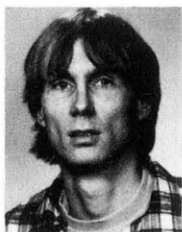


Editorial Comment

Decision Support Systems: the next research/practice connection

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Over the last ten years or so, there has been a number of important occurrences which have created an environment conducive to the use of systems which support decision making. The four most important occurrences seem to have been:

- (i) The technological developments in hardware and software and their use;
- (ii) Recognition of the importance of the psychological dimension in decision making;
- (iii) Recognition of the interdependent nature of organizational subsystems; and
- (iv) Recognition of the fuzzy nature of many aspects of problem solving.

Within each of these major areas there are numerous partitions which could be used to delineate a particular focus for research investigation or practical development.

What is needed now is a careful delineation of the partitions of these areas by providing a framework for the study of DSS like the Mason and Mitroff [1] MIS framework. A framework is necessary if research is to be focused not only on "main effects" such as technology and the psychological dimension of decision making but on the interaction of the various main effects. The study of the interaction of specific research aspects is more likely to lead to a strong connection between research and practice, since in practice all the main effects and their interactions must be considered. What would be desirable would be to construct research situations which are likely to impact the practical needs of individuals responsible for designing and implementing DSS. If DSS research is viewed as a means of providing

- (1) practical insights into the difficult and worrisome situations which surround DSS in organizations, and
- (2) a forum for practitioners to report the re-

search they conduct in organizing the DSS intervention,

it is likely that meaningful interchanges can be developed which excite the interests of both groups.

Human Systems Management is the perfect medium for such an interchange. As an associate editor with Peter Keen in the DSS area, I hope that the DSS Research/Practice relationship is established and grows to maturity. I look forward to hearing from those interested in contributing to this effort by submitting articles, case studies,

notes, short reviews of articles and texts on topics relevant to DSS, and notes on upcoming conferences which deal with interesting DSS topics.

I look forward to our future interactions.

References

- [1] R.O. Mason and I. Mitroff, A program for research on management information systems, *Management Sci.* 19(5) (1973) 475-487.