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Xerox Star

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The **Xerox Star**, officially known as the 8010, was a revolutionary computer [workstation](#) released as a commercial product in [1981](#). The Star workstation hardware was known as a Dandelion, or Dlion. Its CPU was a microprogrammed bit-sliced running a virtual machine for the Mesa computer language, a direct precursor to Modula 2 and Modula 3. The Star was developed by the Xerox Systems Development Division, and not at the famous [Xerox Palo Alto Research Center](#) as commonly supposed. Many of the ideas in Star originated at PARC, such as [WYSIWYG](#), [Ethernet](#), and network services such as Directory, Print, File, and internetwork routing. However, the product versions were distinct from the research versions.

The Xerox Star was not originally meant to be a stand-alone computer, but was part of an integrated Xerox "personal office system" that also connected to other workstations and network services via Ethernet. The Xerox Star was the first commercial computer to use a [graphical user interface](#) (GUI) with the familiar desktop with icons metaphor and a [mouse](#). In this it borrowed several designs from the earlier [Xerox Alto](#) computer.

The Xerox Star is considered by many to be a commercial failure because only about 25 thousand were sold. However, the Star product laid important groundwork for today's computers.

There is a common story that a trip to Xerox PARC by [Apple Computer's Steve Jobs](#) led to the GUI and mouse being integrated into the [Apple Lisa](#) and, later, the first [Apple Macintosh](#). This is only partially true. Steve Jobs was shown the [Smalltalk-80](#) programming environment which had a small portion of the GUI features in the Star—for example it didn't have a desktop or icons. The Lisa engineering team saw Star at its introduction and came back and converted what had been a text-based user interface into a GUI. The initial Macintosh interface was a simplified version of the Lisa interface (i.e., single-tasking), supporting only a single [floppy drive](#) instead of the [hard drive](#) of the Lisa (and Star).

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