described. As these sections were written ten years ago it would have been valuable to know in this revised edition what the practical results of testing these approaches has been over this period.

D. J. BAMBER

The Human Side of Information Processing

N. BJORN ANDERSON (Ed.)

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This book represents yet another attempt to move away from seeing an information system, whether for constraining, monitoring or supporting decision-making, as a system which can be theorised about, designed and packaged *in vacuo*. The view taken here is that the nature of the behaviour (and performance) with which such systems are associated is inextricably linked with the social and complex nature of the larger organisational context in which they operate. Even the man/machine view has to enlarge to the organisation/system view and for some purposes to the yet larger social context/system view (e.g. most obviously in countries in which some form of co-determination laws operate). It is necessary to take this larger view of the information system not only in determining the form that the system finally takes but also in the nature of the process by which it is designed. Furthermore, since it can be argued that today's systems take their current form (and purpose) to some extent because they are derived from previous manual operation, how can we determine the form (and purpose?) of systems which are uniquely suited to computer operation without taking such a larger view? Functions ascribed by the analyst will not do.

The book, like a number of others produced by North-Holland on this topic, consists of the papers and edited discussions presented at an international conference. The eclectic nature of such volumes inevitably makes it difficult for the reader to distil a totally coherent view of their individual subject matters, let alone identify prescriptions for action. No doubt the degree of coherence of the material in a particular volume reflects the current state of the art on the one hand and the programme committee chairman's grip on his committee and authors on the other. On the evidence Bjorn-Anderson had a strong grip and the book focuses tightly upon the social aspects of computers and upon some possible ways of mitigating their less predictable effects. These are considered via the level of the individual's perception of his job, via the nature of the organisation's political system, via the distribution of power and via unemployment, etc. at the society level. Solutions are seen to lie, for example, in participative job design, in deeper union involvement in design, in the broader education and greater professionalisation of the systems analyst, in treating systems wholistically and, for some, in the ultimate disappearance of the analyst altogether via emphasis on user-developed systems—the ultimate in participation.

A worthwhile addition to the bookshelf.

JOHN BANBURY