specific ways that technologies can seem neutral while extending and replicating the power and belief systems of particular groups.[63]

The history of computer dating, when critiqued as a conservative technology, offers insights into the history of sexuality's intersection with high technology, the replication of heteronormative institutions and ideals, and the ability of technologies to create social categories and implied social "needs." It shows how technologies—far from somehow being neutral or rational—are often engaged in highly sexualized and emotionally charged cultural projects to normalize particular behaviors and roundly condemn others. Currently, more and more dating applications are unpacking this cultural baggage, leading to software that, for instance, privileges queer users and attempts to create safer spaces online for women of color. Developments like these show that the historical lineage of computer matchmaking is a contentious push and pull between competing interests rather than a revolutionary social or technological force. My hope in unpacking and correcting some of this history is to add to the modest but growing number of queer histories of computing which interrogate the infrastructure of heteronormativity instead of taking it for granted, as well as to contribute to the large and growing set of conversations across multiple humanities disciplines about diversity in technology.[64]

1. Charles Addams, Cover, *New Yorker*, February 11, 1961.

2. IBM claims this cartoon machine was based on IBM's SSEC in the showroom on Madison Ave from 1948-1952: "The SSEC was visible to pedestrians on the sidewalk, and inspired a generation of cartoonists to portray the computer as a series of wall-sized panels covered with lights, meters, dials, switches, and spinning rolls of tape." Excerpt from IBM history available at: **http://www.historyofinformation.com/expanded.php?id=851.** (http://www.historyofinformation.com/expanded.php?id=851.)

3. *Times* (London), "How France Makes Use Of Computers," October 27, 1960, 10.

4. See Janet Abbate, *Recoding Gender: Women's Changing Participation in Computing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012); Marie Hicks, *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017); and Marie Hicks. "Only the Clothes Changed: Women Operators in British Computing and Advertising, 1950–1970," *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 32, no. 4 (October 2010): 5-17.

5. See archives of LEO Computer Company at National Archive for the History of Computing, Manchester, UK, and Georgina Ferry *A Computer Called LEO: Lyons Tea Shops and the World's First Office Computer* (London: Fourth Estate Ltd., 2003).

6. For an extended discussion of how heteronormativity impacted computer labor forces in the 20th century and altered their potential, see Hicks, *Programmed Inequality.*

7. See Donna J. Drucker, "Keying Desire: Alfred Kinsey's Use of Punched-Card Machines for Sex Research," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22.1 (2013): 105-125, and *The Classification of Sex: Alfred Kinsey and the Organization of Knowledge* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014). Jacob Gaboury's work is available at http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/feb/19/queer-computing-1/ and see Marie Hicks, "De-brogramming the History of Computing," *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 35, no. 1 (Jan-Mar 2013), **http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=6502624** (http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=6502624) .

8. Molly Niesen, "Love, Inc.: Toward Structural Intersectional Analysis of Online Dating Sites and Applications" in *The Intersectional Internet*, eds. Safiya Noble and Brendesha Tynes, (New York: Peter Lang Inc., 2016).

9. Steve Yoder, "How Online Dating Became a $2 Billion Industry," *The Fiscal Times*, February 14, 2014, **http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/Articles/2014/02/14/Valentines-Day-2014-How-Online-Dating-Became-2-Billion-Industry** (http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/Articles/2014/02/14/Valentines-Day-2014-How-Online-Dating-Became-2-Billion-Industry) , and Pew Research Center, "Five Facts About Online Dating," 20 April 2015, **http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/20/5-facts-about-online-dating/.** (http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/20/5-facts-about-online-dating/.)

10. T. Jay Mathews, "Operation Match," *Harvard Crimson,* November 3, 1965.

11. Ibid.

12. For a history of the gender dynamics at Harvard in the 1960s, and its process of going fully coeducational, or "coresidential" in the seventies, see Marie Hicks, "Integrating Women at Oxford and Harvard Universities, 1964-1977," in *Yards and Gates: Gender in Harvard and Radcliffe History*, ed. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004), 245-270.

13. At the same time that Operation Match was starting at Harvard, there was a similar rival service on campus, also started by Harvard undergraduate men, called Contact Incorporated. Dan Slater, "The Social Network: The Prequel," *GQ*, January 28, 2011, http://www.gq.com/story/social-network-prequel-online-dating.

