Editorial Preview

This issue is composed of "applications" articles. The first article by Halloran, *et al.*, represents the thoughts of a number of MIS practitioners on the subject of the quality control of the system development process. I would suggest that readers examine the job titles of the authors to put the article in perspective.

A major problem faced by both computer users and by vendors is that of contractually defining penalties associated with inoperable computer systems. Because of the unavailability of acceptable methods, the user to date frequently has suffered the consequences of inoperable or inefficient systems performance. Our second article by Bateman and Wetherbe addresses one aspect of this problem and provides one approach to a part of the problem. I would like to see other work in this area. One enhancement would be to add the area of operating and purchased applications software to the model. I am aware of one very large company which attempted to acquire and install a payroll package for all its divisions, plants, and offices. $300,000 into this $1.1 million project, they found the package so machine inefficient, they decided to retain the old patchwork system. No doubt the user, not the vendor, suffered the entire loss. An article discussing contract protection against these sorts of losses would receive serious attention for publication in the **MIS Quarterly**.

Our third article is unusual. This article by Highsmith introduces many concepts and ideas for consideration by the system designer. One of the perceived functions of the **MIS Quarterly** is to introduce new material to its readers; "new" may mean that the material is common in other areas of management or the social sciences, but transferable and unfamiliar to MIS professionsals. I believe that the Highsmith article clearly satisfies this objective for new material.

We have recently been seeing a number of articles which suggest the integration of data processing systems, word processing systems, and/or administrative systems into the organization. Our fourth article, by Swanson and Culnan, addresses a related topic, document-based systems. Accepting the authors' definition of a document-based system as one based primarily on a collection of documents as contrasted with a collection of data, one can clearly accept the notion that such systems are pervasive, as well as being awkward and expensive. Based upon a study of twenty-two such systems, Swanson and Culnan provide the first exploration of these systems to appear in the **MIS Quarterly**.

Another area of considerable concern recently is the auditing of EDP systems. The authors of our final article in this issue, Rittenberg and Purdy, provide a survey of the role of internal auditors during the EDP design phase. Forty-four organizations participated in the survey and the results should be of interest to those wrestling with EDP auditing issues.

Our readers will note that this issue is late in appearing. The lack of enough publishable material contributed greatly to the tardiness. I encourage all of you to consider submitting material to the **MIS Quarterly**. We also encourage any reader wishing to serve as a reviewer of manuscripts to contact us. Another form of participation which I consider to be extremely important is the comments we receive from readers and publish in our "From Our Readers" section. Jim Scott's contribution in this issue continues this tradition.

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GARY W. DICKSON
SENIOR EDITOR

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