



The Halfway Point, Let's Take a Look

Since January 2026, I have focused on the Business Technology Association's (BTA's) 100th anniversary year in this space. That focus continues. This month's Flashback, seen in the bottom right corner of this page, features the cover of the July 1975 issue of the NOMDA Spokesman magazine, a predecessor to Office Technology. The issue provides a celebration, of sorts, of the halfway point to our 100th year. On the cover, you can see "50" surrounded by "Our Golden Anniversary Convention" and "1926 NOMDA 1975."



1975? Not 1976? It does say "Convention" and not "Year." With a convention held each year starting in 1926, that is 50 conventions. Plus, the convention occurred in the first month of the 1975-1976 year for the association, then the National Office Machine Dealers Association (NOMDA). In that same 1975-1976 year, the association reached its 50th anniversary in January 1976. So, yes, "50" with "1975" works. That settled, let's move on, looking inside the vintage issue.

Let's start with a quick look at the preview of the 50th Anniversary Convention. It took place July 30 to Aug. 2, 1975, at the Minneapolis Auditorium & Convention Hall in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The schedule included a variety of educational sessions. Some of the session titles still resonate (somewhat) today, such as "The Right Way & The Wrong Way to Sell Copying Machines." Others are a bit more dated, such as "A Place for the Dealer in Microfilm." The entertainment the first evening: Glenn Ash & Jeanne Steel. Who? The closing night entertainment: Tex Beneke and The Modernaires. I have heard of Tex Beneke; no doubt his backup singers would not sound too modern today.

Moving on to my favorite discovery in this

issue: An image of the front of the program from the association's first convention. The full text reads. "Program, First Annual Convention, National Association of Typewriter Dealers, (Organized at Kansas City, Missouri, January 22-23, 1926), Chicago, Ill., August 26, 27, 28, 1926, Convention Hall, Palmer House." There you have it — an image documenting the start of our association. Where is the hard copy of that program today? I don't know. As I write this, I am looking at the image for the first time. I will keep my eye out as I search through the association's archives in the coming weeks. There is also the image of a convention program cover that reads: "National Office Machine Dealers Association, 25th Anniversary, International Convention and Trade Exhibit, June 28 - July 1, 1950, Palmer House, Chicago, Illinois." I will look for a hard copy of that program, too. Note that the two conventions, nearly 24 years apart, were held at the same venue.

The vintage issue also lists the locations of the association's first 49 conventions. Only one convention on the list occurred in Kansas City, Missouri, BTA's home today. The 1936 convention took place at the Muehlebach Hotel in downtown Kansas City. ChatGPT tells me the hotel still stands today (I live here, but was uncertain), but it is not serving as a hotel. However, its historic lobby, ballrooms and meeting spaces are part of the adjacent Kansas City Marriott Downtown.

I am almost out of space here, so one more nugget. In the vintage issue, then NOMDA President-Elect Bob Kuykendall (I had dinner with him and his wife in Abilene, Texas, in the summer of 1994) wrote about his enthusiasm for "the potential of NOMDA during the next 50 years." Yes, he was thinking through to us and the association of 2026. Bob's enthusiasm has proven to be well placed. ■

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FLASHBACK



The association's magazine cover 51 years ago this month
— the NOMDA Spokesman, July 1975.