

Three years ago, the Club Managers Assn. of America began investigating the possibility of developing computer and educational systems to meet their members' needs. The board of directors approved a working agreement with Computer Information Corp. of Cleveland to analyze club requirements and design and produce an efficient club management information system (CMIS). The broad objective of CMIS was to enable a minimum operating staff, consisting of a manager, auditor assistant, secretary and competent switchboard personnel, to perform required bookkeeping and accounting functions, create pertinent financial analysis reports and more efficiently perform all management functions.

Today the system is operating in Columbus, Ohio, at the Ohio State University Faculty Club. Management receives more accurate information faster, at about 40 per cent of the cost of their old bookkeeping machine system.

Clubs today face many grave and serious problems. Despite rising dues and fees, they continue to go further in the red every year. Members want more and improved services for their money. Payroll costs keep climbing faster than personnel productivity. Capable management and operational personnel are difficult to find and keep. More demands are being made of club management to provide statistical proof of operational efficiency. Clearly a computer system is one answer, but the cost of developing, testing and maintaining their own systems has discouraged most clubs. The more courageous clubs, which have computerized their operations to the point of preparing timely control reports; find their management unequipped to utilize the information. And very few clubs can afford to train their personnel.

The CMIS answer to these problems is cooperation; there seems to be no other choice. As an industry, clubs could cooperatively develop and maintain an extremely efficient club management information utility.

### Development of CMIS

Analysis of existing club systems and club information requirements began over three years ago when Computer Information Corp. was the Cleveland office of the UNIVAC Information Services Division of Sperry Rand Corp. Many branches of UNIVAC throughout the country contributed to

the investigation. The consensus was that the not-for-profit club industry had serious control problems not solvable by generally accepted club systems. Due to this lack of control, many clubs were unaware that they even had problems. A major drawback of existing controls in clubs was the lack of standardization of accounting practices and terms.



As CMIS began to take form, several major requirements soon became evident:

**Flexibility.** Due to the varied operational requirements of different club types, sizes and locations, the CMIS must be adaptable to the precise needs of each club. This system must also be capable of adjusting to individual club's changing demands without undue cost or frustration.

**Uniformity.** Rigid uniformity of basic data manipulation and statistical information preparation can and must be achieved for relevant comparative analysis of club operations. Unless clubs use a common system of uniform terms and processing procedures, statistics will require many months of sifting and sorting to insure compatibility. To enable a club to effectively react to danger areas and control statistics a trend analysis must be available on a monthly basis within days after the closing of a club's bookkeeping cycle.

**Control.** An efficient system must enforce exacting data entry controls as close to the time and place of original data preparation as possible. For example, member charges should be audited within hours of preparation by members or servers. All information should be checked for accuracy by being processed through the checks and balances of the entire system each day. This eliminates costly errors and time delays at month's end.

**Data preparation at club level.** Club personnel must be responsible for data preparation, control and error correction. The main drawback of the remote computer service bureau ap-

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proach is the removal of control from the club. Information is batched by the club and weekly or monthly, sent to the service bureau for preparation, control balancing and processing. Most of the errors created by club personnel do not come to light until processing time. At that time, correction

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keeping machine for just these reasons. If the club has control of all processing, responsibility for errors can be quickly determined and effective action can be taken.

Ease of operation. A total system must be easy to learn and operate. A CMIS must be operable by average clerical personnel and training time reduced by hours. The high cost and rapid turnover of competent bookkeeping machine operators has consistently plagued this type of system. Inexpensive bookkeeping machines do not have the computational capabilities to effectively construct a complete accounting system. There are several excellent bookkeeping machines available today with sufficient memory and processing speeds to enable one full-time operator to process most normal bookkeeping and accounting functions. The major drawback of these machines is their cost, which must include the expense of highly competent operators, personnel training and re-training and machine programming.

### CMIS system

Computer Information Corp. has designed, programmed and tested a computer system in which all areas of club accounting are rigidly controlled. Not only is information accumulated and organized with computer speed and efficiency, but the reports are designed to guide management in the proper use of the information.

Installation is carefully planned. First a club is requested to complete a detailed questionnaire concerning many phases of club operation. The questionnaire is then studied by trained systems analysts at the control computer center in Cleveland.

The analysts aid the club in the selection of the various options within the system best suited to the club's requirements. Analysts will also consult with the club auditor to establish the uniform chart of accounts and all required controls.

Management and operating personnel at the club will receive programmed instruction courses on using and operating the system. Prior to installation of a remote computer terminal in a club, operating personnel will receive instructions. Each application to be processed on the computer terminal is controlled by detailed operating instruction described by the terminal as each application progresses. In effect, the terminal asks questions and the operator fills in the blanks. Average clerical personnel with some typing experience should be able to process all applications after four hours of instruction.

Once installed, at least one month's parallel operation of the new and the old system is recommended. This is to insure the complete accuracy of all information transferred to the new system and to instill confidence in the CMIS.

The possibilities of a cooperative effort are limitless. This private computer utility for clubs can effectively lower operating costs and increase the variety and quality of member services by enforcing rigid controls in all operating areas. It will be possible to build data banks of important information concerning vendors and products and services. □

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### A typical operation may proceed as follows:

1. Each day member's charge slips, member's payments, accounts payable invoices, payroll information, various journal entries, inventory information and other operational data is batched, added up and entered into a central computer system by the club operator. No paper leaves the club. All information is prepared on the club's computer terminal and is sent to the shared computer system.
2. Daily, the large central computer analyzes all information. All incorrect information is noted by the computer and the errors, plus corrective diagnostic information, are sent back to the club terminal where it is printed. The operator will make the necessary corrections and re-transmit the information to the computer center.
3. Each day the club will receive a detailed departmental analysis report on its own computer terminal.
4. Periodically the club will inform the computer center, via the terminal, that a processing or accounting cycle is completed and request processing of members' statements, accounts payable checks, payroll checks, operating statements or any of the other operational and statistical reports available. The club can request that the forms or reports be printed either on the club medium speed computer terminal printer or at the central computer center on high-speed printers.

procedures are first initiated by service bureau personnel only remotely familiar with a specific club's procedures and problems. If mistakes must be returned to the club for correction, all systems stop. A few clubs have abandoned the service bureau approach in favor of the in-house book-