

## THE BUGBOOK\* STORY

David Larsen began his faculty appointment at Virginia Tech in 1967 teaching electronics. Vacuum tube and solid state transistor technology was used until in the early 70's-- digital electronics and miniature integrated circuits became the current electronic technology.

David did not feel the educational books available at that time for digital electronics were effective teaching tools. He teamed up with Professor Rony for a few years and the first Bugbooks to teach digital electronics were written.

The teaching equipment for testing electronic circuits was not effective and David began designing teaching equipment for students to test and learn about various electronic concepts.

David was joined by Dr. Jon Titus and Dr. Chris Titus in the mid 70's. They started a company called the "Blacksburg Group" to write and produce books which were marketed as the "Blacksburg Continuing Education Series" about computers and other electronic equipment.

Professor Rony dropped out of the group and David, Jon and Chris functioned as the "Blacksburg Group" for about 10 years. Their office was located in Blacksburg, Virginia. This was a very successful time for the group. Jon was a very clever computer designer and writer - See "Mark8" computer at the micromuseum in The Village Green, Floyd, VA. Jon also designed several microcomputers for teaching computer automation. The MMD1- microcomputer, designed by Jon, is on display at Floyd Professional Center in Floyd. Chris was more of the software developer and writer. David contributed teaching methods, equipment design, developing business concepts and functioning as writer/editor. Several local folks were contributing authors to the book series - Dr. Paul Field, Chemistry Department at Virginia Tech authored books on home automation using the TRS-80 Radio Shack microcomputer and Dr. Robert Stone of Virginia Tech contributed books on solid state devices.

During this time there were many simultaneous activities by the Blacksburg Group ; producing 80 or so books; bringing in 31 authors to assist in writing

books; teaching 100s of professional workshops in the US and overseas; writing about 60 monthly columns on electronic topics for over 5 years. The books and equipment were used as the core for teaching basic digital electronics and automated computer instrumentation in 100s of schools, including high schools, community colleges, colleges and trade schools. There are dozens of folks in the local area that used the Bugbooks in classes at Virginia Tech or New River Community College. Mr. David Shanks, who is currently the Director of the New River Valley Small Business Development Center, attended my classes at Virginia Tech in 1977. Mr. Danny Vaughn, Network manager at Citizens Telephone in Floyd, learned from the Bugbooks at New River Community College in 1975/76. Danny told me "The Bugbooks and the course were a great introductory source for digital electronics- It gave me very good foundation for my nearly 30 years work here at Citizens". The digital electronics course and the computer automation course using the books and equipment written and designed by the Blacksburg Group were taught during the 70's and 80's by Professor Melvin Mabry at New River Community College (NRCC) in Dublin, Virginia.

It is really rewarding for me to talk to folks who learned from the Bugbooks in the early days of digital electronics and how they have been helped in their careers.

We don't know the exact number of books sold, but it was between 1 and 2 million. The books were also used in a number of foreign countries and some of the books were translated into Italian, German, Japanese, Spanish and of course, there were a few pirated versions. The Italians not only did the translation of many of the books but adapted the books and equipment in to the national school system to teach digital electronics and computer automation. Our group made many visits to Italy during 1976 to 1983 to help with this educational project.

The Books can be viewed online at [www.bugbookcomputermuseum.com](http://www.bugbookcomputermuseum.com) or the actual books are on display at The Floyd Professional Center (located in the Village Green) Floyd, VA [www.floydcountyvirginia.org](http://www.floydcountyvirginia.org).

The books have been out of print for at least 25 years, however, most are still available online at Amazon.com as used books. Many of the books are

now collectable and command a premium price - much higher than the original published price.

\*Bugbooks - series of books teaching digital and other electronics topics in 1974~1977. The "Blacksburg Continuing Education" series of books incorporated the Bugbook information, but was greatly expanded to cover computers, software and many other electronic topics. Published 1978~1985.



**Most of the books from BugBook Series**



**Japanese & Italian Translations**