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Letters to the Editor

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Letters to the Editor:

To the Editor:

Operations research and management science have become so universally known and popular that we now find marketeers capitalizing on their buzzwords. In order to perpetuate this trend and to remain a purist, the dyed-in-the-wool OR aficionado should

1. bathe with BASIS soap (Beiersdorf Inc.),
2. shampoo with PERT (Procter & Gamble),
3. smoke MAX cigarettes (Lorillard),
4. listen to matrix cast records fed through an OPTIMAX linear amplifier (Alpha Industries) to CRITERION speakers (Wanona Speaker Works),
5. nightly be imbedded within a fuzzy set of sheets (J. C. Penny flannel sheets),
6. tell time by a Simplex clock (Simplex Time Recorder Co.).

Of course the avant-garde OR analyst will vacation in Maximin, France.

James A. Chisman

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To the Editor:

Taylor and Evans ("Showing that the Low-Cost Route to More Data Processing Capacity Will Work", Vol. 12, No. 4, August 1982) presented an excellent performance simulation model of data processing systems batch throughput, but their conclusions fail to consider the

realities of capacity planning. Their results show that adding additional medium speed tape units did not increase throughput due to saturation of initiator utilization, as would be the result of increasing any single resource in a well-tuned (balanced) system.

Their simulation results simply showed that the parallelism permitted by the number of initiators had been properly matched to the number of primary input/output units (tape drives), that is, their systems programmers had done a good job of tuning and configuration balancing. The only realistic test of the potential impact of additional tape units would be the simulation of an increase in the number of initiators coupled with increased utilization of main memory and disk thereby maintaining a balanced configuration.

The decision making would then have led to an evaluation of the comparative costs of faster tape units versus more tape units, memory and disk. Based on prior experience and on the physical limitations of the site, the decision reached by Taylor and Evans was the correct one, therefore, its acceptance by the data processing organization. However an excellent model, improperly applied, leading to the correct results is not good management science (or good staff work).

I fear that Taylor and Evans article may be a typical example of a primary weakness in management science methodol-

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ogy; doing management science projects, rather than assisting management in evaluating feasible alternatives. Their simulation properly evaluated the popular alternative, and falsely said the unpopular (probably also uneconomic) alternative would not work — the comfortable way to perform studies. If either Taylor or Evans had worked one-on-one with data-processing-capacity-planning personnel, two things might have happened: the simulation would have evaluated the proper configurations, and the second author would have been a user representative — the key to successful implementation.

Paul H. Rosenthal

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To the Editor:

After delivering a talk at a recent symposium in a major third-world nation, I found that I was besieged by members of the audience who, because I am Associate Editor of *Management Science*, assumed that I must have influence on the editorial policies of *Interfaces*.

The general problem is one of unintended unfair publication criteria; one illustration was the *Interfaces* requirement for a letter from the organization to substantiate the implementation of, and benefits from, the model or technique described in the paper.

They gave illustrations of the impracticability of obtaining such a letter in their country. In their culture, the "western" practice of a manager seeking consulting help and admitting that outsiders could, and did, improve the management of his

enterprise, are not widely accepted. Anyone who has dealt with businesses in other cultures knows that, to greater or lesser degrees, norms exist that are quite different from those in the US and other western nations.

The stories this group told about the trials and tribulations suffered by professionals in their country in trying to obtain documentation for *Interfaces* were vivid, and the complaints heartfelt. Interspersed throughout the conversation were references to other criteria, editorial methods, and values that they thought discriminated against professionals in nonwestern countries.

As senior editor of *MIS Quarterly* and as a member of the planning group for the annual International Conference on Information Systems, I have dealt with the problems of attracting and evaluating high-quality papers from other nations. Never before has the generic nature of this problem been so apparent to me.

It is important to us all. If we are imposing narrow cultural norms on those to whom they do not apply, we do not deserve to think of our societies and journals as "international," nor of ourselves as evenhanded and fair. Moreover, if this is the case, it is quite likely that we are stultifying the development of the field, because it can only be enhanced by the transfer of knowledge and experience in both directions across the "culture gap."

William R. King

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Dear Gary:

Thank you for the opportunity to reply

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to the letter on publication criteria and cultural norms.

To my sure knowledge, the only "narrow cultural norm" embraced by all civilized societies, of which I am aware, is *verification of truth*.

Gene Woolsey
MAPCO Foundation Professor
Colorado School of Mines

Because I had been editor for only one issue at the time the critique was received, I asked the former editor-in-chief to comment. Please see the April 1983 *Interfaces* for the current editorial policy.

Gary Lilien