



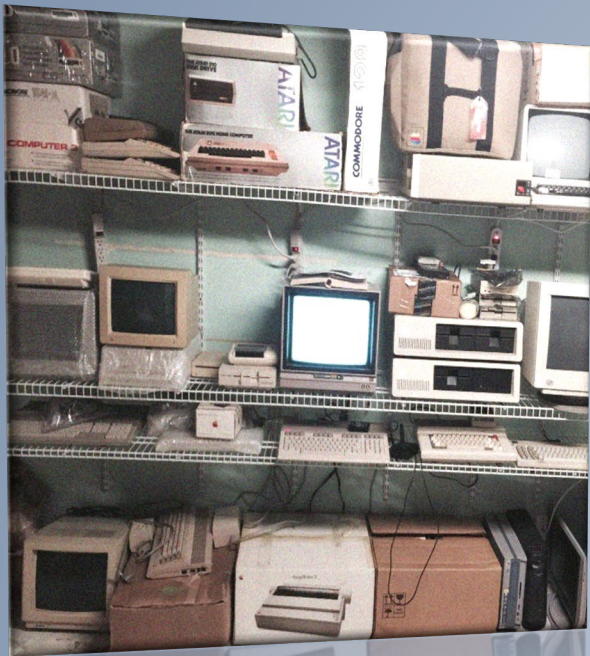
# The Computer Collection Lifecycle – 2025 Update From Cradle to Grave



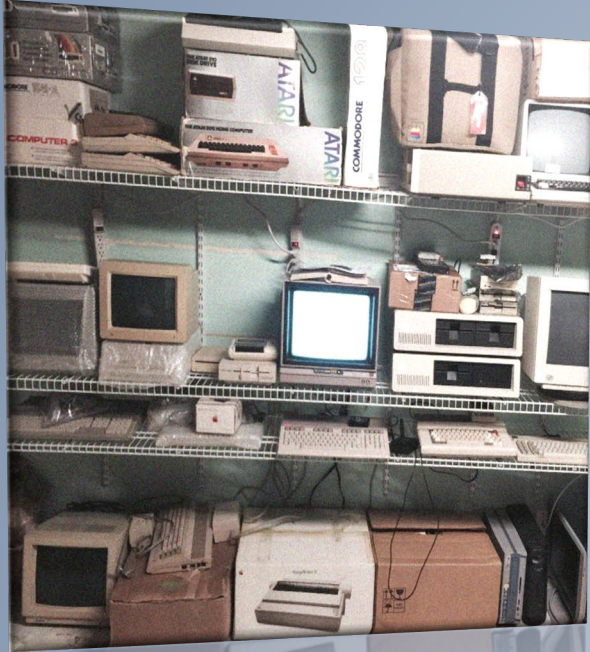
Dean Notarnicola  
Justin Hopkins  
VCF East 2025

# Before you start – What are your goals?

- › **Fun / nostalgia** - Consider modern replicas and/or emulation first
- › **Academic** – Research, document and preserve
- › **Showcasing** – Repair and restore
- › **Selling**
  - Thin out surplus or to support your hobby
  - Flipping for profit - Careful
    - Speculative – No, that TS1000 you found isn't worth \$1000
    - Potential lack of goodwill in the community
- › **Collecting to collect**
  - Beware the trap of hoarding and the rabbit hole of runaway collecting:  
“Just this one last thing, and that will be it.”