14. Quote from T. Jay Mathews, "Operation Match," *Harvard Crimson,* November 3, 1965. Jaakko Suominen, "History of Digital Dating: 'Computer-Balls' and Digital Pairing in Finland from the 1960s to the Present," in *History of Nordic Computing 3* eds. John Impagliazzzo, Per Lundin, and Benkt Wangler, (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2011), 120-121. Suominen discuss examples of this in Finland in the 1960s, but interestingly credits American technology—namely IBM computers installed at the University of Turku—for enabling these programs.

15. Avco was a New England based computer services company with a computer center in the suburbs of Boston.

16. Mathews, "Operation Match."

17. Joan Ball, *Just Me* (Raleigh, NC: Lulu.com, 2014), 217-219.

18. Ibid., 218-219.

19. Civil Service (UK) National Whitley Council Committee, *The Marriage Bar*, 1946, 13.

20. *Times* (London), Advertisement, August 22, 1966, 2.

21. *Times* (London), Advertisement, August 11, 1967, 16.

22. John Clare, "Marriage: Cupid from the computer," *Times* (London), March 25, 1972, 16.

23. E-Harmony also has a long record of discrimination against gay users. In 2008 it settled a lawsuit that forced it to provide a comparable service for gay users, and in 2011 another lawsuit forced it to integrate its main, heterosexual dating website with the website it had set up to cater to gay users. See Nathan Koppel and Shira Ovide, "eHarmony Settles Dispute Over Gay Matches," *Wall Street Journal*, November 20, 2008, **http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB122714242388642779** (http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB122714242388642779) and eHarmony, "Press Release: eHarmony, Inc. Settles Class Action Lawsuit Over Same Sex Matching," January 26, 2010, **http://www.eharmony.com/press-release/25/.** (http://www.eharmony.com/press-release/25/.)

24. Censuses and Surveys, *1961, Summary Tables*, 4-5; Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Census 1971, Great Britain, Age, Marital Condition and General Tables* (London: HMSO, 1974), 26-27; and, Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Census 1981, National Report Great Britain, Part 1* (London: HMSO, 1983), 15.

25. *Times* (London), "Susie Has Got Her Man Taped," December 23, 1966, 8.

26. Clare, "Marriage: Cupid from the computer."

27. Ibid.

28. *Times* (London), "Personal," October 2, 1967, 18, and *Times* (London), "Women's Appointments," July 1, 1969, 15.

29. *Times* (London), "Press Council rejects cartoon complaint," April 18, 1978, 4.

30. Ibid.

31. As late as 1983, a disgruntled user of Dateline wrote a letter to the editor of the *Times* to warn other women against the service because she had been matched with men of "Asian or Oriental descent" even though she had requested to be paired only with white European men. *Times* (London), "Warning date," September 21, 1983, 9. In 1989, the *Times* reported that "most of the leading companies say their clients are white middle class professionals aged between 30 and 45." Victoria McKee, "Dating with danger?" *Times* (London), February 3, 1989, 21.

32. *Times* (London), "John Patterson Obituary," February 1, 1997, 25.

33. Clare, "Marriage: Cupid from the computer."

34. *Times* (London), "Bureaux men fined £300," June 28, 1969, 3.

35. *Times* (London), "Bureau head loses libel action," April 23, 1983, 3.

36. Patricia Tisdall, "Advertising and Marketing," *Times* (London), December 29, 1971, 13.

37. Ball, *Just Me,* 218.

38. *Times* (London), Advertisement, August 11, 1967, 16.

39. Clare, "Marriage: Cupid from the computer."

40. *Times* (London), "Report on computer date firm," August 29, 1970, 2.

41. Clare, "Marriage: Cupid from the computer."

42. *Times* (London), "Court ban on 'dangerous documents'," May 10, 1967, 2.

43. David Anderson, "Boy-Girl Questionnaire Investigated," *New York Times,* June 12, 1966.

44. *Times* (London), "Court ban on 'dangerous documents'."

45. *Times* (London), "Nothing immoral in tourist dating, BOAC says," September 13, 1969, 3.

46. For background, see Hicks, “Only the Clothes Changed.”

47. *Times* (London), “Can they ever,” December 23, 1969, 17.

48. *Times* (London), “Report on computer date firm.”

49. *Times* (London), “Dating agencies attacked for exploiting the lonely,” November 17, 1970, 9.

