

HHC 2015 Conference Report

Richard J. Nelson

Introduction

The first Hewlett-Packard (can we still use this term based on the new corporate split guidelines?) Handheld Conference, HHC, was in Santa Clara California on September 29, 1979. One of my memories of that HHC is watching and listening to John Kennedy and William Kahn discussing HP Solve. We all just listened in amazement as they Q&A'ed the various aspects of its implementation.

The variety, interest, and excitement of that first Conference was just as evident at HHC 2015 in Nashville. Strongly woven into the conference was our theme of "Everything you always wanted to know about the current user-community projects, but were afraid to ask". We had several Prime oriented presentations but HP User Community activity of DIY calculators was a bigger part of the mix. You may see a list of the topics and speakers at <http://hhuc.us/2015/schedule.htm> so I won't list the very full two day schedule here. The HHC website at the same base link will have the group photo of the 35 attendees posted – one or two may be missing because of being late, etc. We took the photo after lunch on Saturday. We had two first time attendees.

A unique group

Of the many justifications for attending an HHC is the fellowship of a unique group of people. I remember the early days of the Conferences when we held weekly local meetings that would often go all night with dinner and breakfast bracketing the meeting. We would often wait for the sun to rise before going to breakfast.

In those early days, I traveled to foreign chapter meetings in Mexico or Belgium – two meetings that immediately come to mind. I looked over the foreign language – to me – speaking audiences noticing that those attendees were unique. They were the same members of their society that were technically oriented practical problem solvers who were also willing to share their experience and knowledge. I could easily approach any attendee and raise any question – and get accurate answers. HHC 2015 was also a normal unique Conference of technical people willing to share their wide range of experiences. I will bet that the attendees learned more at HHC 2015 than most attendees of so-called Educational Conferences simply because of the personal structure of the Conference.

Attendees

As mentioned above HHC attendees are a unique group of people. While the six-member HHC committee, listed below, does the actual work to make an HHC happen it is really the attendees who orchestrate the physical event itself. See <http://hhuc.us/2015/committee.htm> for email addresses.

HHC 2015 Conference Committee

Name	Responsibility
Richard J. Nelson	Hotel, Speakers' Schedule, Proceedings
Joseph K. Horn	Website
Gene Wright	Registration
Wlodek Mier-Jedrzejowicz	European Coordinator
Jake Schwartz	Official Videographer, Historian
Eric Rechlin	Dedicated All-Around Helper

Problems will always arise and because the Conference is a personal event – vs a company paid trip/conference – a big effort is made to keep costs as low as possible. Everyone is a volunteer. If there is a job to be done such as getting ice for the drinks during the breaks, or meals, or sharing a ride to the airport, or making an airport run for an attendee, everyone is there to “pitch-in”. This attitude of the attendees inspires the Committee to conduct an HHC.

Measuring success

When other HP users hear about an HHC they ask, “How was it?” Each attendee will answer differently depending on who is asking the question. It is difficult to convey the personal nature of an HHC and it is uncommon for a first time attendee not to enjoy the friendly fellowship. As I looked around the room, I noticed many familiar faces. Even the quiet attendees – those who do not talk very much – come back year after year.

One of the ways I measure the success of an HHC is to see if anyone is falling asleep (RS is exempted) or leaves the room to talk to someone because the topic is uninteresting. Another personal measure of success is having a wide range of well-prepared topics. If a topic is of less interest, it will soon change with the next presentation.

The Museum-of-HP-Calculators Forum comments are another measure. What are the attendees saying? Personally, I do not have the time to hang out on this forum, but I will check it after the Conference. For HHC 2015 the big topic of discussion seems to be the location of the next Conference. Do the comments assume that it was a great Conference, and what is important is the next one? See more on this later.

Best speaker

The attendees vote for the best speaker. I asked them what criteria that they use to decide their vote. The responded selection criteria – in no particular order.

1. Most interesting subject
2. Most entertaining speaker
3. I like the speaker personally
4. Most relevant subject

HHC 2015 attendees voted **Geoff Quickfall Best Speaker** for his “Woodstocks in the 21st century” presentation. A partial presentation video is available at: <http://panamatik.de/HHC2015Presentation.pdf>

Programming contests

We had two programming contests. Gene Wright conducted an RPN programming contest and Bill Butler conducted an RPL programming contest.

