

Editorial Preview

This is the first Special Issue ever published by the *MIS Quarterly*. This issue is the result of the 1982 Research Program of the Society for Management Information Systems.

Background

In May of 1981 a meeting was held in Chicago and attended by sixteen SMIS members who had special interests in facilitating research in our field. The attendees were practicing MIS managers (line and staff) and representatives of the MIS academic/research community. There was rapid agreement about the overall need. "As various managements of MIS functions throughout government and industry develop their plans for the next three to ten years, it is increasingly clear that a number of issues are beginning to arise that 1) will significantly affect the redeployment of available resources in the near future, but 2) are much too ill-defined at this stage to permit effective prioritization and control." In addition, the group agreed that "the research and development effort necessary to put manageable boundaries around these areas greatly exceeds the time, money, and personnel any one organization can dedicate for that purpose."

As a result of the meeting, SMIS decided to sponsor an initial one year Research Program. The Program's objectives, as outlined in the prospectus, were "to promote effective research on issues critical to senior I/S practitioners and to provide a solid basis to prepare professional managers to deal effectively with the major I/S concerns in the 1980's." Seven topics were initially selected for which "state-of-the-art" research study proposals were solicited. Sixty five proposals were received and evaluated by the research committee. Seven papers were commissioned by the Society in five of the critical issue areas.

There were two unique aspects about the initial SMIS Research Program. First, the Program focused on a "prioritized set of critical issues." Second, two committee members were appointed to work with each author, giving advice and ensuring that the papers would be relevant to and understandable by senior practitioners. A hard deadline for paper completion was set and five research papers were deemed useful to our profession.

Having the papers in hand, the next task that faced the committee was how to disseminate their contents for maximum usefulness to the profession. After considerable discussion, it was decided that a special issue of the *MIS Quarterly* might be the best vehicle for this purpose. The Executive Council of the Society approved publication of the papers in a special issue of the *MIS Quarterly* to be provided to Society members and individual subscribers at no additional cost. Here, then, are the contents of the papers commissioned by the Society to address some of the Critical Information Systems Issues of the 1980s.

Content

The first article in this issue is by John Rockart and Christine Bullen of MIT and Leslie Ball of Babson College. This article sets the environment for those following by looking into the future role of the MIS executive. The predicted trends should be carefully examined by all of us deeply interested in information systems. The second article by Blake Ives of Dartmouth College presents a state-of-the-art paper covering the managerial use of graphics and color. We all know that graphics coupled with the use of color will be expanding rapidly over the next several years. This article, including its extremely informative Appendix, should be very helpful in providing guidelines to both builders and users of managerial graphic systems.

The third article deals with the ever important subject of computer related personnel. Kathryn Bartol of the University of Maryland and David Martin of the American University give us the perspective of specialists from outside the MIS discipline. The authors are personnel experts and provide the reader with an up-to-date summary of what is known about managing human resources in the information systems field. Again, a very helpful Appendix is provided which summarizes research on information systems personnel.

Margi Olson from New York University provides intriguing insights into the impact that new office technology will have upon organizations and their personnel. As with the other subjects covered by these articles, office technology will be substantially different in the 1990s than it is today. Olson's article should stimulate ideas concerned with getting ready for the predicted change. Another major change expected in the next decade is on expansion in inter-organizational (inter connected) information systems. Stephanie Barrett and Benn Konsynski discuss the concepts underlying these systems and suggest some of the organizational impacts we may expect from these types of networks.

The reader will note that all of the papers address future oriented issues. They also attempt to identify some useful research in each area that should be considered to facilitate our understanding of these new phenomena. We, the Committee, trust that these ideas presented in these articles will stimulate the reader to begin thinking about how these "Critical Information Systems Issues for the 1980s" should be addressed.

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Conclusions

Based on the results of the 1982 Research Program, the SMIS Executive Council has decided to make the Program a permanent part of the Society's activities. An outline of the 1983 program will be available after the new year. The Executive Council should be commended for their support of this new approach.

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