Preface

Summer is upon us again, and we hope you are enjoying yours. Whether catching up on your reading, researching new ideas, taking additional coursework, enjoying a welcomed vacation, or just taking a well-deserved break, we hope the articles in this journal stimulate your thinking and help to keep you well-informed. The papers in this issue are all invited papers that were originally presented at the 1991 Information Resources Management Association International Conference held in Memphis, Tennessee.

Quality in both products and services is a factor which receives considerable attention in today’s competitive consumer environment. Companies nationwide have begun competing for prestigious awards based on improvement in the quality control processes within their organizations. Our first article, “EDSS for Product Maintenance in a Global Environment,” addresses one aspect of product quality, namely production and management of service part inventories. F. Stuart Wells and R. Natarajan develop a model for an expert decision support system (EDSS) which can address issues which arise during any of the phases of a product’s life cycle: (1) product design and planning, (2) production planning, (3) service planning, and (4) inventory and logistics control.

As discussed in our last issue, LAN planning and implementation is a major issue in many organizations. As the use of LAN’s for significant organizational systems has increased, so have the “horror stories” about installations that have not worked or that have failed to meet the objectives of the implementation project. Raymond A. Patterson and Dennis D. Strouble in “Critical LAN Success Factors: An Implementation Model” integrate the LAN implementation process with the traditional Information Systems’ project life cycle. By consolidating and summarizing existing research into the significant factors associated with successful LAN installations, the authors are able to combine these factors with the critical success factors applicable to each stage of the project life cycle. This should aid any of you who become involved in LAN implementation, whether now or in the future.

Many university employees, whether faculty, staff, or students, have become acquainted with electronic mail services. Some of these services are commercial ones which link campuses together; others are implemented on a college or university campus, providing a link between individuals who otherwise may have a difficult time maintaining contact with one another. In the third article, “Electronic Mail in the University,” Rodney A. Pearson presents us with insights into the use of one such intra-campus system at Mississippi State University. What distinguished this system from similar ones around the nation is that it was developed by the university’s MIS Department and incorporates features specifically designed for use in the academic environment. These include (1) saving or printing a message, (2) sending messages to groups of individuals, (3) obtaining an acknowledgment or deleting a message prior to receipt, and (4) sending students grades electronically.

Our new hardware editor, Greg Welsh, introduced to you in our Spring 1991 issue, confronts the issue of determining if a notebook computer is right for you. He then identifies the critical items to review as you conduct your buying search. In his software review, Jim Gates looks at GraceLAN, a network program, reviewed on an Appletalk LAN. It provides a significant amount of information to a LAN administrator which can aid in the management of the LAN workstations and software. Finally, Jan Travers, managing editor of JMSM, reviews the widely acclaimed book, The Macintosh Bible.

As always, we welcome your comments.

Glenn Byerly
Associate Editor