

Although the complete text falls short of its objectives, Canadian readers will benefit from chapters six, seven and eight which are well written, pertinent to Canadian educational problems and suggestive of ways of bringing about change.

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William L. Tetlow (Ed.) *Using Microcomputers for Planning and Management Support*. New Directions for Institutional Research, No. 44, Jossey-Bass Inc., San Francisco, 1984. 103 pp.

This volume is the 44th in the quarterly "New Directions for Institutional Research" sourcebook series published by Jossey-Bass in conjunction with the Association for Institutional Research. The Association regards this series as one of its most important publishing efforts and monitors its quality through its Publications Board and an editorial advisory board.

As is the case with most monographs in the NDIR series, this publication deals with a broad subject area of major interest to institutional researchers. As such, it can only provide the reader with an introduction to some of the main issues included under the subject area and present, as references, some selected writings from the literature. The task of the editor is to select the particular issues to be covered, and to involve those authors whose background enable them to discuss these issues briefly, yet somewhat comprehensively. This is not an easy task for the editor nor for the invited contributors. In addition, it is customary for the editor to briefly describe the general subject area in a short introduction and to summarize and synthesize the various chapters in a conclusion.

According to Tetlow, a past president of the Association for Institutional Research and an experienced institutional researcher, the purpose of this monograph "is to try to provide a metaview of this chaotic, volatile, and rapidly changing computer revolution so that readers can be informed professionals and planners." He goes on to state that "Because the technology is so new, the equipment choices abundant, the technical terms unfamiliar, and the advice contradictory and misleading, there is a clear need for a comprehensive overview of the potential uses of the technology." Taken as a whole, the nine contributed chapters (the first and last are authored by Tetlow) satisfy this objective. Specifically, this sourcebook should be very helpful to the person in higher education who is interested in taking advantage of the microcomputer to assist in planning and management support.

In the first chapter, Tetlow illustrates that the prolific growth of microcomputers on campus which administrators in higher education are observing and experiencing is not a unique phenomenon but rather part of a general societal change. He stresses the importance of intelligent selection and use of microware by higher education administrators. Chapter 2 emphasizes the shift in computer-based information systems from providing data to middle level managers to concern with information content that can be used to support the thinking and reasoning of senior administrators. In Chapter 3, applications of the microcomputer for institutional research are discussed including the general area of telecommunications. For those interested in evaluating or learning more about the specifics of microcomputer systems, Chapter 4 presents an informative discussion of the important elements to be considered. This chapter may be especially helpful to those who are involved in making decisions concerning the purchase of such systems. The problems and potential benefits of using microcomputers for distributed information processing is presented in Chapter 5. What are the issues to be considered in choosing among mainframes, minicomputers and microcomputers or some combination? How much computing is enough? These are two of the questions discussed in Chapter 6. Decision support systems are discussed in Chapter 7 and the importance of decision support *management* is emphasized. The author discusses this as a possible area of responsibility for the institutional researcher. Chapter 8 stresses several factors which should be considered before using microcomputers for planning and management support. In the last chapter, Tetlow summarizes and synthesizes the previous chapters and ends with the statement: "I hope that this sourcebook will enable readers to acquire a basic understanding of the uses and abuses of microcomputer technology and, as a result, (develop) realistic expectations."

The subject of this monograph is a difficult one to cover for two reasons: (1) microcomputer hardware and software are changing so rapidly and (2) the degree of understanding of planning and administrative support systems is very diverse among administrators in higher education. Yet, the authors seem to have overcome these difficulties by quickly introducing the reader to the basic concepts that are needed for a more complete understanding of the subject area and then proceeding efficiently to provide an overview of the current thinking of experts. In addition, six of the chapters provide current references for more in-depth reading. Thus, in an afternoon's reading one can obtain a useful understanding of the applications, as well as the problems to avoid, in using microcomputers for planning and administrative support. Tetlow should be commended in selecting authors who are not only knowledgeable about the subject but who have the practical experience to discuss the topics in a manner that will be meaningful to administrators in higher education. An excellent book for administrators.

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