

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS QUARTERLY

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SMIS Awards Paper Process Description

Introduction

A major objective of The Society for Management Information Systems is to enhance communications about information resource management among professionals in the field, line and staff executives, managers, educators, and other professionals. One way in which the Society pursues this objective is an Annual Paper Competition. The competition encourages information systems professionals to share significant IRM/MIS developments which advance the understanding of the conceptual foundations and/or practical applications in the field through published papers.

The paper competition was initially proposed by Herbert Z. Halbrecht, former SMIS president. The competition prize provides a continuing positive incentive to attract papers of high impact from all members of the IRM/MIS community. The Society is truly grateful to those organizations which contribute to the award prize.

This edition of the *MIS Quarterly* contains the papers selected as finalists during the 1980 competition.

The selection panel

A panel of highly qualified judges was selected from both industrial and academic backgrounds. These judges were Erwin M. Danziger, Director, Administrative Data Processing, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; Gerald M. Hoffman, Executive Vice President and General Manager, Amoco Computer Services, Standard Oil Company-Indiana; James H. Scott, Manager, Management Systems Division, Procter and Gamble Company; Norman Statland, Partner and National EDP Director, Price-Waterhouse Company; and M. L. Weil, Director, Information Systems, Anchor Hocking Corporation.

The selection process

The competition was announced through Call for Papers in a wide variety of professional journals and through mailings to SMIS Institutional Members. Basic ground rules for candidate papers were defined. The work described, which yielded the benefit, could take the form of a management information system, an approach to developing information systems, a technique for improving MIS activity, or a technique for improving management of MIS. The work had to have been implemented, evaluated, and judged to have had significant beneficial impact on the user organization.

Since the principle thrust of SMIS is to top management, the paper needed to address the management of information within a complex organization rather than stress the application of computer technology. The impact on the organization of the work was validated by senior management of the firm or user organization.

Following the lead of the first competition in 1979, it was agreed that the judging would be based on five major criteria. The primary one was *innovation*. The judges were looking for the degree to which the activity described is expanding the state of the art.

Close behind this were *impact* and *re-applicability*. Is it addressing a *real* problem? Is it a significant problem? Is the solution successful with respect to economics, to its being operational, and to its being broadly used within the organization? What is the degree of general applicability—of transferability to another organization or to another industry? How widespread is the problem?

Of much less weight but still of sufficient importance to consider were *implementation* and *literary quality*. Here, the committee looked for how well it was applied, considering the degree of difficulty, the element of

risk, the time required, and its acceptance by the users. For literary quality, style, persuasiveness, and clarity were considered.

Initial candidates were asked to submit abstracts and impact statements. Thirty-five serious inquiries resulted in the submission of sixteen abstracts. The judges reviewed each abstract with a view toward its appropriateness to the Call for Papers and the criteria stated above. Eight finalists were chosen to prepare full papers for consideration by the Panel.

While all eight finalists indicated they would prepare full papers, only six completed their entries in time for the final judging. Each judge received copies of all finalist papers and independently prepared a ranking of the papers, supported by appropriate rationale.

The Panel members brought rather different rankings for the papers to the final judging. The papers represented diverse topics, well-treated in their own right, all describing high impact systems or approaches to IRM/MIS problems. The final prize determinations were made only after substantial discussion within the Panel.

Results

The Panel reached the following determination: first place: "Incorporating Data Dictionary/Directory and Team Approaches into the Systems Development Process," Phil Semprevivo, University of Albany (SUNY); second place: "Developing a Cost Justified Nation-wide Communications Network: A Systems Approach," George M. Perry, Investors Diversified Services, Inc.; third place (a tie): "Evolving and Implementing a Worldwide Management Information System (IMS/MIS)," Arnold M. Kneitel, E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Company, and "AMANDA: A Computerized Document Management System," Ronald Schwartz, Joan Fortune, and Julian Horwich, American Critical Care.

Future competitions

Contestants in future competitions need to bear in mind the top management thrust of SMIS. Work being considered for submission must clearly define the top management issues involved—the impact, the system support for top management decision making, the timely/effective presentation of information to top management, *etc.* Papers should clearly describe management processes involved which might be unique in achieving the reported impact. The impact must be discussed and separately validated by executive management. Contestants need to provide a conceptual framework within which to place the work described, and to address the reapplicability of their work in other business environments. In short, a context, both organizational and technical, must be provided.

The prize competition is being repeated for 1981. Prizes will be awarded at the SMIS Annual Conference in September, 1981. Abstracts should be submitted before January 15, 1981, to Dr. Robert A. Rouse, Associate Director, Center for the Study of Data Processing, Box 1141, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri 63130.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Society, I want to thank those who entered the 1980 competition and those firms and individuals whose continued contribution of prize money makes the competition possible. The panel of judges deserves special thanks for the time and effort required to select finalists from abstracts, and prize winners from finalists. A special acknowledgement goes to Jim Scott for the leadership he provided in carrying the spirit of the competition during its first two years.

Dr. Robert A. Rouse
Chairman
1980 SMIS Awards Paper Competition