

# Robert Gundlach Biography

## Robert Gundlach

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# Biography

Robert Gundlach nurtured the new science of xerography from its infancy to its adulthood. Today his well-reared child--the photocopier--is largely taken for granted. Although the son of a cosmetic chemist, Gundlach found physics to be more accessible and intriguing.

In 1949 he earned a B.S. in physics from the University of Buffalo, New York. He pursued but did not finish a M.S. degree in physics from the same institution, opting to work instead. After a short stint with the Durez Plastic Company, Gundlach joined the Haloid Company, a small photographic firm.

He quickly made his mark. While Chester Carlson, the inventor of xerography, and others were developing the first fully automated photocopier, the model 914, Gundlach worked on later models. Early photocopiers were cumbersome and slow, requiring three or four minutes to produce a single copy. In his first year with Haloid, the 25-year-old Gundlach had three patentable ideas. He developed a process that allowed multiple copies to be produced from the same master image, thus significantly increasing the copier's speed. He also created a process by which solid figures and shapes could be reproduced, which previously had not been possible.

Eight years after Gundlach's arrival, the Haloid Xerox 914 copier made its debut. This machine, which could produce a clear copy in less than a minute, initiated Haloid's transformation into the giant Xerox Corporation. With 15-year exclusive patent rights to xerography, Xerox--and Gundlach--refined copier machines undisturbed. By the mid-1980s, Xerox copiers could make 120 copies per minute.

In 1975 Gundlach became the first Xerox research fellow. He continues to head Xerox's EXITE Lab, a research facility, though he was granted a partial retirement in 1986 to work on his own inventions, which include a snow-making system and a backpack.

Gundlach's contributions to the Xerox Corporation, over 100 patents, set the standard for copier companies that emerged after Carlson's patents expired. Not only did Gundlach's ideas transform Xerox into one of the world's largest companies, they turned the trade name Xerox into a generic term used to designate photocopiers of all types.