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Book reviews

Advances in Computer Programming Management, Vol. 1, edited by Thomas A. Rullo, 1980; 202 pages. (*Heyden*, £14.50)

This is the first in a proposed series of *Advances* to be published annually, aimed at the programming manager and emphasising the human aspects of his job. The book reviews advanced programming techniques, methods of project planning, and other topics of interest to the intended reader. Three chapters concern the programmer himself: one on aptitude tests, telling us what we probably already know—that no single test is yet available to help with the problem of programmer selection; one on professional development—required reading for all programmers; and one on the evaluation of programmers and analysts—a rather rambling discussion of the manager's role in guiding the development of his staff through regular progress monitoring.

The section on resource estimation (costing) is an up to date discussion with references to on-going research, and should be of interest to all programming managers. The project development chapter, however, though broad in its coverage of useful management tools (CPA, Gantt charts etc.) says little, if anything, new; no sign of advances here.

An evaluation of structured programming turns out to be more of a catalogue. There are no diagrams to ease the text in this section, and no examples of, for example, HIPO charts or structured English. However, the next chapter, on the management of structured programming, puts the balance right, describing the techniques in a refreshingly undogmatic manner:

". . .All programs can be written using these logical constructs. It does not necessarily follow that they should be; rather it forms an agreed-upon baseline. Deviation . . . is done only as a well thought-out decision."

This chapter should be required reading for all programmers.

The use of multiple regression techniques in deriving a formula for the prediction of program development time is discussed in some detail without, unfortunately, any references being given. This is true of five of the book's eleven chapters—rather a surprising fact in such a volume.

Software testing has a chapter to itself, covering planning, methodology and technology, and will surely help the reader gain a broader perspective on the possibilities. There is also a set of relatively recent references here.

Overall, this seems to be a book for the library rather than the personal bookshelf. Probably because it is the first of a series, it does not seem too sure of what constitutes an advance or, if you prefer, over what period advances are to be considered. The editor will need to shorten that period for Vol. 2 if the series title is to be justified.

A. S. RADFORD (Bristol)

The V-Series Report, 1981, (*Bootstrap Ltd.* IR £11)

At first sight this publication appears to be rather shabby and poorly produced but when one takes the time to ingest the contents, a surprise awaits.

I found the report to be very informative, concise and explanatory in an informal manner. In the reading of this report I came to the considered opinion that since it clears away many of the myths surrounding such things as V24, it should be part of the armoury of every professional and possibly used as part of formal training. Indeed there are some rather useful comparison tables for V24/LS232 and the like and the references, though not exhaustive, do include the address where the work may be sought.

To summarise; the content is high and practical but the report quality lets it down. If the publishers were to spend just a little more on the presentation, in particular the cover, they would have a fine reference work.

P. A. BENNETT (Brigg)