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DRAFT

14 March 1968

25X1

(Submission for COINS semiannual report)

COINS Evaluation Panel

The Evaluation Panel was reconstituted by memorandum dated 30 January 1968 of the Chairman, COINS Committee. Its members are:



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The tasks and responsibilities assigned to the panel are as follows:

1. Develop and present by 1 June 1968 to the COINS Committee for approval a plan for acquiring, analyzing and presenting data on:
 - a. System utilization,
 - b. System performance, and
 - c. User reaction to the system.
2. Oversee and coordinate execution of the approved plan.
3. Recommend such other data acquisition and analysis as in the Panel's judgment is necessary or desirable in connection with system evaluation.

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The panel has met four times in February and March 1968 and is now organized into subgroups, each of which is developing a draft of one of the following portions of a plan for gathering and analyzing data on COINS:

Hardware/software system performance

User log form for recording certain needed data

User survey to gather additional data on circumstances of use and user reactions

Environmental conditions in participating agencies that may affect use

The framework of the plan that is being developed is as follows:

1. Statistical analysis of performance and of minimal data on utilization and user reaction.

Data on the performance of the hardware/software system will be gathered systematically for a year beginning in July 1968 in two ways -- by the system itself in a log maintained by the switch on all traffic through the switch and by means of user log forms completed by users at each terminal. The switch log is already functioning and maintaining a record of the present DIA/NSA activity. The user log form will serve to gather data on the identity of the user and his office, the times at which queries are placed and responses received at the terminal, the user's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the response, the principal reason(s) for dissatisfaction, and an indication as to whether the same information could have been obtained in some other way in time to serve the user's purposes. The data from the log forms will be coded and together with the data from the switch log will be analyzed at the end of each two-month period throughout the year, in order to obtain statistics on use of each file, response times, *reasons for delays,* ~~number of non-responses & reasons for them,~~ *reasons why proper responses did not occur,* and user reactions.

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The user log form will be tried out on some present users before a final version of the form is recommended for use throughout COINS.

2. More intensive analysis of utilization and user reaction.

An interview guide is being developed for in-depth interviews of selected users in order to learn more about the circumstances of use, with attention to both favorable and unfavorable experiences with the system, and to obtain users' views on deficiencies, needed improvements, training, potential use of such a system, and alternatives to COINS. Selection of the sample of users to be interviewed will be based largely on the bimonthly statistical data on use and user reaction.

3. Description of environmental conditions affecting use.

In order that the data on use and user reaction may be properly understood, participating agencies will be asked to describe the environmental conditions in each agency that may affect use of COINS, such as training, assistance provided, steps taken to encourage or urge potential users to try the system, locations of terminals in relation to potential users, and previous experience with on-line querying of computer-based files.

On March 13, as a result of the CODIB discussion of the report of the ad hoc Panel on Files for Use in COINS, the Evaluation Panel was asked if its plan for gathering and analyzing data could be restricted to the set of ten files recommended for inclusion in the COINS "experiment" by the CODIB Panel, even though other files will be available for use in the system. The Evaluation Panel's response is that in order to make statistical analyses and estimates of performance characteristics of the COINS hardware/software system it is essential to have data on all the activity in the system. Data on the restricted set of files can be presented separately

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if desired, but data on the other files in the system will also be available. The in-depth study of system utilization and user reaction could be focussed primarily on users of the restricted set of files, but it would seem to be preferable to defer decisions on the composition of the interview samples until some data on actual use of files in the system are available.

Problems

Since data on use and performance are to be gathered from 1 July 1968, prompt attention to the training of potential users is crucial. Otherwise we may be in the position of gathering data on use when, in fact, very few persons know how to use the system and query the files.

It is essential that participating agencies see to it that a unique reference number is assigned to each query as it is forwarded to the switch and make provision for relating the user log form in each instance to that query reference number. It is also essential that the agencies provide certain data on their retrieval systems, the number and size of queues in each system, and the numbers of local queries to each file competing with COINS queries for processing. These requirements are being discussed informally with those responsible for the operation of the agency systems.

Recommendations

The Panel is not yet prepared to make formal recommendations.

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Outline of Panel's Report

I. Introduction

- A. Directive to the Panel
- B. Panel's awareness of the problems of evaluating a network such as COINS and of the limited nature of the Panel's assignment
- C. Scope of the Panel's plan
 - What it includes
 - Certain things it does not include and why
 - Security
 - Cost data
 - File composition and organization, query languages, and their impact on performance (we will have users' reactions)
- D. Factors considered in deciding upon the schedule of data gathering, analysis, and reporting

II. Plan for data gathering, analysis, and presentation

- A. Statistical analysis of hardware/software performance and of minimal data on utilization and user reaction
 - Sources of data
 - Switch log, user log forms, info. on agency retrieval systems
 - Detailed plans for statistical analysis
 - Including the how and the who
 - Periodic reporting
- B. More intensive analysis of utilization and user reaction
 - (Unresolved question here on non-users)
 - Sampling procedures
 - Interview guide)
 - Analysis of findings) how and who
 - Reporting
- C. Description of environmental conditions that may affect use
 - Information required of participating agencies
 - Preparation of Panel's comments on their possible effects on use of COINS

III. Recommendations on other data-gathering and analysis efforts relevant to an evaluation of experience with COINS I

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