

APPLICATIONS

I was fortunate to be in a position at Hemel where I could obtain a fairly detailed knowledge of the various application systems. The following has to be E. and O.E.

The first and most important of the applications had to be Sales Accounting. This was set up at Hemel but operationally was split between Hemel and Wythenshawe by the Regions.

To operate this massive system you needed a C.M. R (Customer Master Record), Sales data from the terminals (under cover of DG 31s) and a pricing program.

This was a daily run with a fascinating time at month end when all sorts of things could, and did, go wrong. I wonder whether anyone out there will remember the dreaded Program 24?

Out of all the sales data came two main tapes. One of these led to A/Cs Receivable and the other to what were called Proceeds and Statistics. The accumulated Sales data also provided the main input to other statistical reporting, such as Trade Records and Industrial Reporting. I'll break the monotony of this by recounting two highlights relating to these two systems, which I am sure the survivors from Computer Operations will never forget. Due to a program error (a long loop) Trade Records ran ' Regions 1 to 10 but instead of going to end returned to Region 1...It was some little time before this was spotted. I won't name the programmer, she might be at Redditch! I don't think anyone realised how much paper Industrial Reporting produced. Printing the first operational run took some considerable time and the paper output was tremendous. I didn't personally see it but was told it was stacked to the ceiling.

A brief, very brief, mention of the ill-fated A/cs Payable system, started at Cecil Chambers (HO) moved to Hemel, and scrubbed. This system was never set up In House but was introduced much later using outside contractors.

Alongside the main " bread and butter systems" were Payroll (Does anyone remember the insert on all the monthly pay advices for the year end? It was "AND A MERRY XMAS TO ALL OUR READERS". It was spotted before the advices were sent out and eliminated. - The programmer concerned narrowly avoided a similar fate.

Other systems that were set up included the Personnel Master File, a Vehicle Routeing program (the name of which escapes me), Various Scan programs and one of the favourites - the DSR (Dealer Site Record). For the Operations side of the Company there was the VMR (Vehicle Master Record) designed to hold data for the Company's vehicle fleet, another application, which produced vast amounts of paper and which, I believe, sank gradually into obscurity.

There were also applications, which covered Costs, Product Stocks and Agency. This last was the first application, I think, to use an optical character reader...

That's about it. I'm sure there are other systems and anecdotes out there so I'll leave you with one final tale which caused management, in the person of Eric Jones, no little concern at the time. An empty syringe was discovered in the Hemel building. Thoughts of drugs entered the mind and an investigation was carried out. It transpired eventually that the syringe belonged to one of the decorators working in the building. He apparently used it to eliminate any air bubbles in the wall coverings.

Hope this brings back memories and stimulates our ageing minds.

Regards

Denis Lucas