

# Laptop used for first US presidential email finds a buyer

April 17 2014

---

The laptop computer that Bill Clinton used in 1998 to send the first-ever US presidential email has sold for \$60,667 in an online auction, the Boston auction house that handled the transaction said Thursday.

RR Auction did not disclose the name of the buyer of the still-functional Toshiba Satellite that Clinton borrowed to email veteran astronaut John Glenn, who was orbiting Earth aboard the space shuttle Discovery.

The laptop, with accessories and full documentation, originally belonged to White House physician Robert Darling, who lent it to Clinton when NASA informed the president that Glenn wanted to swap emails with him.

"It's a remarkable collection that represents the dawn of a new age, combining America's greatest technological achievements—space travel and the Internet," said RR Auction vice president Bobby Livingston in a statement.

Glenn, a US senator who in 1962 became the first American astronaut to orbit the Earth, was completing a nine-day mission on Discovery in November 1998 when he sent word that he wanted to email Clinton, who was at the time was visiting friends in his home state of Arkansas.

"This is certainly a first for me, writing to a president from space, and it may be a first for you in receiving an email direct from an orbiting spacecraft," wrote Glenn, then 77.

Clinton was keen to get the message, but when his staff couldn't readily find him a computer to do so, Darling stepped forward with his trusty Toshiba and his personal AOL email address.

"Hillary and I had a great time at the launch," emailed Clinton, referring to Discovery's liftoff from the Kennedy Space Center a few days earlier.

"We are very proud of you and the entire crew, and a little jealous."

In an interview in 2000, Clinton said he never used email due to security concerns, but acknowledged emailing Glenn in space as well as some US marines and sailors at sea at Christmas.

Prior to selling the laptop in 2000, Darling took care to keep the historic email exchange on its hard drive, and made a copy on its internal floppy drive, while deleting all other data.

He also typed up a memo about the landmark [email](#), saying Clinton "seemed to really enjoy himself particularly when he pressed the 'send' key and realized that at that instant his message was traveling through cyberspace and into real space."

© 2014 AFP

Citation: Laptop used for first US presidential email finds a buyer (2014, April 17) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-04-laptop-presidential-email-buyer.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.