

Book Reviews

Analysis and Design of Information Systems
by James A. Senn. 614 pages. Price £11.95.
Published by McGraw-Hill, International
Student Edition.

I am now convinced that the Americans are far less confused about the distinction between a textbook for students and any other form of book than we would be in the UK.

James A. Senn's textbook on the analysis and design of information systems is primarily a student book. The careful way in which the subject matter is blended with summaries, key words, review questions and application problems is exemplary. Basically, the book is about systems analysis and the author starts by addressing both the student and the teacher. To the student he says clearly that systems analysis is a list of activities which allow the systems analyst to exert a significant influence over the organization in which he works; while to the instructor he issues the warning that systems analysis is one of the most difficult activities to teach. To this end he places emphasis on case studies and proven procedures.

The first section of the book contains three introductory chapters which introduce the concept of life cycles and provide a broad view of the steps that are taken in the design of the system. Indeed, the author proves his commitment to case studies by introducing one such study at the end of most chapters. This makes interesting reading and is well placed in the educational development of the subject material. By the end of the first chapter, the student is capable of answering questions on different types of information systems users, the concept of systems themselves and the elements of control in such systems.

The second chapter introduces the reader to the first steps in project development including the correlation of sources of project requests, and the testing of project feasibility. By the end of the first hundred pages, the top layer of systems analysis has been developed and from there on

it is a matter of getting to grips with greater detail.

The second part of the book is largely concerned with assessing the information requirements for a system. This includes strategies for the elicitation of such requirements, decision analysis and development of the system proposal. Part three gets down to the nitty-gritty of systems design, ranging over topics such as output control, database development and the appropriate choice of storage. Quality assurance is a central feature of the fourth part of the book, while the fifth and last part deals with the management and administration of completed systems.

There is no doubt that it is the completeness and thoroughness of a text of this kind that must surely make it one of the leaders in its field, and it will clearly be adopted in many computer science courses in the near future.

Igor Aleksander

Managing for Innovation – Leading Technical People by Watts S. Humphry. 206 pages.
Published by Prentice-Hall Incorporated.

The information technology interest in this book comes from the fact that it is almost the case history of the development of the IBM PC. Indeed, Watts S. Humphry is a manager with IBM and is a computer designer in his own right. The involvement with IBM is both the strength and the weakness of the book. It is a strength because it adds interest and realism to the subject, but a weakness because it leaves the reader suspicious of the often extolled virtues of IBM excellence. The central thesis of the book is that successful technical innovation depends on the leadership generated by very few people, possibly just one person within a large team. The example highlighted by the book is the work of Don Estridge who was asked to lead the team that developed the IBM PC. The decision by IBM management