Gunter Schink won the RPN programming contest

Roger Hill won the RPL programming contest

Prizes

Each registration packet is numbered and it contains a corresponding blue numbered ticket. A corresponding ticket is drawn at random on Sunday afternoon for the donated prizes. In recent years, the “door Prizes” have been exceptional. HP was generous with their contributions and the community at large contributed so many that each HHC 2015 attendee had an opportunity to go home with three prizes. We divide the prizes into two groups, a normal group and a premium group. The normal group exceeded 90 items and the premium group was 14 items. The premium group are the very expensive, rare, or unusual items as selected by the Committee. Here are the premium Prizewinners.

HHC 2015 Premium Prizes and Winners in Draw order

#	Prize	Winner	Reg. #
1	DM-41	Tim Wessman	32
2	HP-41CL Board	Brad Barton	11
3	HP-75C	Torben Schink	3
4	HP-12C	Peter Marschell	6
5	HP-71B	John Mohn	27
6	HP-48 Prototype	Eric Rechlin	2
7	NP-25 calculator	Bob Patton	12
8	Blue HP-48 Calculator	Brian Walsh	23
9	HP-65A	Stephan Thomas	31
10	\$100 Gift Certificate at Vintage Calculators Store on ebay	Bill Butler	10
11	HP Xpander (never produced)	Sylvan Cote	35
12	HP Calculator Repair Certificate	Art Litka	25
13	HP-71 (Zenwand)	Wlodek	26
14	uWatch	Gene Wright	28

The best speaker and contest winners, in that order, get first pick from the normal group. Every HHC attendee gets an equal chance from the premium group.

Conference resource materials

A numbered registration packet (large envelope) contains the conference resource materials. It has a printed schedule, Programming Contest problems and rules, Attendee Name Label for each day, and a USB Drive with all related Conference resources. The 16 GB USB Drive has a folder called HHC2015ThumbDrive. Here is a directory listing of the folders.

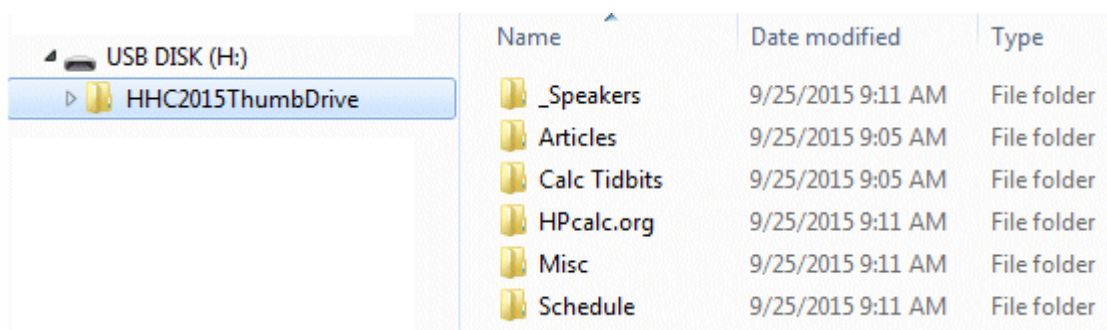


Fig. 1 – HHC 2015 USB Drive contents.

The Speakers presentations are in the _Speakers folder. I added the underscore character to force it to the top. There are four calculator related articles in the Articles folder. See Fig. 2. The original of the TitanFileCompleteCollection was only available as a PDF file.

Name	Date modified	Type	Size
Calc Farewell.pdf	9/20/2015 10:16 AM	Adobe Acrobat Document	259 K
Calc vs Tablet.pdf	9/20/2015 9:08 AM	Adobe Acrobat Document	350 K
Sell & Buy HPs.pdf	9/20/2015 12:23 PM	Adobe Acrobat Document	114 K
TitanFileCompleteCollection.pdf	9/22/2015 8:33 AM	Adobe Acrobat Document	721 K

Fig. 2 - Articles folder contents.

The Calc Tidbits was a power point presentation prepared to show a slide between the speakers as food-for-thought and discussion. It was never projected/shown, mostly for small-room mechanical reasons

The HPcalc.org folder, thanks to Eric Rechlin, is the up-to-date website. It is 1.4 GB and has 18,484 files in 273 folders.

