Preface

One of the cardinal rules of communication, whether oral or written, is to accurately identify your audience. In many instances, the audience is homogeneous which often makes the communication process somewhat easier. At other times, the diversity of the audience makes communication much more challenging. This journal is dedicated to exploring managerial issues related to microcomputer systems in both academic and business environments. Although this task may be more difficult than only addressing one environment exclusively, we believe the ideas presented herein can help to further enhance the ties between business and academia.

Both environments have seen microcomputer usage proliferating in the last eight years. In the academic setting, all disciplines have found new software available to aid their students in a variety of different tasks. These range from the use of generalized, common packages like spreadsheets, word processors, and data base to more specialized software designed for the specific discipline. Businesses have seen a similar expansion of microcomputer capabilities. Although the common packages previously mentioned continue to be used heavily, more and more companies are turning to specialized and custom software to gain further benefit from the micro.

This, the third issue of the journal, addresses both of the audiences described above. In our first article, "Microcomputer Purchase Decisions in Small Retail Businesses" by Gerry Gingrich and Earl Honeycutt, Jr., the authors explore the hardware/software acquisition process. Although much previous research has focused on reasons for buyer dissatisfaction, this research aims at establishing a link between the nature of the acquisition process and the resultant level of satisfaction. Issues explored include pre-sale information gathering, choice of vendors, and short and long-term satisfactions.

Richard Yellen, in the second article, develops "A Methodology for Evaluating Tutorials for Computer Application Software." Any enterprise, facing the high cost of training computer users, needs to choose from a variety of training methodologies. Making this choice is not an easy task. Often, one or more tutorials are available for the software. This paper focuses on a method for evaluating self-paced tutorials. The desired result of any software training is effective use of the package by the trainee. Therefore, one potential measure of the effectiveness of the training is the willingness of the trainer to use the software in an appropriate problem-solving situation. Yellen proposes a way of determining which tutorial to use and documents its use with one particular set of tutorials and suggests other possible uses for the methodology.

In today's academic environment, the demand for use of the institution's computer resources is constantly increasing. Allocating this usage among various departments, courses, and open student lab hours is a difficult task. Even more input, however, may be addressing long-range planning for computer resources. In the third article, "Comparative Study of Strategic Issues in the Management of Business School Computer Resources," Ralph Stair, Jr. discusses significant issues involved in computer resource planning. Although long-range planning is a standard part of many courses in the business school curriculum, few schools have applied this tool to their computer resource growth. Through the use of surveys, Yellen explores goal development and decision making, staffing and management issues, budget levels and phases, and strategic support issues. In each of these areas, a number of important sub-issues are defined. In his recommendations, Yellen identifies four critical issues that stand out from the others and suggests ways to address each one.

In The Expert's Opinion section, Jim Lloyd of Pennsylvania Blue Shield gives his perceptions on where microcomputer technology is now and where he believes it will be headed in the future.

In the hardware review section, R. Scott Heubner provides an overview of printers and defines the advantages and disadvantages of the different types. Our two software reviewers, Thomas Loser and Jeff Lutz, review two software packages for the Apple MacIntosh computer, namely CLARIS Smart Form Design and MORE II respectively. Claris provides not only forms design capability, but also incorporate a spreadsheet and database for integration of data with the form. MORE II takes a presentation outline and allows creation of bullet or tree charts directly from the outline.

Our book review features a review of Microcomputer Applications for Managers: A Hands-on Approach by Mohammad Dadashzadeh of Wichita State University which is a comprehensive lab manual intended for use in the introductory MIS course offered by most business schools.

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