Preface

Welcome to the second issue of the *Journal of Microcomputer Systems Management!* We are quite excited about its contents and about the future of this publication. In this issue, three articles address various facets of microcomputer management and use, an interview with an academic computing coordinator is presented, interesting hardware and software developments are discussed, and a book about management information systems is reviewed.

Two of the three articles address the use of knowledge-based or expert systems. In the first article, "An Integrative Management Approach to Developing Knowledge-Based Systems for Management Decision Making," Robert J. Mockler and Dorothy G. Dologite address some of the common difficulties encountered in developing knowledge-based systems within the business environment. Although defining in detail how business decisions are made is not an easy process, this does not preclude or inhibit the development of systems designed to replicate that decision-making capability. The authors suggest an approach to the development of small, limited systems that provides a framework for the development of larger, more complex ones. Using marketing planning as an example, they outline four ways to achieve these objectives.

Clive C. Sanford and Thomas Marshall, in the second article entitled, "Admissions Advisor: A Micro-Based Expert System Using Certainty Factors," present an example of a specific expert system that is designed to replicate the decision-making process of a masters of business administration program's admissions director. Their emphasis is on the need for a careful, disciplined approach to the design of the system. For readers new to expert systems, this article is of interest for the way the developmental path is traced and explained from inception to implementation. Others will find the process of data organization and knowledge acquisition quite interesting.

Our third article addresses a specific example of a "hot" topic in today's rapidly changing information technology environment, i.e., the use of lawsuits to protect software development techniques and the implementation of such techniques. Over the course of the last several years, we have seen an increasing number of attempts to define the boundaries of copyright and patent laws as they pertain to computer software. Although only a few of these have actually been completely litigated, one particular case has been receiving a significant amount of attention in the last few months, namely the case of *Apple Computer v. Microsoft Corporation and Hewlett-Packard Company*. Cherie Sherman Werbel and Phillip Werbel detail the background of this case and the implications of the conclusions reached to date.

Our editor, Mehdi Khosrowpour, interviewed Gerry Santoro, Assistant Director of Microcomputer Applications at Pennsylvania State University's Center for Academic Computing. The interview reveals that, although Santoro operates in the academic environment, the problems encountered in controlling and supporting microcomputers therein are quite similar to those found in the business community. Users as owners of computer resources still require a significant amount of support in terms of
training and troubleshooting. His comments about the future of microcomputer technology in both academic and business settings are thought provoking.

As usual, we have reviews of hardware and software. In the hardware section, Hardware Review Editor R. Scott Huebner discusses the factors involved in determining if a "clone" computer can be used and, if so, where to buy one. Our Software Review Editor, Charles A. Creswell, provides an in-depth review of RapidFile, entry-level database software from Ashton-Tate, the makers of the leading database package, dBase III+. The final pages contain a review of David Kroenke's book, Management Information Systems, by Mehd Khosrowpour.

We hope you enjoy the contents of this issue. Since our objective is to provide articles that will both interest and stimulate you, we welcome your letters, comments, and suggestions.

Glenn Byerly
Associate Editor


Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:
I have served as a referee for a number of conferences, as a reviewer and guest editor, and invited editor for a number of journals and periodicals. It is my honest opinion that the new Journal of Microcomputer Systems Management will be a valuable addition to any computer scientist, decision maker, manager, and, specifically, educator.

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