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Journal Review

Informization in the Public Sector, Quarterly, Elsevier, ISSN 0925–5052

The editors, Ignace Snellen from Erasmus University, Rotterdam, and John L. King from the University of California, offer this new journal, whose first issue appeared in 1991, as a forum to focus attention on the effects of adopting Information Technology in the public sector. They describe the long history of the use of automation in all functions of public administration as being unknown and unacknowledged. The particular effect on which they wish to concentrate is inevitably that of organisational change; not only on the change that has happened but on the change, even revolution, which they say is looming even larger in the future. Their use of the term 'Informization' covers not only the technology but also the opinions held by students of information technology.

The central field on which they intend to focus involves the possible structures of public administration and the roles of citizens as individuals and customers of services. They offer a very wide range of issues for debate, ranging from applications of emerging technologies to changing power relations between as well as inside the public and private sectors, including themes concerning experiences in developing information systems. The latter are well covered in existing international journals, some of which are well established.

The editors come from the Netherlands and the USA; their Editorial Board covers Europe, North America and Japan. Academic fields

range from politics and public sector studies to information technology. There appear to be few if any representatives from the practitioner sector.

The section 'Information for authors' states that the journal's intention is to publish 'work of high quality of practical and strategic relevance to practitioners' (page 87). There is detailed advice on what and how to contribute and on the refereeing process (the conventional, long-established one). It is not clear whether the authors are seeking for contributions in the form of papers from practitioners.

It should be observed that every contribution to this issue comes from an academic. If the authors wish for a high level of interest from practitioners they must seriously ask themselves how practitioners can participate in making the journal a success. Is it to be only by reading it and applying the lessons from the research? or by sponsoring or supporting research? or could it be by making contributions themselves? The long-drawn-out process of refereeing and waiting, sometimes years, for publication is a feature of research publishing which, while intended to ensure a high quality of paper, militates against contributions from practitioners. With modern methods of electronic information processing, in whose effects in the public sector the editors are interested, it is to be hoped that new ways of communicating more rapidly between academic researchers and practitioners could be found. It is not only the journal publishers who are dragging their feet here, but the whole

academic community, which has not yet come up with new methods of obtaining a sufficient number of contributions of relevant quality from practitioners, especially in journals concerned with innovation and with new technologies which develop very quickly.

Papers in the first issue address themes of information technology in the areas of social security in Sweden, experiences in US municipal information systems, social administration in Europe and a revisit to Nolan's stages theory. There is a review of the use of expert systems in social administration and some items of news, entirely concerned with new university programmes in this field.

A review of a new journal can hope to do little more than briefly describe the editors' intentions and evaluate the issue in the context of the field it is entering. This offering will overlap the fields of existing journals. However, the editors are bringing together some well-defined fields to create a new if immense area. Their readership is likely to be international, so they may well find enough readers to stay alive even in the current economic climate. A possible subject for debate might be whether their offering would be ecologically respectable if it had been presented electronically. This new journal, concentrating on the effect of information technology on informing the public sector, should be warmly welcomed.

A. LEEMING
London

Announcement

8–11 NOVEMBER 1992

CIKM-92, First International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management, Radisson Hotel, Baltimore, Maryland, USA Sponsored by ISMM in cooperation with AAAI, SIGART, SIGIR, IEEE

The conference provides an international forum for presentation and discussion of research on information and knowledge management, as well as recent advances on data and knowledge bases.

The focus of the conference includes the following: application of knowledge representation techniques to semantic data modelling; development and management of heterogeneous knowledge bases; automatic acquisition of data and knowledge bases especially from raw text; object-oriented DBMS; optimisation techniques; transaction management; high-performance OLTP systems; security techniques; performance evaluation; hypermedia; unconventional applications; parallel database systems; physical and logical database design; data and knowledge sharing;

interchange and inter-operability; cooperation in heterogeneous systems; domain modelling and ontology-building; knowledge discovery in databases; information storage and retrieval and interface technology.

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