Editorial

This issue sees several developments. Firstly there is a change of publisher, with Chapman and Hall taking over from the good work done by Kogan Page over the first four volumes of the Journal. As Editors we are very enthusiastic about working with a large publisher like Chapman and Hall, who are highly experienced and have an excellent reputation in the publishing and journals field. There are a range of proposed changes to the presentation and content of the journal now being discussed, and readers will see these being implemented over the next few editions of the Journal. We are always happy to receive suggestions from readers, and now is probably one of the best times to influence future direction.

There are also some changes to the Editorial Board. We extend our thanks to Professor Bernard Cohen of Surrey University, Fred Mundle of PA Computers and Telecommunications, Professor Les Johnson of Brunel University and Bernard Gomes da Costa of Bath College for their service on the Board. We welcome Garry Hunt of Logica, June Verner of Massie University, and Julie Baddeley of SEMA. We are looking to extend the collective expertise and organisational and business experience of the Board still further. In this respect suggestions of possible Board members are always welcome and should be made in the first instance to the Editors or any existing Board member.

Future themes in the Journal

The Journal will be having some future issues devoted entirely to specific themes. The first theme will be *The Evaluation of Information Systems Investments*. This should be interpreted broadly to cover evaluation methods and activity at the initiation, design, development, implementation and/or operating stages, and may apply to evaluating the payoff from the technology and systems or from the service provided by an information services department or external agency. The *December 1990* issue of the Journal will be devoted to this theme. We invite contributions in the form of refereed

papers, or in the form of personal viewpoints. Please send your proposed title and a synopsis of the paper to the Editors by April 23rd 1990. Completed papers will be required by the Editors by June 11th 1990 at the latest, to enable refereeing and possible redrafting.

Other future themes including Marketing IT, IT and Marketing, and Aligning IT Strategy with Corporate Plans. Proposals for articles on these themes can be sent to the Editors in the first instance.

This issue

There are four main papers in this issue. Two of these papers are concerned with intelligent decision and expert systems. Daniel Lee reviews traditional data modelling techniques and knowledge representation methodologies. He then puts forward a carefully considered framework for developing integrated intelligent decision systems. His paper represents a very useful attempt to support future developments in systems integration for decision-making purposes. His conclusion is that integrated intelligent decision systems are not only becoming feasible, but may be central and crucial to the next generation of computing.

Rodger Jamieson and Richard Szeto have researched the extent of use and impact of knowledge-based information systems in commercial organisations. Their research sample consists of eleven such organisations. They provide some fresh evidence from an Australian perspective on the difficulties and underuse of expert systems experienced in other economies. Their evidence adds to the picture given for instance by the 1987 Ovum Ltd. survey for the UK Department of Trade and Industry. This found the main barriers to expert systems adoption to be lack of user awareness and understanding, unproven nature of the technology, lack of knowledge engineers, unavailability of suitable experts, lack of senior management awareness or support. But Jamieson and Szeto go beyond such barriers to discover the difficulties experienced

in commercial settings when expert systems are actually put into use.

A third paper, by Professor Ivan Jackson, focusses on changes in the DP/MIS function, partly resulting from moves to more distributed environments. One feature will be the need to develop a new type of information professional, less of a systems analyst but skilled at managing information as a corporate resource. The author puts forward suggestions for how these new professionals may be developed. The paper sounds a welcome warning note, with as yet few organisations or academic institutions geared to developing the sort of IS professional described here.

David Mason has taken a disarming look at how spreadsheets are used in organisations. He finds widespread usage of spreadsheets, but the pertinent

question he asks is whether spreadsheets are being used in the right ways. He finds a variety of ways in which spreadsheets are misused, and uncovers many of the reasons why this occurs. He concludes with some practical advice on how such tools may be rendered more useful to the individual and to organisations.

The rest of this issue is mainly devoted to reviews – of books and of a 1989 conference on Computer Aided Software Engineering held at Imperial College, London. The issue concludes on a lighter note with a piece sent in to us by a reader who seems to be addressing quite a central experience in the IT field. We will leave you to judge whether or not this is the case.

Anne Leeming
Leslie Willcocks