

Econ 323

Economic History of the U.S.

Prof. Eschker

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QWERTY Keyboard

- Why is the keyboard arranged as it is?
- There are other keyboards that are faster (Dvorak), so why not use them?
- Paul David from Stanford
- Path Dependency and historical accidents
- By 1873, modern keyboard in place
- Modern example: Windows versus Mac

1874: Sholes & Glidden (Remington No.1)



Benefits of QWERTY Keyboard

- Salesman could type “TYPEWRITER” on first line.
- Slowed down typing so keys wouldn’t jam
- It was the first one widely adopted, so people learned how to use it.
- Use grew due to *network effects*. Costs fell due to economies of scale.
- Hard to learn other keyboard once QWERTY learned

Response to David

- Dvorak CAN'T be that much faster!
- This is especially true today, where computers make it possible to use ANY keyboard layout