

Coding Control: A Close Reading of NIPS 360 FFS

The role of the US military in shaping modern computing has been a key focus in research on Cold War technology and software history. During the early digital age, the military's demand for automated data processing and system compatibility drove efforts to standardize hardware, software, and data formats. In response to growing command and control needs, the Department of Defense developed the National Military Command System Information Processing System 360 Formatted File System (NIPS 360 FFS), introduced by IBM in 1963. This system established a standardized data format and routines programmed in IBM's Job Control Language (JCL).

This paper traces the historical development of NIPS 360 FFS, focusing on challenges of implementation and standardization, particularly regarding the materiality of system components. A close reading of JCL statements will analyze how specific code elements reflect military culture, alongside an examination of the system's use during the Vietnam War and its broader legacy in digital computing.

Dr. Moritz J. Feichtinger, University of Basel – Departement of History

moritz.feichtinger@unibas.ch