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29 February 1968

MONTHLY REPORT TO THE COINS COMMITTEE

From

Chairman, COINS Panel on System Evaluation

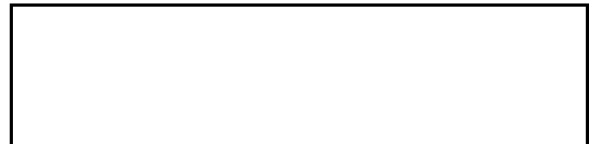
The COINS Panel on System Evaluation, as reconstituted by the charter dated 30 January 1968, met twice during the month on 6 February and 21 February.

The first meeting was devoted primarily to discussion of the tasks and modus operandi of the panel, the potential utility of the several COINS system logs as sources of data, and the different points of view of the members toward various means of gathering data on system utilization, performance, and user reaction.

The second meeting focussed on consideration of a plan drafted by  NSA, most of which was aimed at measuring the effectiveness of the COINS hardware/software system; discussion of two principal means of obtaining data on use and user reaction (user log forms and interviews); and review of a DIA evaluation in October 1967 of the DIA on-line formatted file system.

At the present time the panel is divided into subgroups, each of which is developing the first draft of the following portions of a plan for gathering and analyzing data.

- a. Hardware/software system performance
- b. User log form for gathering a minimal amount of feedback from users on each instance of interagency use
- c. User survey to gather additional data on circumstances of use and user reactions
- d. Environmental conditions in each participating agency that may affect use



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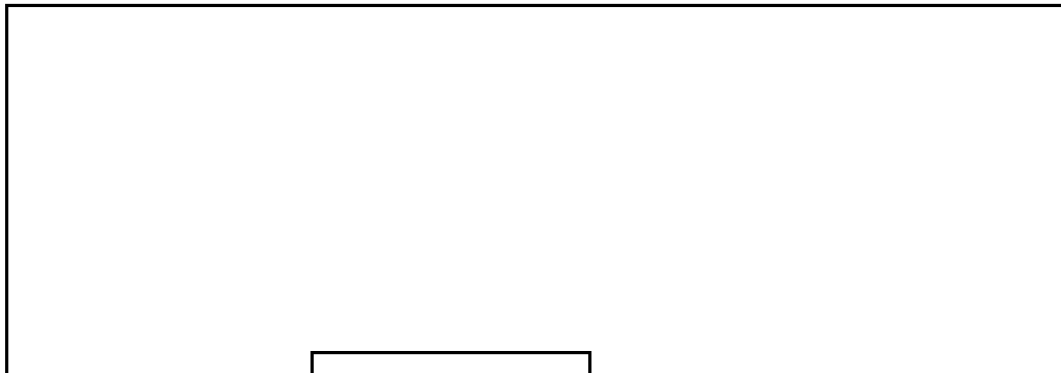
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COINS EVALUATION PANEL

Minutes of Meeting of 21 February 1968

1330-1545 hours, Ames Center Building, Rosslyn

Present



1. Information items. [redacted] reported for the panel's information that [redacted] Chairman of CODIB, on 7 February had established a CODIB Panel on Files for Use in COINS with instructions to submit its draft report by 8 March 1968. Among its assigned tasks was the following: "For evaluation purposes, give consideration to the selection of a single area of substantive intelligence to be included in COINS as a package of properly prepared files." [redacted] of CIA is chairman of the panel. [redacted] also reported that [redacted] in discussing with CODIB the problem of files for COINS, had mentioned the need to obtain suggestions from users as to how files in the system could be improved -- a need that this Evaluation Panel should keep in mind in developing the plans for gathering data on user reaction. [redacted] distributed copies of both the plan and the report on the evaluation conducted in October 1967 of the DIA on-line system of formatted files, which are also COINS files. It was extremely helpful to the panel in its discussion of means of obtaining data on COINS use and user reaction to have this information on the questions asked and responses obtained by DIA in its study.
2. [redacted] draft evaluation plan. [redacted] opened the discussion with a short introductory briefing on the statistician's approach to the determination of systems effectiveness, defined as the probability that a system will successfully meet an operational demand within a given time when operated under

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STAT specified conditions. [redacted] pointed out that for COINS, two and a half of the three essentials for measurement of effectiveness in this way are unknowns: there are no explicit operational demands; the only time requirement included in the design of COINS, a response within 15 minutes, was arbitrarily selected; and there are no specified conditions. [redacted] explained his belief that it would be rather feeble to provide data on how COINS performs in actual usage and to do no more, because the initial trial period and the data contained in the system are not at all typical. But tests could be planned and made to determine how the system would perform under different conditions of operational demand. [redacted] agreed that such tests could be conducted, that they would provide information on limiting factors, but that the results would necessarily apply only to the present hardware/software configuration. After further discussion, it was agreed that [redacted] [redacted] will constitute a subgroup to develop the detailed plan for gathering and analyzing data on the performance, or effectiveness, of the COINS hardware and software. They will consider whether use can be made of data from the switch and agency system logs, and will design the tests to be made to determine performance under a variety of conditions.

STAT 3. Proposed COINS user log. Since the previous meeting, [redacted] had drafted a "COINS User Log Form," with the thought that such a form could be used to obtain a small amount of user feedback on each interagency interrogation; had discussed it with [redacted] and they had then obtained reactions to it from a number of other persons within CIA and NSA. Copies of the form were distributed for panel discussion. Several panel members felt that the six questions on it were too many. Some thought it would be preferable to ask only the two principal questions used in the DIA study concerning the "success" and the format of responses. As for the distinction between use to obtain needed data and use to gain knowledge of the COINS system, it was suggested that it might be well to retain the distinction but to require only those seeking needed data to answer the rest of the questions.

STAT 4. Panel organization for developing the plan. As indicated in paragraph 2, [redacted] will proceed to develop the portion of the plan concerned with the hardware/ software system performance. [redacted] will follow through on the user log and will develop a final draft for panel

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consideration. After some discussion of the pros and cons of "in depth" interviews of users to obtain more information on the circumstances of use and on their reactions than can be obtained on a brief form, it was decided that Mr. Stein and [redacted] will concentrate on this question. [redacted] mentioned the need to gather certain descriptive information on the different environmental conditions in the several agencies that may affect the extent of use of COINS. The data that will eventually be presented on system utilization and user reaction could be better understood in the light of the conditions in each Agency with respect to measures taken to encourage potential users to try COINS, training of users, number and availability of terminals, amount and kind of assistance available to users, and extent of users' familiarity with a similar system. It should be possible to obtain from each agency a descriptive account of such environmental conditions if the panel's plan outlines the information needed. [redacted] agreed to draft this portion of the plan. It was agreed that, if possible, preliminary drafts of each of the plan components will be available for panel discussion at the next meeting.

5. The next meeting will be held on 7 March at 0930 hours at the Ames Center Building, Rosslyn.

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