

Computer Based Energy Management in Buildings



ABBA
CONSULTANTS

COMPUTER BASED ENERGY MANAGEMENT IN BUILDINGS

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Abba Consultants are currently preparing a series of monographs upon selected facets of energy management system technology and application. Each subject is covered in greater depth than is possible within the present volume and, further, considers the products and services of individual supply companies.

The following monographs are scheduled for release over a 2 year period. Each is aimed directly at the building automation/energy management field.

Condition monitoring and maintenance management

Direct digital control

Fibre optics as an alternative to hardwiring

The use of power line modems

Communication over private and switched telephone circuits

The use of general purpose communication networks in building automation

Energy management system supply in Japan

Sensors and actuators

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System specification

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Legal constraints in EMS application

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Energy conservation is vital to our world economy. Until new, low cost and renewable energy sources become available commercially, we are faced with steadily rising energy prices and uncertainty of supplies; these pressures are complemented by growing demands for improved environmental conditions in many parts of the world.

It has often been claimed - and rightly so - that investment in automation technology as an aid to energy management offers a much higher return than does investment in many other major sectors of energy conservation. The commercial availability of microelectronics, coupled with gradually increasing expertise in applying computer technology to plant automation and control, has led to a wealth of new opportunities for energy efficient operation and management of buildings and service plant.

Energy is no longer seen as a fixed overhead, to be regarded as are rates and rents. It is both a variable cost item and one which, after years of neglect, is highly amenable to improved management, discipline and control. Each pound saved on energy costs becomes one pound extra profit and results, in turn, in increased equity values.

The present plethora of equipment and systems aimed directly at this important but narrow sector of the automation market has opened many new doors for those seeking to use this technology to reduce energy consumption and costs. However, the path is not an easy one for those lacking extensive experience in the energy management field. Whilst the fruits of success are considerable, the consequences of failure are costly and can result in a determination thereafter to avoid other than the simplest steps to reduce energy consumption; the opportunity is then lost for some years to come.

This book, the first major work of its kind, is intended to increase understanding and awareness of building automation systems to stimulate fresh thinking and to raise the prospects of successful, cost effective use of automation technology for energy management purposes. It does not provide every answer, for the whole field is in a state of transience. However, it should do much to aid the building operator, the energy manager, the professional engineer and the prospective supplier to become conversant with the technology, its application and its practical implementation. It is not a book for the academic and is not based on concepts or theory. It is essentially a text for the practitioner, presenting much of the collective experience of Abba Consultants gained through assignments and investigations in Europe, North America and the Far East.

The text is presented in the form of an overview followed by four Parts plus appendices, any one of which may be read without cross reference to others. However, the four parts combine to present the subject of automated energy management in its entirety and therefore inter-relate closely at both a technical and management level.

PART 1 TECHNOLOGY

Part 1 deals with the essential technology of computers and computer systems of the type employed for building automation purposes, moving on to a detailed discussion of the primary characteristics and features of building automation systems.

PART 2 APPLICATION

Part 2 deals with the techniques and routines available for applying that technology to the problems of energy management in buildings and, in lesser detail, to the monitoring and control of other building services. Modern, soft systems are growing increasingly variable in their function and a wide variety of special purpose routines may be appropriate in particular cases. For brevity, therefore, Part 2 concentrates upon routines of a standard nature. The content of Part 1 should provide a sufficient base for augmenting the standard routines by special facilities appropriate to individual requirements.

PART 3 IMPLEMENTATION

Part 3 deals with the many tasks, factors and issues which arise in the lengthy process of system implementation. It is in this area that the majority of problems arise, primarily due to neglect by the prospective system user of fundamental rules and requirements.

PART 4 SUPPLY

Part 4 contains a list of the system suppliers now active in the UK and USA. It makes no claim to be comprehensive for the present spectrum of supply is extremely wide and varying day to day.

APPENDICES

Ten appendices on specific technical/commercial items amplify specific areas of the foregoing text. Their contents may be found elsewhere with diligent search but have nonetheless been brought together within this text for the convenience of the reader.

COMPUTER BASED ENERGY MANAGEMENT IN BUILDINGS

PART 1: THE TECHNOLOGY

1 THE COMPUTING SPECTRUM

1.1.1	Introduction	1.7
1.1.2	Categories of computer system	1.5
1.1.3	Computer v non-computer	1.9
1.1.4	Intelligence v non-intelligence	1.10

2 SYSTEM CONFIGURATION

1.2.1	Introduction	1.14
1.2.2	Distributed computing	1.14
1.2.3	System evolution	1.19
1.2.4	Distributed building automation systems	1.19
1.2.5	System modules	1.25
1.2.6	Some representative configurations	1.27
1.2.7	System implementation	1.33

3 SENSORS AND ACTUATORS

1.3.1	Introduction	1.35
1.3.2	Monitoring of the internal environment	1.39
1.3.3	Monitoring of the external environment	1.40
1.3.4	Monitoring of energy usage	1.41
1.3.5	Monitoring of plant	1.43
1.3.6	Monitoring of fire and security	1.46
1.3.7	Sensors used in building automation	1.46
1.3.8	Space temperature sensors	1.48
1.3.9	Pressure sensors	1.50
1.3.10	Steam flow sensors	1.51
1.3.11	Relative humidity sensors	1.54
1.3.12	External measurements	1.54
1.3.13	Electricity metering and sub-metering	1.56
1.3.14	Fire and security sensors	1.57
1.3.15	Other measurement devices	1.58
1.3.16	Intelligent sensors	1.60
1.3.17	Actuators	1.63

