Trauth

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Decision Sciences Institute
Sheraton Hotel at Station Square Drive
Pittsburgh, PA
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Welcome to the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Northeast Decision Sciences Institute at the Sheraton Station Square Hotel in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The program includes 39 sessions of competitively judged papers and seven special sessions in the form of symposia, panels, and tutorials or workshops. Authors of papers and special session leaders include members of academe as well as the business and public sectors.

Ultimately, the quality of the meeting depends on the quality of the papers and special session proposals received and the processes that govern review and selection of papers and special sessions for presentation. Many people worked very hard in the paper review and selection process, and they did an excellent job. All papers were competitively blind reviewed by at least two referees. Over 150 papers were submitted for consideration for the conference, of which 105 were accepted for presentation.

The Proceedings has several features designed to help conference participants locate papers of special interest during the meeting. The papers are grouped by track, appearing within that track section in the order in which they will be presented at the conference. There are two indexes of all the papers and special sessions included at the end of the Proceedings. One is arranged alphabetically by authors, while the second is arranged alphabetically by title.

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THE ROLE OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS COURSE IN A BUSINESS CURRICULUM OF THE FUTURE
DP -> MIS/IMS -> IUM

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WORKSHOP

For some time now, it has been apparent that all is not well within the MIS academic community.

Kronke (1988) writes of the "MIS" course as the "widow-maker", Behling (1989), and others suggest that there is no particular consensus on the topics which should be included in an advanced or an introductory MIS course, and a report prepared for the AACSB (McLeod, 1985) suggests that from among our members we are certainly able to identify a myriad of topics which might be included. Ball & Harris (1982), Dickson et al (1984), Hartog & Herbert (1986), and Brancheau & Wetherbe (1987) have chronicled the change in "issues of importance" as perceived by mid- or upper-level managers; while MacDonald and Swearingen (in press) have pointed out that the issues considered most significant by these managers do not seem to be the ones covered in our current IS textbooks, and suggest that perhaps this lack of coverage may extend to the classroom. In addition, enrollment in MIS or CIS majors at institutions across the country appears to have dropped; in some cases, precipitously, with some schools evidencing decreases in excess of 75%. At the same time, Drucker (1989) and others argue that we are now in the age of the "knowledge worker".

How do we reconcile our problems, our uncertainties, and our aspirations with the needs enumerated by Drucker and others?

Background

We suggest that one approach begins with attempting to view ourselves and our discipline along the continuum indicated below where we have attempted to categorize our history and our present, and suggest what we may aspire to become. As purveyors of "data processing", we tended to emphasize technology, primarily hardware and software. We justified this emphasis on the basis that neither hardware nor software were particularly reliable, and interface with either was difficult for the casual user (Figure 1).
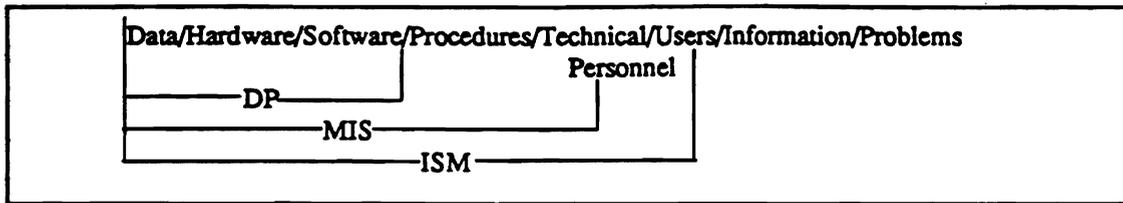
As the transition to MIS developed, we began to give grudging recognition to the role of process and of people, to recognize that whatever it was we were talking about was part of a larger "whole" - a "system", and to accept that all this was a "concern" of management. We still, however, emphasized technology, but included a larger set of items under this heading and even went as far as to consider, often to only a minor degree, the "management" of this technology. There are now textbooks appropriate for courses in Information Management Systems (i.e., the management of systems which manage information) (Tom (1987), Gray, King, McLean, & Watson (1989), McNurlin & Sprague (1989), and Wysocki & Young (1990) among others).

In each of these cases, emphasis falls primarily on the technological - hardware and software (DP/MIS), or management of the hardware and software (IMS). In other words, at each stage in our development the scope

Figure 1

Data Processing	Management Information Systems	Information Management Systems	Information Utility Management
Past	Present		Future