The Misc folder has the best speaker form, Bob Prosperi's discussion topics which we didn't get to, a Conference Logo with a light blue background, the speaker email list, a working speaker folder list, and a photo of the USB Drive.

Note: The USB 2015 Conference Drives have an orange label on the back. The upper number is the write speed and the lower number is the read speed in Mega Bytes per second. The drives were not all the same which is typical of Cheap Chinese made products.



Fig. 2 – USB HHC 2015 Conference Drive.

The last Folder is V2 of the Schedule. V3 was a Friday Nashville up date and used for the Conference. The actual schedule is on the HHC 2015 website and may be considered the final (real time) version V4.

HHC 2016

After a Sunday group discussion, the HHC 2016 dates are September 17 & 18, 2016 – third weekend in September. A simple formula determines this date. Use the first weekend after September 15th. Many hotels still follow the legacy room cost schedule of lowering prices after the “high season” which ends on the 15th. If that weekend conflicts with a religious holiday, we move it to the next free weekend.

There is always a comment about the September date as being difficult for teachers. After many years of hearing this, we tried to hold the HHC at other times. We did and it did not increase teacher attendance and it was an inconvenience to many others. After a couple of decades of experience, we have found a “formula” that actually works for us. We always have teachers who attend and they have found a way to adjust their schedule. Having the Conference on a weekend is the best for everyone.

While the date for an HHC is easy to determine **the single most important decision for an HHC** (aside from having a good working Committee) is the location, usually a Hotel or University/college auditorium.

Everyone has suggestions and personal preferences, but one fact is quite clear. For the last few Conferences, the actual location used was NOT one that was proposed during the Conference itself. Location costs such as room rates, conference room rental rates, and food costs vary greatly from one location to another. These costs have soared during 2015 and that is the reason we ended up at a previous experienced location for HHC 2015. We investigated more hotels in the Nashville area than those of any previous Conference. The hotel industry is undergoing dramatic changes.

Everyone is excited *during* the conference for a location, but then they return to their normal lives and an actual hotel selection must be made. The hotel needs to be visited and the contract numbers “crunched” by the Committee. Someone has to negotiate with the hotel and sign a contract. No one actually wants to do this is time-consuming job. Suggesting a location is easy, getting into the details is a challenge. There is a reason we return to certain locations, they are time proven and we are known to be good guests.

The two suggested locations is Vancouver BC, Canada and Ft. Collins Colorado at HP's facilities. Geoff Quickfall will gather the cost data for the former and Tim Wessman will get the (no conference room

cost) information/approvals for the latter. Ft. Collins is the back up. I made a table of the overall considerations of each location. Tim prefers the former because it is a break from the normal “rat-race” but he is confident and eager for it to be a backup.

Several comments, especially from our overseas visitors, is that we must make a decision ASAP. The reason is the changing of currency values and the stronger dollar, which puts a pinch on non-US attendees.

In the past, I have suggested that we wait until the new year has started before talking to hotels. One reason is the economy changes mentioned above and the other is to give the Committee a rest period before starting the planning of another Conference.

Table 1 – Two Proposed HHC 2016 Locations Compared

Location	Advantages	Disadvantages
Canada	New location, conference familiar point person (Geoff), preliminary data is promising, flight costs seem reasonable, new side trip possibilities, could enter Canada by buss or driving.	Passport cost required if you don't have one, additional customs considerations, foreign currency conversions for everyone, HP GM cannot personally see our value to HP for future Conferences.
Colorado	Experienced location, very low cost, point person (Tim) prefers Canada, good side trip possibilities, greater HP participation; HP GM can personally see our value to HP for future Conferences.	Secondary travel from Denver to Ft. Collins adds to travel cost.

Because of the enthusiasm for these two locations, we didn't (want?) to discuss alternatives. See the next session.

HHC Conference list

I asked all of the attendees if they subscribed to the HHC List. All but two are on the list. Anyone can join the list at no cost. See: <http://lists.brouhaha.com/mailman/listinfo/hhc>. This is the ideal forum to discuss Conference issues. We used the list when we thought that we had a hotel shuttle issue. I have no idea how many attendees saw the information. Everything worked out OK, but it illustrated a weakness in our communications capability, especially since the Conference room where we were is underground and cell phone dead.

Richard J. Nelson

For the HHC 2015 Committee