



By John Loretz

Thanksgiving weekend while many Reynolds employees were enjoying a holiday dinner, a few were performing a delicate operation on the company's nervous system. They were relocating the last of three large computers to the new Management Information Services building, recently built at the headquarters complex in Richmond.

The installation of most of the company's computers and information operations under one roof was spread out over several weeks. At times split second timing was required to make sure that computer downtime didn't interfere with essential business.

"The information system is the hub of our activities as a corporation," said Howard B. Wilson, general director of MIS. "It enables us to record, assign and schedule orders, to monitor production, to ship and invoice properly and to access quality control statistics. Our computers create vital sales

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statistics, financial statements, inventory records and payroll information. There is no fundamental operation of this company which does not rely on the services of the computers in some way."

This reliance on electronic communications, while it allows information

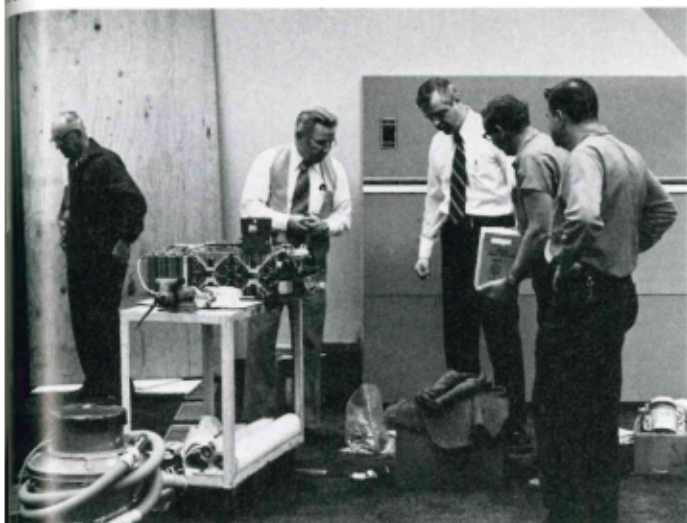
(1) Thousands of magnetic tapes are stored for easy access in the new computer tape vault. (2) Roy E. Stone (left), a member of the technical service staff, enters information on the operating system of one of the work terminals. Looking on are William Schaefer, a computer operator, and a representative from Memorex Corp. (3) Many Reynolds employees spent their Thanksgiving holiday readying the building for operation. Here, one of the building's power converting systems is being installed. (4) Bernard W. Cheatham (left), computer operator, and Harold T. Mitchell, a shift supervisor, observe Anthony J. Giannasi, computer operator, monitoring one of the computer systems.

be developed and exchanged at remarkable speed and accuracy, is not an unmixed blessing. A power failure or a serious breach in the system's security, could leave its users inconvenienced at best, stranded at worst. The new MIS building therefore, has been designed with a combination of features which

A special switchboard at the receptionist's desk informs her at all times which key executives are in or out of the building. In the event of an emergency, the computer can print out a list of all MIS employees who are in the building, making evacuation more effective.

Remote Job Entry (RJE), which allows several Reynolds plant locations to use the Richmond based computers, is another MIS service which saves the company time, money and manpower. "The plants which use RJE," Wilson said, "have the entire computing capacity of the corporation at their

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MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SERVICES MOVES TO NEW HOME

ensure an even higher level of system integrity than we have had before," Wilson said.

One of the most important of these features is the Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS). "When our power comes through normal electrical lines," Wilson said, "even a slight drop in current can distort or erase a data." UPS is a battery powered source of electricity designed to cut-in should an electrical failure occur, giving computer operators adequate time to switch to auxiliary generators, keeping the information system on stream as long as fuel is available.

Day-to-day security is maintained in the building by means of computerized access to its different zones. All MIS employees enter the main floor offices with badge passes during normal business hours. But access to the other levels is allowed only to those with the proper pass card which is cleared by computer. "This system provides us with the kind of security we need to protect our operations from misuse or sabotage," Wilson said.

Not only security, but the entire building environment is controlled by computer, including room temperature and humidity — even fire protection. The building is heated by a system which re-claims exhaust heat from the computers during normal operation.

In an age when writers speculate about the influence of the computer on our lives, the benefits of electronic communication are often overlooked.

Jim Matsey, an MIS operations manager explained how computerization can be the "lifeblood of a business organization." Matsey recently helped switch the ordering system for one Reynolds division from cardex to computer.

Any of 120 terminals across the country now have access to complete information about inventories, prices, warehouse locations and delivery times, and order writers are guaranteed the answer to any question about an order in an average of ten seconds. "This division would never dream of operating without this system, now that it has proven what it can do," Matsey said.

disposal, at a fraction of the cost of installing their own information system."

But perhaps the most important aspect of computerization — the one which affects the greatest number of individual employees — is computer generation of the payroll. Hourly payroll information for most, and eventually all, Reynolds plants is transmitted from Richmond, while checks are actually printed at the plant. "I think its obvious what a failure in the system at this level would mean to our employees," Wilson observed.

This is only one reason why MIS is the exception to the rule that efficiency means the elimination of repetition. "We are completely redundant," Wilson said, "and we would not have it any other way. Every program we use has its back-up somewhere in the system, so that downtime in one area won't disrupt important business."

Wilson dispelled any notion that the company's computers are mysterious devices which exist only for the pleasure of their operators. "This system is here to meet the needs of users throughout the company. At Management Information Services the emphasis is on the word 'Services.'" □