



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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June 26, 1947 224 D

MIT

Electronic Computation

Dr. Warren Weaver  
Room 5500  
49 West 49th Street  
New York 20, New York

Dear Warren:

On May 17, 1946 we received notification from the Rockefeller Foundation of a grant-in-aid to M.I.T. for \$100,000. for a two-year period beginning July 1, 1946 to support a program of research and development on electronic digital computation. This program was aimed, not at producing a machine nor even a specific design, but rather at an appraisal and development of fundamental methods, both mathematical and instrumental, that would provide a well-founded basis for the subsequent design and construction of a machine.

At the end of our first year certain conclusions have become evident that alter our original program in a major way and which I wish to report to you at this time. The major conclusion is that the Navy Whirlwind project here under the direction of Mr. Jay Forrester has so evolved in objectives, scope, and security aspects that it is doing what we had expected to do under the Rockefeller Grant. It is doing this on a substantially larger scale than we had planned under your grant and with such vigor that the purpose of your grant to us is being met as fully as we know how to meet it. This being the case, we think the expenditure of Foundation funds for competitive work in the same institution is not justified and is in fact foolish. Our conclusion therefore is to terminate the work under your grant and to return to the Foundation the monies that have been sent to us by the Foundation.

A word of explanation about the changes in our Navy project Whirlwind that have led to the foregoing conclusion may be of interest. Initially project Whirlwind required

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some form of computer as a component of an analytical machine for a very special purpose. This project was classified. As the work proceeded it became evident that a computer adequate for the special purpose was in fact a very powerful general-purpose computer. The special-purpose use merely required some relatively minor auxiliaries that could be associated with the general-purpose machine. Because of strong Navy interest in general-purpose electronic digital computers, this turn of events enhanced rather than weakened Navy backing of Project Whirlwind. The project was encouraged to make fundamental studies of the sort contemplated in the Rockefeller project. Simultaneously the project was entirely declassified except for the one special-purpose use and the auxiliary equipment.

After the declassification the group working under the Foundation Grant and our Mathematics Department people became acquainted with the detailed objectives and scope of project Whirlwind, through a series of seminars and personal associations. It became evident that any work done by the Rockefeller group was of direct interest to the project Whirlwind group, and that they could exploit any development on a much more ambitious scale than could the Rockefeller group. The Rockefeller grant was indeed generous and well adapted to a careful deliberate study. On the other hand the Navy considers speed of action worth the necessary cost and is backing fundamental studies and simultaneous development at a level of expenditure sufficient to minimize the time to a working machine. The fundamental studies are well conceived and are drawing upon the full resources of the Institute on a scale limited by the availability of talent rather than by the means of utilizing this talent.

Under these circumstances the original purpose of the Rockefeller grant is being so effectively carried out under other auspices that we believe the Rockefeller project should be terminated.

Our records show that we have received on this grant from the Rockefeller Foundation a total of \$50,000. out of which our expenditures to the end of this month will have

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been about \$31,000. In view, however, of the fact that we have not, under this grant, achieved the objective for which the grant was made we would feel more comfortable about the whole situation if we returned the entire amount, \$50,000, to the Rockefeller Foundation and charged our expenditures to profit and loss and experience. I am therefore directing our bursar to send you our check for this full amount.

In conclusion may I again express our sincere appreciation to the Rockefeller Foundation for having made the grant and for its ever generous and helpful consideration of our projects and problems. When again we have something exciting which we believe worthy of your consideration you will undoubtedly hear from us.

Very sincerely yours,

*Karl T. Compton*  
President

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