

SUPPORT TOOLS FOR AN UNDERGRADUATE MANAGEMENT
INFORMATION SYSTEM COURSE

by

NEAL VINCENT STRUNK

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Approved by:


Major Professor

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Information is defined as meaningful interpretations and correlations of data. We are an information hungry society. Seventy-five percent of all information available to mankind has been developed within the last two decades (1). With over 75 billion new pieces of information being generated annually, how can we store it, let alone retrieve and use it?

For the last two decades businesses have had to deal with this onslaught of information. This increasing quantity of information has forced business leaders to be increasingly selective in the flow of information to them. Modern societies have also been changing their characteristics at an accelerating rate. This has necessitated the need for accurate and timely information. The need for sophisticated information systems was required to meet the information requirements of modern managers.

1.1 THE PROBLEM

Since the first commercial computer was installed in 1954 for a business application of payroll processing, the computer was predicted to play a key role in the future of information systems. As newer and more powerful computers were developed over the years, this key role was becoming realized. The early 1970's brought the advent of cheaper random access storage devices. The decrease in hardware prices allowed many businesses to set up data processing departments, to purchase computing equipment, and to store more and more information.

With these changes in the business world, the College of Business Administration at Kansas State University, along with colleges across the nation, saw a need to expose their business graduates to some fundamentals in the field of computer science. This was accomplished by requiring all Business Majors to take a course on the fundamentals of computer programming, which taught PL/1 programming language.

During that time period, this introductory course was sufficient preparation for business graduates entering the business world. Small businesses could not afford their own computer and large organizations had separate data processing departments to handle the computer information needs. If managers wanted certain information, like sales forecasts or personnel data, they would express their needs