50. *Times* (London), “Report on computer date firm.”

51. *Times* (London), “Fair-trading office to study marriage bureau,” December 27, 1975, 2.

52. *Times* (London), “Danger when computer plays Cupid,” August 23, 1973, 4.

53. Ibid. This article describes the kind of unhelpful, knee-jerk “moral panic” critique that has repeatedly been leveled against new technologies.

54. Sue Puddefoot, “A Tender Missive To Mr. Wilson,” *Times* (London), February 14, 1968, 9.

55. Ibid.

56. Valerie Knox, “Merry-go-Round,” *Times* (London), April 24, 1967, 7.

57. Project TACT was started by an accountant who got the idea from a program designed to match people up with pen pals. He hired a programmer to do the same thing but to match based on close physical proximity rather than the opposite as in the pen pals program. Nick Paumgarten, “Looking for Someone. Sex, Love, and Loneliness on the Internet,” *The New Yorker*, July 4, 2011.

58. Nathan Ensmenger, “Computer Dating in the 1960s,” March 5, 2014, blog post, **http://thecomputerboys.com/?p=654.** (http://thecomputerboys.com/?p=654.)

59. See Kate Losse, “The Male Gazed: Surveillance, Power, and Gender.” *Model View Culture* 1, (January 13, 2014). **https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/the-male-gazed**

(https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/the-male-gazed) , and her memoir of her time working at Facebook: *The Boy Kings* (New York: Free Press, 2014).

60. PHS. "The Times Diary: My Bleeping Heart," *Times* (London), June 5, 1984, 10.

61. Morgen Bromell, "Thurst Prepares For Launch: The First Dating App for Queer People of All Genders," *Model View Culture* 39, (July 25, 2016). **https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/thurst-prepares-for-launch-the-first-dating-app-for-queer-people-of-all-genders.** (https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/thurst-prepares-for-launch-the-first-dating-app-for-queer-people-of-all-genders.)

62. For example, the Maintainers conference held at Stevens Institute of Technology (April 7-9, 2016), and the Shift-CTRL conference held at Stanford University (May 6-7, 2016). See **http://themaintainers.org/** (http://themaintainers.org/) and **http://www.shiftctrl2016.org/.** (http://www.shiftctrl2016.org/.)

63. For more on the ways in which users and sexualities are co-constructed in conjunction with technologies, see Jean Hardy and Silvia Lindtner, "Constructing a Desiring User: Discourse, Rurality, and Design in Location-Based Social Networks" in 20th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing, (New York: ACM Press, forthcoming), and Molly Niesen, "Love, Inc.: Toward Structural Intersectional Analysis of Online Dating Sites and Applications" in *The Intersectional Internet*, eds. Safiya Noble and Brendesha Tynes, (New York: Peter Lang Inc., 2016).

64. For more on queering the history of technology and telecommunications, see Katie Hindmarch-Watson's work on prostitution rings in which aristocratic British men had sex with telegraph boys. Hindmarch-Watson shows how socio-sexual networks of power function within technological ones. Katie HindmarchWatson, "Male Prostitution and the London GPO: Telegraph Boys 'Immorality' from Nationalization to the Cleveland Street Scandal." *The Journal of British Studies* 51, no. 3 (2012): 594-617.

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Footnotes (returns to text)

1. Charles Addams, Cover, *New Yorker*, February 11, 1961.
2. IBM claims this cartoon machine was based on IBM's SSEC in the showroom on Madison Ave from 1948-1952: "The SSEC was visible to pedestrians on the sidewalk, and inspired a generation of cartoonists to portray the computer as a series of wall-sized panels covered with lights, meters, dials, switches, and spinning rolls of tape." Excerpt from IBM history available at: http://www.historyofinformation.com/expanded.php?id=851.
3. *Times* (London), "How France Makes Use Of Computers," October 27, 1960, 10.
4. See Janet Abbate, *Recoding Gender: Women's Changing Participation in Computing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012); Marie Hicks, *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017); and Marie Hicks. "Only the Clothes Changed: Women Operators in British Computing and Advertising, 1950–1970," *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 32, no. 4 (October 2010): 5-17.
5. See archives of LEO Computer Company at National Archive for the History of Computing, Manchester, UK, and Georgina Ferry *A Computer Called LEO: Lyons Tea Shops and the World's First Office Computer* (London: Fourth Estate Ltd., 2003).
6. For an extended discussion of how heteronormativity impacted computer labor forces in the 20th century and altered their potential, see Hicks, *Programmed Inequality.*
7. See Donna J. Drucker, "Keying Desire: Alfred Kinsey's Use of Punched-Card Machines for Sex Research," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22.1 (2013): 105-125, and *The Classification of Sex: Alfred Kinsey and the Organization of Knowledge* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press,