# Themes

- › Period/Era collecting (60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, etc.)
- › Vendor specific
- › Type of technology (CPU architecture, bus type, distinctiveness, rare, etc.)
- › Computer type (micro/mini/mainframe, SBC, portable, etc.)
- › Peripherals
- › Form factors





# Getting Help and Info

- › Newsgroups / forums / websites / mailing lists
- › Magazine and book archives
- › Clubs / User groups / Workshops / VCF talks!
- › Museums
- › Knowledgeable friends





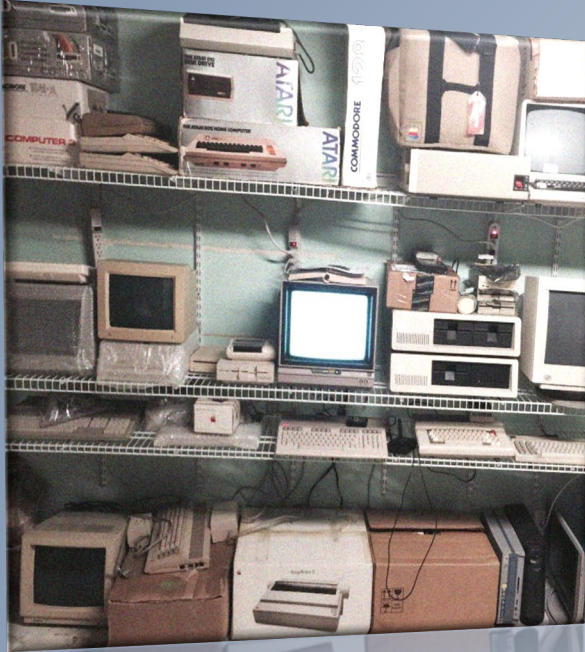
# What are you willing to do?



- › **Keep track of what you acquire as you acquire it!**
  - Spreadsheet, database, etc., with photos, condition and provenance (if available)
  - Makes things much simpler for everyone in the long run
- › **Repairs, at a minimum:**
  - Basic knowledge of electronics, electricity, digital and analog logic
  - Appropriate tools / Decent soldering kit (wire, flux, desoldering tools, etc.)
  - Spare components
  - Multi-meter
  - ESR meter; because you WILL be replacing caps
  - Schematics / documentation resources
  - Oscilloscope and logic probe (advanced)
- › **Create Space**
  - Viewable, usable or both?
  - Do you have the space to not look like a hoarder and annoy your family? 😊
- › **Storage**
  - Cool, dry, pest free, drop cloth, off the floor on racks or pallets.



# What are you willing to do?



## › Cleaning and restoration

- Careful! Brittle plastics and old components – marks of provenance
- Retrobright – Caution!
- Canned air
- Proper, safe cleaning products
- Rust mitigation
- Proper, safe lubricants



## › Not a stickler for authenticity?

- New molded or 3D printed parts
- Painting
- Mods that require alterations
  - › Weigh the value vs the damage
- Using modern replacement peripherals
  - › Storage replacements
    - SCSI2SD, Gotek, XT-IDE, FujiNet, etc.
  - › WiFi modems
  - › Multicarts







# Acquisition

› **Stuff you already have!**

› **Methods**

- Trade with friends / associates
- Forums / mailing lists / newsgroups
- Garage, yard and estate sales
- Flea markets / HAM fests / VCF swap meet and consignment!
- Storage locker sales/auctions
- Recycling centers
  - › Public – If they let you
  - › Retail - \$\$\$ 😞
- Dumpster diving / Curb watching / Town bulk pickup days
  - › Caution: Know the local ordinances



# Acquisition



## › Retail websites or storefronts

- Thrift shops – Many have caught on to the collector's market \$\$\$☹️
- Antique/Consignment shops – Rarely, but you never know what you'll find!
- Retro video game stores

