

Shorter notices

Office Information Systems. Management Issues and Methods

Richard H. Irving and Christopher A. Higgins. Wiley Series in Information Systems, Chichester: 1991
ISBN 0-471-91888-1. 217 pp (hb)

This Wiley Series is already notable for a number of very interesting texts. This is another well produced, detailed volume, though one can question why in a 1991 publication, in an area as fast moving and voluminous written about as information systems, except in the section on telework, it is difficult to find a reference after 1987. The book is organized into four sections. The first covers fundamental issues, including the organizational scan and scope of OIS, the nature of office technology, and the integration of business systems, the strategic use of OIS and the likely impacts of OIS. Much of this is well-trodden ground but is clearly discussed, with interesting case examples.

Part Two covers operational issues in OIS, namely planning and needs analysis for OIS, and implementing and evaluating OIS. The needs analysis section provides the more original material here, but the section on evaluation comes in at just over two pages and is far too brief to be helpful. Part Three looks at using computers to monitor performance, flexible work and OIS, and end-user computing. A managerial perspective is assumed throughout, and key management questions are usefully highlighted. Part Four looks at OIS and the future, with the authors suggesting that IS needs to be much more focussed on organizational processes and required organizational goals. OIS applied without a clear understanding of the business 'is a recipe for disaster'.

The authors provide an informative introduction to the practitioners and students they address, and on a few subjects they provide something more than that.

Shaping the Future. Business Design Through Information Technology

Peter G.W. Keen. Harvard Business School Press, Massachusetts: 1991
ISBN 0-87584-237-2. 264 pp (hb)

Peter Keen offers a challenging, informed, forward-looking and sophisticated analysis of information technologies as applied in business organizations. This book is aimed at managers, but its wide-ranging, cross-disciplinary perspective, its sure academic base, and

the extent to which it draws on practical experience and empirical study – these guarantee a profitable read to a wide audience indeed.

Across an introduction and eight chapters, Keen makes the case for the degree to which managers underestimate the importance of IT and underutilise its potential; he then offers a great deal of informed and imaginative advice on ways forward. Despite IT being a central business reality managers are ill-prepared for its reception and use. An early chapter establishes management responsibility for IT. In the series of well written chapters that follow, Keen discusses competitive and geographic positioning through IT, redesigning the organization, redeploying human capital, managing the economics of information capital and positioning the IT platform. A final chapter on aligning business and technology forms a cogent summary of Keen's argument and details ways forward, and the needed dialogues within organizations. Given Keen's considerable experience in the field it would have been interesting at this point to see explicit discussion of the role of external IT suppliers and consultants in influencing organizational agendas, and guidelines on how they can be managed. The book concludes with a selected glossary of some 63 terms.

Keen has succeeded in providing a detailed overview and informed comment on the IT/business management agenda for the next few years. He is surely right to broaden this agenda into a series of interrelated issues and concerns. The book represents a very recommendable text not only for students in this area, but as a valuable tool for management education.

Software Metrics. A Rigorous Approach

Norman E. Fenton. Chapman & Hall, London: 1991
ISBN 0-442-31355-1. 337 pp (pb)

This book goes some way towards justifying its subtitle. It is about controlling, managing and predicting software development processes. The author is refreshingly detailed about the problems and pitfalls in software measurement. This awareness prompts a framework for these activities based on a rigorous approach to measurement combined with 'the classification of the entities of interest in software development in terms of products, processes and resources'.

The book has several notable characteristics: it is well written and illustrated; it is very closely argued rather than merely descriptive of procedures; it