2014). Jacob Gaboury's work is available at http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/feb/19/queer-computing-1/ and see Marie Hicks, "De-brogramming the History of Computing," *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 35, no. 1 (Jan-Mar 2013), http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=6502624.

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10. T. Jay Mathews, "Operation Match," *Harvard Crimson,* November 3, 1965.
11. Ibid.
12. For a history of the gender dynamics at Harvard in the 1960s, and its process of going fully coeducational, or "coresidential" in the seventies, see Marie Hicks, "Integrating Women at Oxford and Harvard Universities, 1964-1977," in *Yards and Gates: Gender in Harvard and Radcliffe History*, ed. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004), 245-270.
13. At the same time that Operation Match was starting at Harvard, there was a similar rival service on campus, also started by Harvard undergraduate men, called Contact Incorporated. Dan Slater, "The Social Network: The Prequel," *GQ*, January 28, 2011, http://www.gq.com/story/social-network-prequel-online-dating.
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15. Avco was a New England based computer services company with a computer center in the suburbs of Boston.
16. Mathews, "Operation Match."
17. Joan Ball, *Just Me* (Raleigh, NC: Lulu.com, 2014), 217-219.
18. Ibid., 218-219.
19. Civil Service (UK) National Whitley Council Committee, *The Marriage Bar*, 1946, 13.
20. *Times* (London), Advertisement, August 22, 1966, 2.
21. *Times* (London), Advertisement, August 11, 1967, 16.
22. John Clare, "Marriage: Cupid from the computer," *Times* (London), March 25, 1972, 16.
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25. *Times* (London), "Susie Has Got Her Man Taped," December 23, 1966, 8.
26. Clare, "Marriage: Cupid from the computer."
27. Ibid.
28. *Times* (London), "Personal," October 2, 1967, 18, and *Times* (London), "Women's Appointments," July 1, 1969, 15.
29. *Times* (London), "Press Council rejects cartoon complaint," April 18, 1978, 4.

30. Ibid.
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32. *Times* (London), "John Patterson Obituary," February 1, 1997, 25.
33. Clare, "Marriage: Cupid from the computer."
34. *Times* (London), "Bureaux men fined £300," June 28, 1969, 3.
35. *Times* (London), "Bureau head loses libel action," April 23, 1983, 3.
36. Patricia Tisdall, "Advertising and Marketing," *Times* (London), December 29, 1971, 13.
37. Ball, *Just Me,* 218.
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39. Clare, "Marriage: Cupid from the computer."
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42. *Times* (London), "Court ban on 'dangerous documents'," May 10, 1967, 2.
43. David Anderson, "Boy-Girl Questionnaire Investigated," *New York Times,* June 12, 1966.
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48. *Times* (London), "Report on computer date firm."
49. *Times* (London), "Dating agencies attacked for exploiting the lonely," November 17, 1970, 9.
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Location-Based Social Networks" in 20th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing, (New York: ACM Press, forthcoming), and Molly Niesen, "Love, Inc.: Toward Structural Intersectional Analysis of Online Dating Sites and Applications" in *The Intersectional Internet*, eds. Safiya Noble and Brendesha Tynes, (New York: Peter Lang Inc., 2016).

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COMPUTING DATING GENDER HISTORY PEER REVIEWED SEXUALITY

Mar Hicks (https://adanewmedia.org/author/mariehicks)

Mar Hicks is an assistant professor of history of technology at Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, Illinois. Their research looks at how gender and sexuality help us better understand the hidden dynamics of pervasive technologies. Their first book, *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing (MIT Press, 2017)* investigates how women's experiences change core assumptions in the history of computing and alter what we think we know about the technological progress. Hicks teaches courses on the history of computing, disasters, and gender and sexuality studies. Hicks received a BA from Harvard University and MA and Ph.D. degrees from Duke University. Before entering academia, Hicks worked as a UNIX systems administrator.

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