A giant leap for Kansas City Fed technology

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Fifty-five years ago, the Tenth District began implementing a computer system that helped propel the Reserve Bank into the modern era of data processing.

By STAN AUSTIN and ETHAN ANDERSON

Well, it probably wasn't as momentous as Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon that same year, but in 1969 the Tenth District began implementing a computer system that allowed the Bank to make major strides into the digital age.

In February of 1969, the Bank's board of directors approved a project that would install IBM S/360 computers at the head office and at the three branches.

The S/360 series, which IBM introduced in 1964 and touted as "a turning point in mainframe history" enabled the Bank to significantly improve communication, data processing and check handling.

Additionally, according to an employee newsletter from March 1969, the computing system included database technology that, for the first time, "allows the user direct access to a central District data file from remote locations."

The system rollout began with the Omaha Branch in November 1969 and extended into early 1970 with the Denver and Oklahoma City branches. The last installation was at the head office in Kansas City.

"By adapting the latest data handling concepts to our operations and research activities, we will be better equipped to fulfill our responsibilities to the public, to our member banks, and to the national economy," Kansas City Fed President George H. Clay said when the project was approved.

Over the ensuing decades, the Bank would implement numerous technology innovations to help advance its mission. Today, information technology professionals make up nearly half of the District's workforce.

Media

A snapshot of employee Joye Julius at the mainframe console in Kansas City. Bank archives