

Information Management: Innovation of Computers

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Abstract

Innovations from typewriters to 35mm cameras have had important impact on the information office. Most have made the job more effective and more efficient - the computer promises to be another. In fact some have described it as "the ultimate innovation" for information management.

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Information Management: Innovation of Computers

Innovations from typewriters to 35mm cameras, have had important impact on the information office. Most have made the job more effective and more efficient—the computer promises to be another. In fact some have described it as “the ultimate innovation” for information management.

They may be correct. Computers may offer answers to some of the questions we have been asking for years: Can we more effectively and efficiently distribute the information originating within our organizations? How can we more efficiently prepare materials for distribution? How successful have we been in reaching our audiences?

Still computers are only tools, just like the typewriter or the camera. Sound management and planning are still the foundation of an efficient operation. Many ACE members are already using computers in a number of ways. Some use computerized editing systems while others have developed computerized publications inventory control systems or computerized typesetting.

At least one state uses the computer to help evaluate the results of a clipping service. Others are using a computerized system for information distribution.

The following articles describe different uses of the computer in information operations in Michigan, Nebraska, and Minnesota.

In the first, Eldon Fredericks and his colleagues at Michigan State describe the development of an information utility. The utility in this case is the MSU computer. It contains information (news releases) that can be accessed at any time by Michigan media. The information utility has been a dream of many “avant-garde” information specialists in business

and industry. The Michigan system is perhaps the first such university-operated utility made available exclusively for media use.

In the second article, Dan Lutz describes a similar use of the computer in Nebraska. In the Nebraska case, however, the information is "fed" from the university directly into the computers operated by the media. This use of the computer to transfer information by telephone lines guarantees its almost instantaneous delivery.

The final article by Gail McClure describes Minnesota's experience using a computerized word processing system. In this case, the computer is used in place of the typewriter and blue pencil. Minnesota's use of the computer is an effort to increase internal production efficiencies—but as McClure aptly points out, the computer did not exactly solve all of the problems. Yet while McClure describes her disillusionment with computer technology, she still seems to hold a basic belief that once the mechanical and social systems are properly adjusted, the computer will increase production efficiency.

Computer technology is still new and rapidly changing. Hopefully these three articles will stimulate an increased sharing of experiences and ideas about using computers in information work.

Cliff Scherer