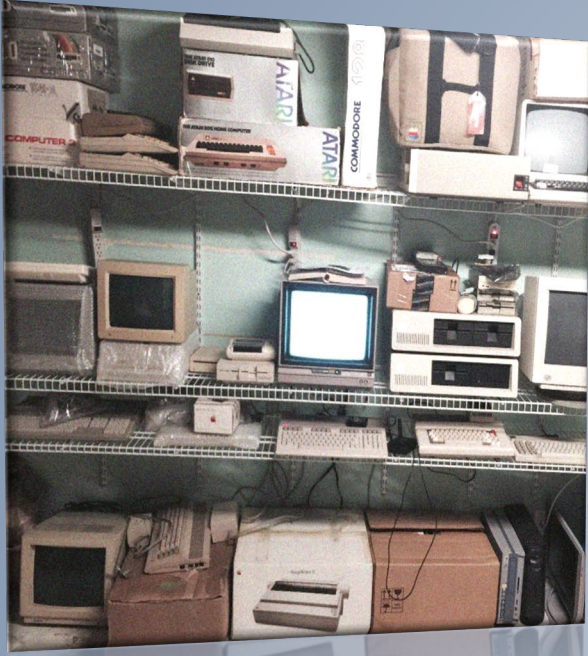
## › Asking (often overlooked)

- Talk about your hobby to anyone who will listen
- Build an information network





# Acquisition



## › Online

- eBay / Craigslist / Facebook / classifieds / forums / LetGo, etc.
  - › Buying remotely
    - What to look for
    - Keywords to watch out for
    - Valuations (eBay sold listings)

## › Cautions

- Misrepresentation
- Hidden damage
- Shipping
  - › Proper methods
- Payment and other scams



# Valuations

- › Clubs, eBay sold listings, auction house sales, etc.
- › **Catalog, photograph and value your collection periodically**
- › **Insurance**
  - Check your homeowner's policy for collectables coverage
    - › Check \$ limits before a rider is needed. They can vary from \$200 to \$5000 or more
  - Quoting from several sources averaged ~\$90/year for \$10,000 of coverage. **YMMV**





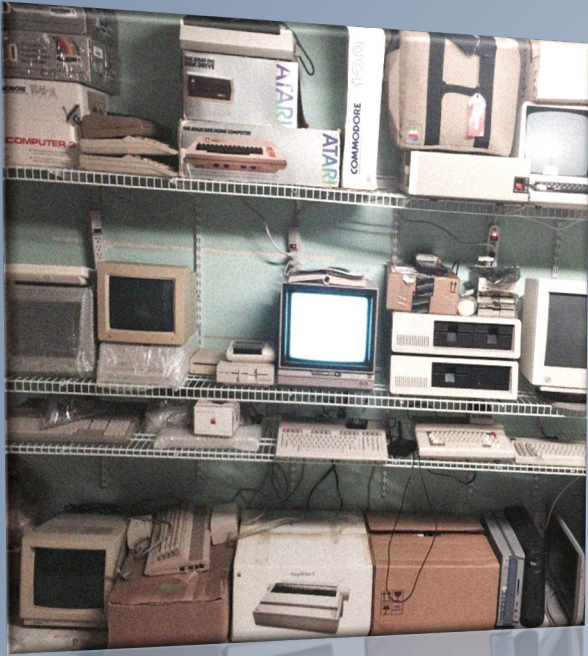
# Getting out - Voluntarily or not

## › Plan

- Talk to relatives, friends, user groups, museums
- Legal Last Will and Testament

## › Surrender

- Selling (possibly profitable but time consuming)
- Donating to museums, educational orgs
- Giving away
- **Beware of the dump** ☹️



