

Information Systems for Business

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Prentice-Hall, Hemel Hempstead, 1991. xx + 617 pp. £18.95

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This book is aimed at a student readership, on courses which touch on the way managers handle computer-based information. A typical readership would be—so the authors claim—students of management at undergraduate or postgraduate level. Such readers (according to the preface) need to know how to use information technology to the best advantage.

The format of the book follows that of many textbooks, with each chapter followed by a summary and then some questions and exercises. The authors come from North America, and this is evident in many of the expressions that they use. European students will have no difficulty translating most of the words and phrases into English. Nonetheless, the authors have taken considerable trouble to include examples of different information systems which have been drawn from the experience of companies outside the USA.

The book is well structured in five parts and a couple of dozen chapters. The first parts ('Computer Hardware and Software' and 'Data Technology') cover material which will be familiar to most of the students for whom this book is intended. There is considerable discussion about the 'nuts and bolts' of handling data which would generally be delegated to the staff of a company's computing department. The third part looks at the 'Development of an Information System', followed by the management of such a system. Last of all, there are six chapters on 'Functional Computer Applications' which translates to 'Everything else about computers in industry that wouldn't fit under another title'. Office automation, expert systems, decision support systems, computers in the financial world and computerized manufacturing appear here.

Inevitably, in a subject which is changing rapidly, it is easy to point to omissions. The authors have done a very good job in most of the book to reflect the state of the art around about 1990. But there is no mention of visual interactive simulation, and very little about the psychology of the human-computer-interface.

The style is readable and avoids technicalities. So it is well-suited for reading by non-specialists, and many chapters could be recommended as background material on selected topics within the overall heading of 'Information Systems'. The exercises will stimulate some thought (good marks for that!) and many of the concepts are well illustrated by extracts from very recent items in the computer press. Besides the written text, there are numerous diagrams and charts; here the authors have overlooked one of the cardinal rules of using illustrations; frequently, the text does not tie up with the figure. As a result, information is lost to the user of the book. The same problem appears in the index, where several topics are not indexed adequately enough for use as a reference book.

Overall, though, the book does not stand out as being particularly bad or particularly good. It is the sort of textbook which the OR scientist would expect to find in a public library, not in an organizational one.

DAVID K. SMITH

Statistics for Economics and Business

DAVID BOWERS

Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1991. vii + 276 pp. £14.99

ISBN 0 333 53435 2

Most US books with titles like 'Statistics for Economics and Business' are about 900 pages long, for example Toh and Hu¹, Anderson *et al.*² and Kvanli *et al.*³ The main reason why this book is so much shorter, is that some major topics such as forecasting, sampling and survey design, analysis of variance and decision analysis have been omitted. This makes the book's description of itself as 'a comprehensive statistics text for students of economics and business' seem somewhat optimistic. However what the book does cover, it generally covers well.