Figure 2

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Data/Hardware/Software/Procedures/Technical/Users/Information/Problems
                                        Personnel
            DP
                MIS
                    ISM
```

of our consideration has enlarged - but the main emphasis has remained on the technology. As indicated in the diagram above - we have consistently failed to include the ultimate goal of information - to be useful to people attempting to solve problems (Figure 2).

Our contention is that the needs of the future can best be met by a course which emphasizes what we have called **Information Utility Management** - the use and management of information to achieve the highest benefit to the organization (Figure 3).

Workshop Assumptions

The impetus behind this workshop is three-fold. We believe that:

    1.the future holds great promise

    2.significant change must take place if we are to meet that promise and remain (or perhaps become) a viable discipline

    3.there is at present neither universal recognition that change is required, nor agreement as to the ultimate goal or purpose of the discipline

We wish to present this model to members of our discipline as a basis for thought and consideration, to engage our colleagues in discussion, and to develop through them a coherent vision of the future role of information systems course(s) in the general business curriculum.
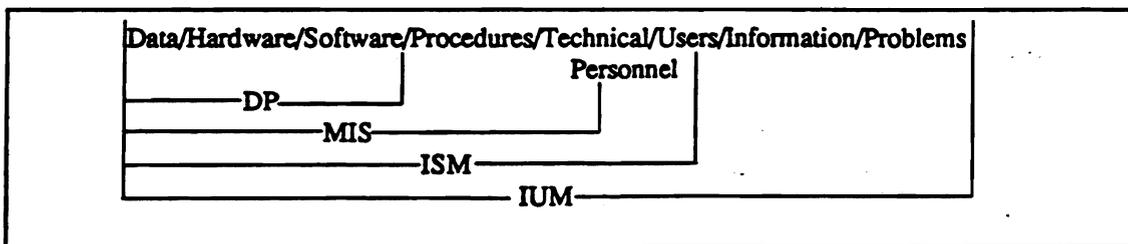
Workshop Outline

The workshop will be conducted in five segments over a three hour period using the following basic structure:

    1.Presentation of a basic paradigm

    2.Identification by members of the audience as to where they perceive themselves to lie along the continuum.

    3.Identification by members of the audience as to where they perceive our discipline to lie along the continuum.

    4.Discussion among the audience as to where we should be going.

    5.Brainstorming among the audience as to activities which might move us in the right direction(s).

    6.An action plan to provide for a continuation of the discussion and the dissemination of conclusions reached by the workshop participants.

Figure 3

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Data/Hardware/Software/Procedures/Technical/Users/Information/Problems
                                        Personnel
            DP
                MIS
                    ISM
                        IUM
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RBOCs have revealed changing procurement patterns (for example, now sourcing a high percentage of their large switches (exchanges) from the Canadian firm Northern Telecom). The spectre of the fully unleashed RBOCs sucking in yet further foreign equipment supplies, has ironically tempered the enthusiasm for removal of the line of business restrictions by one of their most ardent institutional supporters, the NTIA. Finally, concern has surfaced over the defence implications of divestiture (Drucker, 1986). Such worries have centred on the fragmentation entailed in the divestiture of AT&T, highlighting the difficulties it may bring in train for the maintenance of the integrity of a secure and reliable defence communications system.

The key question illustrated by the battles of the MFJ, is that of the rationality of a pluralistic telecommunications decision–making process which fragments power and appears to militate against the generation of a coherent industrial policy. Against the arguments of some European writers (Hills, 1986; Tunstall, 1986) that America is determinedly attempting to export the deregulation revolution to force open foreign markets for its indigenous companies, can be presented a picture of 'multi organisational sub–optimisation' and lack of focus and direction (Hood, 1976). It is hard to disagree with the verdict that telecommunications policy making is fragmented and continuously subject to 'jurisdictional turf fights' (Olsen, 1988). While pluralism may positively (vide Lindblom) make for 'optimal' policy outcomes, the line of business debates documented above, raise the spectre of a divided America in a hostile world. Bearing the risks of a policy of 'deregulation in one country', the United States faces the challenge of competition from countries like Japan, which view competition not as a policy end, but as a policy means and which provide incentives for jurisdictional 'concertation' between key agencies (Harris, 1988).

Since divestiture, the American telecommunications policy process has revealed predictable tendencies. Some might choose to characterise US telecommunications as a policy arena symptomatic of chronic pathology (Hogwood and Peters, 1985). The RBOC debate shows familiar signs of an adversarial policy approach tending to incohesiveness. The uniquely American characteristic of the injection of judicial activism compounds this situation.

In recent months, there are certainly increasing signs of a crystallisation of concern about the downside of deregulation. A clear impeller of such anxiety, is the rapidly deteriorating trade balance in telecommunications equipment since the beginning of the 1980s as a direct consequence of unilateral US deregulatory disarmament. The spectre of the imminent construction of 'fortress Europe' in 1992 has added to such fears. The passage into law of the Omnibus Trade Bill in 1988 was a self–conscious attempt of the government to aggressively address the question of the establishment of advantageous foreign market opportunities for US companies in the field of telecommunications products and services. It mandated the President to negotiate with priority countries in order to establish bi–lateral or multi–lateral trading agreements.

Like all external threats, the issue of the telecommunications trade imbalance has had the effect of concentrating minds. An important inter–agency 'concertationist' initiative has developed in the form of the 'breakfast club' – an informal gathering of the heads of the federal agencies most deeply involved with telecommunications policy formulation and, in particular, aspects of telecommunications trade policy. Such agencies include the United States Trade Representative (USTR), the FCC, the International Trade Administration (ITA) and NTIA – two key sub–agencies within Commerce – and the State Department.

Of parallel significance is the activity of the US Chamber of Commerce, which has established a Telecommunications Task Force to improve communications links between 'industry' and 'government' and to pool intelligence about foreign market opportunities for US companies. Interestingly, it includes among its membership both RBOCs and members of the anti–RBOC alliance.

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