

lead in

► Look at the picture on the right. Do you understand what it shows? If you do, judging from the title, too, can you guess what this Unit is about?

► It is clear that the Unit focuses on the history of the computer. Before you start working on it, answer the following questions, based on your background knowledge:

- When was the first electronic computer ever made? In the 18th, 19th, or 20th century?
- What do you think was the most striking characteristic of the first electronic computers?
- Can you name a number of scientists whose work contributed to the development of the first electronic computers?
- Have you included any women scientists? (*Hint:* You can start with **Ada Lovelace**, the woman in the painting on p. 213. Have you ever heard this name before? What is Ada famous for?)

► Activity 1: The following passage is about the picture above. Fill in the gaps using the words:

built / digital / architecture / employed / operating / leading / multidisciplinary

The picture, entitled *Living Large - Argonne's First Computer*, shows Argonne computer scientist Jean F. Hall, one of the many pioneer researchers (1) _____ at Argonne National Laboratory, a(n) (2) _____ science and research centre in the USA. The name of the computer she is working on, the first (3) _____ computer at Argonne, is AVIDAC, which began (4) _____ in 1953. AVIDAC stands for 'Argonne Version of the Institute's Digital Automatic Computer'. It was (5) _____ by the Physics Division of the Laboratory and was based on the (6) _____ developed by John von Neumann, a world (7) _____ mathematician.

► Activity 2: Match the events in Column A with the people and the years in Column B:

A		B	
1. FORTRAN (FORmula TRANslation), the first commercially available language	a) 1976 - computer hobbyists Steve Jobs and Stephen Wozniak	2. the first commercially viable home computer	b) 1998 - Ph.D. students Larry Page and Sergey Brin
3. the World Wide Web	c) 1953 - avant-garde composer, architect and engineer Iannis Xenakis	4. Google & the Google search engine	d) 1956 - a team led by John Backus at IBM
5. one of the first attempts to compose computer music	e) 1993 - British scientist Tim Berners-Lee		



"Do you realize that we're meteorites; almost as soon as we're born, we have to disappear?"
Iannis Xenakis

