

History of the *Today in the History of Psychology* Website
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In the early 1970s somebody in my group of young faculty friends discovered that Fechner Day, October 22, was celebrated in some psychology departments. We all knew lots of stories of how Fechner's genius was liberally salted with craziness, so the thought of his having a holiday to mark his breakthrough insight into the relation between mind and body was delightful – holidays for George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jesus . . . and Fechner? Why not?

In short order we found anniversaries of other oddball events in psychology. I made a list of them. I started going to the library to find new ones. I made longer lists, typed them out, circulated them, received contributions and suggestions. The criteria for inclusion broadened from the bizarre and amusing to truly noteworthy events in the history of psychology.

I wrote the entries on IBM punch cards (this was a LONG time ago, remember) as the lists got longer so I could sort them by date and print out new versions. That's why a lot of the more obvious dates, such as birthdays, gathered early in the life of the project, are no more than 80 characters long. That was the number of columns on an IBM card. The wording of some of these entries is very telegraphic as a result.

Time passed and the calendar grew in number and complexity of entries. I started to use the events as introductory comments in all of my classes, especially the class in history and systems of psychology, which I inherited from a retiring faculty member. By the late 1980s, there were maybe a thousand entries in the calendar, each an event connected to a specific day, month, and year in history. I found many events for which only a year or month and year were known and regretted not being able to include them in the calendar database.

The medium for the database evolved from punch cards to text files on 5-1/4 inch “floppy discs” and then to an MS-DOS database program called File Express. Using a database program allowed me to add other information, such as the source, keywords, subject categories as indicated by APA divisions, and nationality of event and person, to the date and description of the event.

The centennial celebration of the APA was in 1992 and in the late 80s I thought that if the APA was ever going to be interested in this collection of historical events, now was the time to contact them. I wrote to the APA and my inquiry was forwarded to Gary Van den Bos, then the head of APA Books. The APA Library and the APA Archives were in his administrative area. My proposal was to have a few historical anniversaries published each month in the *APA Monitor* (now *Monitor on Psychology*). His counter-proposal, *APA Monitor* plus a hardbound centennial appointment calendar for 1992, was beyond anything I had imagined. In addition, the APA funded my air fare to Washington, DC for a summer month for three years so that I could dig around in the APA Archives, the Library of Congress (especially its Copyright Office), the U.S. Patent Office, the National Archives, nearby military archives, and other resources. They didn't fund my living expenses but they did post on their in-house e-mail list my request for local living accommodations in exchange for house-sitting services. Every year, someone gave me the run of their place while they went on vacation. I lived in Arlington, Chevy Chase, and a little north of Adams Morgan in these years and learned a lot about DC.

In 1991 the APA published its 1992 centennial calendar appointment book with my entries and photos from its archives. After that I continued to correspond with Van den Bos about publishing a substantial reference book of calendar entries. We agreed that I would apply for a sabbatical leave in 1994-1995 and finish a manuscript then. All through these years, the format of the calendar morphed into a form compatible with the early World-Wide Web, as the Internet was known then.

I applied for a sabbatical leave to work on the book. My wife, Libby, also a psychology professor, also applied for a sabbatical leave. She knew she could develop instructional materials with a laboratory school in Logan, Utah and I could do my writing there. However, our preference was to be in DC but Libby had no connection to a scholarly project there. One day we saw an APA solicitation for applications to the AAAS Congressional Science Fellowship program sponsored by the APA. Libby applied, with little hope of winning an appointment in an applicant field of faculty members at major research universities. She did win a Congressional Science Fellowship, though. The panel of past Congressional Science Fellows chose her for her ability to distill disparate research findings into a set of well-founded but accessible talking points that would be useful to a member of Congress.

So we both went to DC, me to work in the APA and Library of Congress and Libby to work with a senator or congressman. It turned out that the APA wanted to go to press with the book much earlier than we expected. I worked like crazy in 1993-1994 and had the manuscript ready when my sabbatical to write it began. Nevertheless, I added hundreds of entries during that sabbatical year, 1994-1995, and worked on several APA book and history projects. Libby took a position on the staff of Senator Ted Kennedy, truly a transformative experience in her personal and professional life.

After a couple of years and with the APA's agreement, I wrote the HTML code to create a searchable Internet version of the book entries and mounted the website on the web server of my home institution, Central Washington University (CWU). This became the current *Today in the History of Psychology* website. I had no training in website development, so the site has always been functional but its coding rudimentary. During this time, Microsoft's Windows operating system emerged and support for DOS-based File Express database software waned. I transferred the calendar database to Microsoft Access format but I found it very difficult to manipulate the entries in Access. I transferred the entries to Microsoft Excel, software I did understand even though it's not relational database software. After that, I made matching additions and changes to the Excel version and to the web version but those versions didn't electronically talk to each other. I had reached the limits of my software abilities.

Changes to the calendar database and online versions continued at a diminishing pace for the next few years until another burst of entries in a sabbatical year in 2001-2002. The online version created then is pretty much the current version. I took on some university administrative positions at that time and expansion of the calendar database languished until my retirement in 2008. I regret that I was not able to keep up with new dates of birthdays, awards, significant publications, legislation, and professional association milestones. My wish to add photos and other images to the calendar has also gone unfulfilled. Nevertheless, the online calendar continues to be used by teachers of psychology at all levels. Whenever it disappears from the CWU website during software shuffles, we receive e-mails asking what happened. For some years, the calendar was the second-most-visited website on the CWU system, exceeded only by

hits on the Chimpanzee and Human Communication Institute website where Washoe, the chimp that used American Sign Language, was the alpha animal in our web world.

During these years I contacted different offices at the APA to see if any of them would like to host the website and continue its development. In 2016, the online calendar vanished from the web during a CWU web server housecleaning episode. Eight years into retirement, I was unaware of the interruption in access to the database until a user contacted me. Shortly after that Sue Frantz, then president of APA Division 2, the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP), reached out to me via my former academic department. My wish to find a new home for *Today in the History of Psychology* (THP) was matched by Sue's enthusiasm for STP sponsorship of the project. At this writing, STP is in the final stages of taking over the management and online presentation of the database. I'm very gratified to know that this history resource and teaching supplement will live on under the aegis of STP.

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