Econ 323
Economic History of the U.S.

Prof. Eschker
Spring 2017
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