Exhibit Gives First-Hand Look at How Computers Were Used to Build the 777 Airplane

A new exhibit now is open at the Museum of Flight, giving visitors a first-hand look at how The Boeing Company built the 777 -- the first airplane to be 100-percent digitally designed and preassembled on a computer.

The 26-foot-long, four-part display, developed and donated to the museum by Boeing, is located in the museum's T. A. Wilson Great Gallery -- a 143,000-square-foot glass and steel showcase. The gallery is named for retired Boeing Chairman T Wilson, who led the original funding effort to construct it.

The exhibit includes several elements, including two large panels with illustrations and text created on Boeing computers; the Computerworld Smithsonian Award given to Boeing in 1995 for its "creative and innovative use of computer programs in manufacturing to benefit society"; and a physical model of Humod, also known as CATIA-man -- the computer-generated person created by Boeing to make the 777 more people-friendly. CATIA-man interacts with the aircraft's spaces and equipment.

CATIA (Computer-Aided Three-dimensional Interactive Application), was developed by Dassault Systemes of France and marketed by IBM in the United States. The CATIA system lets Boeing engineers simulate the geometry of the airplane design on the computer, eliminating the need for the costly and time-consuming construction of a physical mockup and use of drafting boards. "100 percent digital design was a real paradigm shift," according to Larry Olson, information systems director for Boeing Commercial Airplane Group.

"The purpose of the display is to recognize all of the folks who played a role in bringing the 777 to life," Olson said. "In addition, the Museum of Flight archives much of the history of The Boeing Company and can make it available to the public in a much easier way than Boeing can," he said.

An interactive computer station will be added soon so people can see how computers are used to design airplanes. Silicon Graphics Inc., also participated in the creation of the exhibit. The 777 exhibit will be on display during regular business hours through June 1998. After that it will be put on permanent display at the Boeing Tour Center in Everett.

The exhibit will be open July 12 when the museum celebrates the 10th anniversary of the opening of its Great Gallery. The celebration is from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. A birthday celebration led by Wilson, begins at 11 a.m at the museum, which is located at 9494 East Marginal Way South.

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