work to be done on a terminal in a university is concerned—defined the total test run to be executed on the systems to be compared in a selection evaluation process, resulting in the replacement of the existing system by a new one.

References

BUCHHOLZ, W. (1969). A Synthetic Job for Measuring System Performance, *IBM Sys. J.*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 304-318.

GELL, G. *et al.* (1979). Entscheidungskriterien und Ergebnisse des Auswahlverfahrens bei der Planung eines Universitätsrechenzentrums to be published.

HUNT, E. *et al.* (1971). Who are the Users? An Analysis of Computer Use in a University Computer Center, *AFIPS Conf. Proc.*, Vol. 38, pp. 231-238.

KENDALL, M. G. *et al.* (1973). *The Advanced Theory of Statistics*, Vol. 2, Ch. Griffin, London.

KLEINROCK, L. (1976). *Queueing Systems*, Vol. 2, Computer Applications, J. Wiley, New York.

LUCAS, H. C. (1971). Performance Evaluation and Monitoring, *ACM Comp. Surv*, Vol. 3, pp. 79-91.

OSSWALD, B. (1973). *Leistungsvermögensanalyse von Datenverarbeitungsanlagen*, S. Toeche-Mittler, Darmstadt.

POSCH, R. *et al*, (1979). Ein leistungsorientiertes Bewertungsverfahren zur Auswahl von Großrechnern, to be published.

SREENIVASAN, K., and KLEINMAN, A. J. (1974). On the Construction of a Representative Synthetic Workload, *CACM*, Vol. 17, pp. 127-133.

Book reviews

Distributed Processing and Data Communications, by D. R. McGlynn, 1978; 305 pages. (*Wiley*, £14·50)

There is a computer somewhere which has a splendid piece of software running in it. The suite is known to the cognoscenti as AFABOG, or Automatic FAshionable BOok Generator. It runs in a background partition, monitoring trendy buzz terms as they flash through the trade press. As soon as more than five conferences/ seminars with a particular buzz phrase in their promotional hand-outs have been held, instructions are sent to a publisher somewhere to commission a book with the appropriate buzz terms in the title. The suite is quite clever. It extracts subheadings from conference handouts and correlates them with previously successful chapters in books and articles in the trade press. From this a picking list is generated which is sent to the author. All that the human being has to do is pad out the paragraphs to make up chapters. The system does the rest—it sells the product, despatches, invoices, deals with complaints and pays royalties to the author.

This book is a splendid example of the work of AFABOG. It has caught the 'distributed processing' and 'data communications' markets slap on the crest of their individual fashionability waves. A couple of years ago it was all 'structured programming' and 'data base management'—next year it will be 'microprocessing' and 'office automation'. The contents of the book are not particularly interesting. It is basically a cull of previously published material, reduced to its elementary level, and slightly repackaged. It is difficult to see just what market the book is aimed at. On one level it is full of technical guff like 'Modified Frequency Modulation has a recorded bit density . . . of 6536 frpi, compared to 8170 frpi for GCR code. On the other hand MFM has a phase margin of 0·125 bit cell time compared with 0·20 for GCR'. On another, it is supremely lacking—in the section on data comms software it discusses IBM systems software products only, and unless the reader is already familiar with IBM's marketing practice, he is left very little wiser and probably very confused.

One of the fundamental problems of distributed processing continues to be that of distributed data base, and maintaining the integrity of it. This book ducks the question head-on. In four paragraphs a tiny overview is given, and dismissed—'The topic of distributed data bases is a complex one that can only be briefly outlined in this work'.

There is a chapter on network control architectures. This is most illuminating, not for its technical content, but more for the insight it gives the reader into the author's own biases. For example, X25/HDLC earn 1½ pages, Burroughs data link control gets 3 pages, and SNA/SDLC gets 18 pages; Decnet earns 14 pages. There is no attempt made to compare and contrast the eight control architectures, and the reader is left with the impression that the only worthwhile approaches are those of IBM and DEC. While this might be true, it certainly is not a professional thing to do, to make the uninformed reader believe it without going into the pros and cons of the argument.

The most useful part of this publication is the back end. There is a good index, a fair glossary and a very useful appendix containing a systems man's checklist on the considerations of implementing data comms. Called 'Technology forecasting and assessment', it is a quite rigorous walkthrough of the salient points. If the book retailed at a third of its price, it would be worth buying for this last part. As it is . . .

SEAN O'CONNELL (Woodley)

Quick Cobol, 2nd Edition, by L. Coddington, 1978; 257 pages. (*Macdonald and Jane's*, £6·50)

The aim of Mr Coddington's book is twofold. Firstly and primarily to give users of computers a knowledge of the most commonly used business computer language; secondly to give computer personnel an easier introduction to COBOL.

The first aim succeeds to a greater extent. The book is easily readable and the only question must be whether any user of computers needs such extensive knowledge of a computer language. The success of the book as far as the second group is concerned is more questionable. Although the book does give a good introduction to COBOL there have been considerable changes in methods of programming since the first edition of the book in 1971. Mr Coddington discusses these in a fairly perfunctory manner recommending the reader to a book on advanced COBOL for more detailed information. This seems to suggest that alterations to COBOL have all been in the more advanced use of the language whereas, for example, the new indexing methods are probably easier to understand to someone learning the language. It is also slightly disappointing to find structured programming covered in one paragraph in the preface.

I have not read the first edition of the book but would have thought that in a second edition more changes could and should have been included.

J. EMERSON (Horsham)

Specimen copies

Information and Management is the Journal of the IFIP Users Group (IAG) published by North-Holland. Volume 2 number 1, February 1979 contains an article by Isaac Auerbach, a founder and first President of IFIP. He is a Distinguished Fellow of the BCS, among his many honorary titles.

The guest editorial by Howard Resnikoff covers the need for research in information science.

Free specimen copies of this publication are available for qualified readers of the Journal on application to

Mr J Dirkmaat
North-Holland Publishing Co
PO Box 211
1000 AE Amsterdam
The Netherlands