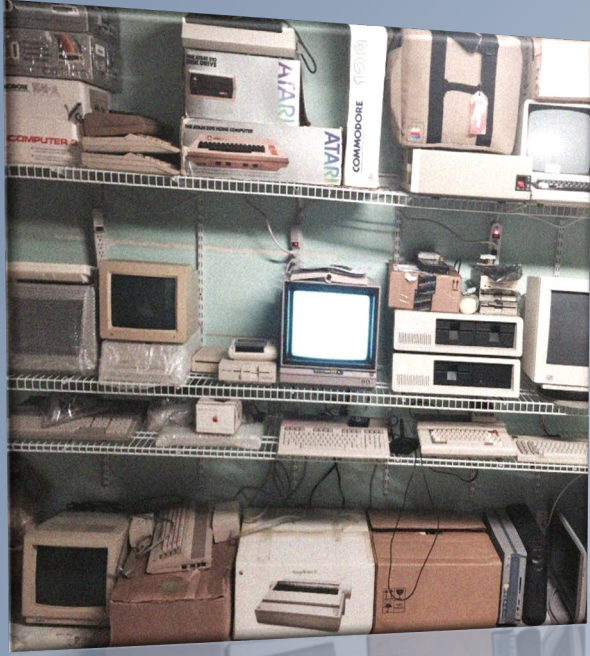


You can't take it with you  
And no, getting it buried  
with you is not an option...

Thoughts from a (former) estate planning attorney







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## Estate Planning has the word “Planning” in it for a reason

- › Estate auctioneers are very unfamiliar with vintage computer equipment
- › So are family members... (More on that later)
- › Take a detailed inventory of all items and tell your lawyer if you have any unusual or very valuable items. (Prototypes, rare items, etc.)
- › Do you have insurance on the items? If so, what is the insurance value?





# What can go wrong: A local story



Art | Art & Photography | Collecting News

## The \$1.1m Rembrandt discovered in a New Jersey dining room

By JustCollecting News staff  
2018-01-19

[addtoany]



## EVEN EXPERTS GET IT WRONG

The owner of the Rembrandt was actually an art dealer.

He bought it in the 1920's and just liked the way it looked, not because he knew it was a Rembrandt.

None of the family members liked it and kept it in the basement for years.



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## WORTHLESS JUNK?

When family members (or your executor) have no idea what they are looking at, this is the result.



### **A woman dropped off this old Apple computer worth \$200,000 at a recycling plant**

**AP**

[Associated Press](#) May 31, 2015, 6:01 AM EDT

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Her electronic waste is someone else's treasure.

A recycling center in the Silicon Valley is looking for a woman who dropped off an old Apple computer that turned out to be a collectible item worth \$200,000.



An Apple-1 computer, built in 1976, is displayed during the First Bytes: Iconic Technology From the Twentieth Century, an online auction featuring vintage tech products at the Computer History Museum on June 24, 2013, in Mountain View, California. Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

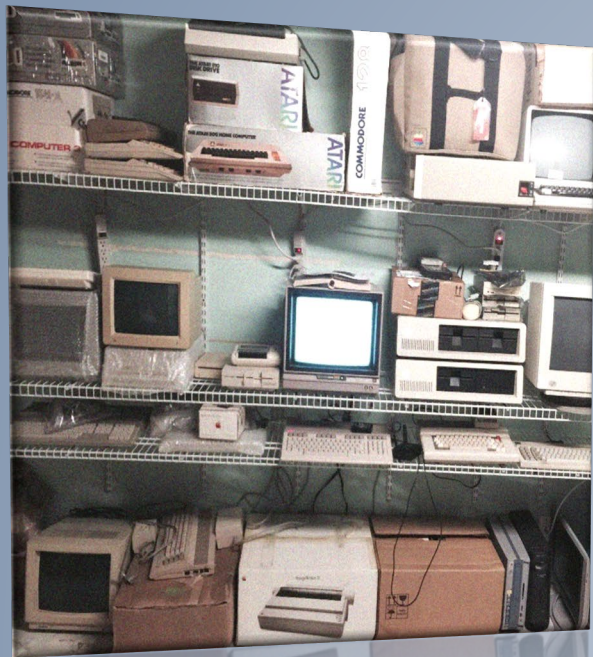


## Final Thoughts

- › Any inventory could be used in a divorce proceeding.
- › Detailed instructions are obviously better than general ones.
- › If donating, are you absolutely sure that the recipient is aware and able to accept the donation?
- › Is the recipient or beneficiary of your collection going to outlive you? Do you have an alternate beneficiary?







# Thank you!

