

Special Section on Information Systems Guest Editorial

The introduction of computers into most forms of business and everyday life has had a significant impact on the way we think of work, society and information. The study of information systems takes as its starting point the idea that computers are technical systems that operate within complex social environments and that it is therefore essential to consider this environment alongside the technology itself. Thus topics covered by information systems include managing new technologies, strategy formulation for linking an organisation's business objectives with its technology requirements and introducing computer based administrative systems in developing countries.

The First European Conference on Information Systems took place at Henley Management College on 29th – 30th March, 1993 with over 100 delegates from 14 countries. The conference took place in magnificent surroundings on the bank of the River Thames and the quality of environment matched the quality of presentations. The papers succeeded in combining purely academic issues with concerns of practitioners in the field and contrasted the various approaches to information systems research and practice in the various countries represented.

The conference was organised by the Operational Research Society of Great Britain and was supported by the Operational Research Society and the Association for Information Technology. Barclays Bank and IBM (UK) Ltd. provided financial support. The papers presented in this special issue first appeared in the Proceedings of the First European Conference on Information Systems, published by the Operational Research Society.

The Journal of Computing and Information Technology is pleased to devote a special section of the journal to a selection of the best papers presented at the conference. These papers were selected to match the journal's editorial policy of focusing on social, legal and managerial aspects of computing and information technology. Additionally, a number of the papers present case studies describing the application and critical evaluation of theory.

Shirin Madon has undertaken a longitudinal case study following the Computerized Rural Information Systems Project (CRISP) in India. Despite the benefits that CRISP was designed to offer, in practice it turned out not to be as successful as expected. The paper discusses the factors that prevented the effective development of CRISP and draws on these insights to make general recommendations about managing the process of organisational change through computerisation.

Richard Ormerod examines the nature of information systems strategy development. He contrasts the conventional process where analysts examine the organisation and report on their understanding of it, with the participative process where analysts facilitate a working group made up of relevant stakeholders. He also explores data and decision oriented methods and makes recommendations as to their applicability.

Edgar Whitley and *Ioulia Doukaki* return to the issue of information systems strategy development. They propose the use of problem structuring methods to help companies agree on their current

position with regard to information systems strategy. This approach was successfully applied in a Greek bank and the case study is described in the paper.

Ian Johnson works for a large utility company with a significant requirement for effective real time monitoring of the production processes. His paper describes a generic systems architecture for combining the requirements of on-line monitoring and control with off-line operational management issues.

Paul Cragg and *Malcolm King* investigated six small and medium sized companies to attempt to determine the effects that information systems had on the performance of these firms. Their paper discusses a range of effects including direct effects on the costs of the organisation and the indirect effects of managers spending more of their time in managing the information systems process.

The Second European Conference on Information Systems will be held at Nijenrode University on May 30–31, 1994 and preparation is well underway for the third conference. For details of how to attend the second conference, please contact Walter Baets at the Nijenrode University, The Netherlands Business School, Straatweg 25, 3621 BG Breukelen, The Netherlands.

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