Editorial

This issue covers a wide variety of themes and topics, ranging from research methodologies, skills and competencies for information management, through to theorizing about systems and strategies and the concepts of 'information polity'. Also highlighted are computer security, information management education and application of soft information systems concepts to buying and selling on stock markets. The coverage provided by the journal is deliberately broad, though our policy is that selective future issues will be more focused on specific themes, for example 'Evaluation of IS investments' (December 1990 issue), 'Information technology futures' and 'IS strategies'. Contributions on these and all issues relating to our policy agenda (published in the March 1990 edition) are always welcome.

The last few months are notable for a strengthening of the editorial board. In addition we welcome Professor Ivan Jackson from the Victoria University of Wellington, and Professor Charles Wiseman of Columbia University. Both have immense experience in the information management field and have published widely. Ivan Jackson has worked in the USA and New Zealand for Burroughs Corporation and the State Service Commission. More recently he has been active in a number of governmental reviews of electronics and information technology within the public services. Charles Wiseman is the president of Competitive Applications, an international consulting practice, and formerly the manager of IS Planning at the American Can Company. He is a frequent speaker at professional meetings and conferences in North America, Europe and the Far East. Ivan includes amongst his publications a major textbook *Corporate Information Management* (Prentice Hall 1986). Charles Wiseman has published well-known texts including *Strategic Information Systems* (Irwin, 1988), and *Strategy and Computers: Information Systems as Competitive Weapons* (Dow Jones Irwin, 1985). We look forward to working with them closely on policy content issues in the journal.

This issue

We begin this issue with a neglected area in information management, namely the methodologies underpinning the research, and the evidence it produces on which claims and generalizations may be based. Management itself is relatively youthful as a field of

study characterized succinctly by Whitley as a 'fragmented adhocracy' – that is it has little coherence as a discipline, no consensus on what the common body of knowledge is and draws from a range of more established disciplines with considerable diversity in approaches to establishing new knowledge and principles. The problems in identifying what management is also derive from the nature of the objects and activities studied. Much of this ambivalence and confusion is also observable in the information management field. Craig Smith's paper is helpful in clarifying many of the ground rules for research and the production of evidence in this area. It is particularly useful that he has focused on the case study approach because much of the investigation in information management using this method tends to be less than rigorous using Smith's yardsticks. Furthermore there tends to be heavy dependence on questionnaire/survey approaches with frequently too little further analysis of these findings and, in the rush to produce results, too little recognition of the limitations of the evidence produced.

Paul Collier and Barry Spaul, in their interesting phrase 'Information systems forensics' bring a legal perspective to the issue of identifying, investigating, prosecuting but also preventing, crimes committed with or against computerized and information systems. Their discussion and prescriptions would seem to have considerable relevance to the practice of computer security, especially given the rising recognition that British annual losses from computer fraud at over £407 million may be indicative of the need for organizations to focus considerably more attention to this area. Ivan Jackson and David Hosking look at an area that perhaps needs less immediate corporate action but whose concerns have immense implications for future development in information systems. The authors discuss the applicability of soft systems, soft data and fuzzy logic concepts to expert systems and provide several illuminating examples of systems that have successfully operationalized them. Those believing this subject area to be a wide academic one need to read the description of the system designed to distill the impact of expert opinion on the market rating of five-year government stock.

John Taylor and Howard Williams focus their attention on the use and significance of information and communication technologies (ICT's) in government. They unpack the notion of an 'information

polity' – a system of governance within which the development of innovative information systems is producing new rationales for the restructuring and changing focus of government. Specifically, they discuss in detail five main themes. These are the adoption, diffusion and application of ICT's in government; information as a factor of production in government; government as an information services provider; information resources and the labour process in government; and information as a strategic resource. The importance and attraction of their paper is in providing a coherent framework for understanding current developments and issues in the public sector where they relate to information and information systems.

The proceedings in this edition consist of an extended paper by Tom Gough and Anne Roberts based on their presentation at the AIT conference in January 1990. Tom Gough and Anne Roberts focus on development, on how the visually handicapped can be taught information systems. They provide a detailed case history, spelling out the major problems

experienced and how these could be handled. In a different sort of paper Professor Ian Angell provides an interesting personal view on systems thinking and the importance of arriving at strategies with information systems.

Continuing our policy on reportage of current developments and publications we conclude this edition with a review of a very topical one-day conference on 'Creating a business-oriented IT department' and detailed book reviews for four recent publications. Readers who are attending conferences of interest or who wish to review specific books are always welcome to make a contribution to the journal. Communication should be made through the editorial office of the journal in the first instance. Ideas about and contributions for, future theme issues are particularly welcome at the present time as we are in the process of planning the agenda for these items for the next two years.

Anne Leeming
Leslie Willcocks