Big Blue in the Bottomless Pit: A History of IBM Chile

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2:00-3:30 pm on Friday, April 4, 2008
Indiana University Bloomington, Herman B. Wells Library, Room LI 001

Refreshments will be available prior to the talk at 1:45 pm.
Following the talk, all interested individuals, especially students, are invited to stay for a reception and informal discussion with the speaker.

ABSTRACT

In recent years the history of computing community has pushed to move beyond histories set in the United States and focus greater attention on the experiences of other nations. The call for international computer history was initially interpreted as studying computer history in other parts of world. However, this approach also brings the transnational dimensions of computing to the forefront of historical analysis. The history of IBM offers a rich site for studying the international dimensions of computing. There is a significant body of scholarship that documents the activities of Big Blue in the United States and Western Europe, but regions of the developing world are noticeably absent from these studies.

This talk examines the history of IBM’s operations in Chile, a slender South American country bordered by the Andean cordillera and the Pacific Ocean. It explores how IBM machines contributed the events of Chile’s past and highlights the transnational aspects of IBM’s operations within the Latin American region. Chile’s computer history enriches our understanding of computer development and the behavior of multi-national corporations. It also illustrates the value of including Latin American experiences in computer history research.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Eden Medina is an Assistant Professor of Informatics and an Adjunct Assistant Professor of History at Indiana University, Bloomington. Her research bridges the history of technology and the history of Latin America and asks how studies of technology can enrich our understanding of broader historical processes. She received her Ph.D. in 2005 from MIT in the History and Social Studies of Science and Technology. In 2007 she received a Scholar’s Award from the National Science Foundation and the IEEE Life Members’ Prize in Electrical History. For more information on Dr. Medina, see: http://informatics.indiana.edu/edenm/.