4 FIELD EQUIPMENT

1.4.1	Introduction	1.67
1.4.2	Packaging	1.70
1.4.3	Peripherals, displays and manual interface	1.70
1.4.4	The programs	1.71
1.4.5	The digital electronic elements	1.73
1.4.6	Levels of processing	1.78
1.4.7	Power supplies	1.81
1.4.8	Direct digital control	1.82
1.4.9	Analog/digital conversion	1.83
1.4.10	Line isolation	1.84
1.4.11	Processors and memory	1.85
1.4.12	Fail safe modes	1.85
1.4.13	Input/output requirements	1.87
1.4.14	Physical construction	1.88

5 COMPUTING HARDWARE

1.5.1	Introduction	1.89
1.5.2	Computer modules	1.94
1.5.3	Peripheral equipment	1.97
	Data entry devices	1.97
	Data display devices	1.98
	Printers	1.103
	Bulk storage devices	1.106

6 COMMUNICATIONS

1.6.1	Introduction	1.108
1.6.2	Some terminology and comparisons	1.113
	Internal bus	1.113
	Communications port	1.113
	Network link	1.114
	External data link	1.115
	Baud rate	1.115
	Serial and parallel communication	1.116
	Asynchronous and synchronous operations	1.117
	Duplex, half duplex and simplex operation	1.119
1.6.3	Interfaces and protocols	1.119
	The physical protocol	1.119
	The data link protocol	1.120
	The network protocol	1.120
1.6.4	Point to point, multi-drop and loop network configurations	1.121
1.6.5	Communication protocols	1.127
	RS 232 C	1.129
	RS 422 and RS 423	1.130
	CCITT X.21 and X.25	1.130
	SDLC and HDLC	1.131
	Non-standard protocols	1.134
1.6.6	Transmission error detection	1.134
1.6.7	Modems	1.136
1.6.8	Auto-diallers	1.138
1.6.9	Communication media	1.139
1.6.10	Public telephone networks	1.142

7 SOFTWARE

1.7.1	Introduction	1.147
1.7.2	Computer languages	1.150
1.7.3	Originators and types of programs	1.160
	The computer manufacturer	1.160
	The system supplier	1.161
	The system user	1.163

8 THE TOOLS OF CONTROL

1.8.1	Introduction	1.165
1.8.2	Data monitoring	1.165
1.8.3	Data validation	1.167
1.8.4	Alarm annunciation	1.168
1.8.5	Data display and presentation	1.170

1.8.6	Data analysis	1.170
1.8.7	On/off control	1.171
1.8.8	Sequence control	1.171
1.8.9	Feedback control	1.172
1.8.10	Direct digital control	1.179
1.8.11	Supervisory control	1.180
1.8.12	Feedforward control	1.181
1.8.13	Predictive control	1.183
1.8.14	Adaptive control	1.186
1.8.15	Optimal control	1.188

9 DEDICATED FUNCTION MODULES

1.9.1	Introduction	1.193
1.9.2	Examples of dedicated function modules	1.194
	Temperature control	1.195
	Humidity control	1.195
	Time of day switching	1.195
	Power management	1.196
	Optimum start/stop	1.196
	Enthalpy optimization	1.197
	Light switching	1.197
	Heat flow monitoring	1.197
	Hours run metering	1.198
	Chiller control	1.198
	Boiler monitoring and control	1.198

PART 2: THE APPLICATION

1 ENERGY MANAGEMENT

2.1.1	Introduction	2.1
2.1.2	Plant supervision	2.2
2.1.3	Control of temperature and humidity	2.4
2.1.4	Duty cycling	2.5
2.1.5	Load shedding	2.8
2.1.6	Optimum start/stop control	2.19
2.1.7	Outdoor air control	2.29
2.1.8	Supply air temperature reset	2.30
2.1.9	Night purge control	2.33
2.1.10	Control of defrost	2.34
2.1.11	Control of condensor loops	2.35
2.1.12	Supply water temperature reset	2.36
2.1.13	Boiler and chiller scheduling	2.37
2.1.14	Waste heat recovery and thermal storage	2.39
2.1.15	Control of pumps	2.39
2.1.16	Climatogram control	2.41
2.1.17	Air movement	2.45
2.1.18	Ventilation control	2.47
2.1.19	Lighting	2.49
2.1.20	Power factor correction	2.58
2.1.21	Data analysis and presentation	2.59

2 PLANT MAINTENANCE

2.2.1	Introduction	2.64
2.2.2	Maintenance by conventional means	2.64
2.2.3	Computer aided maintenance	2.66
	Maintenance scheduling and work orders	2.69
	Maintenance forecast program	2.70
	Maintenance file update	2.70
	Input file	2.70
	Cost data input program	2.70
	Cost summary program	2.71

3 COMMUNICATIONS

2.3.1	Telephones	2.73
2.3.2	Intercom	2.75
2.3.3	Public address/paging	2.75
2.3.4	Facsimile transmission and word processing	2.76
2.3.5	Closed circuit television	2.76
2.3.6	Computer terminals	2.77
2.3.7	Document conveyors	2.78
2.3.8	Lift systems	2.81

4 EMERGENCY POWER SYSTEMS

2.4.1	Introduction	2.85
2.4.2	BUilding automation system role	2.86

5 SECURITY

2.5.1	Sensors	2.89
2.5.2	Badge readers	2.90
2.5.3	Alarms	2.91
2.5.4	Centralized panels	2.91
2.5.5	Building automation system role	2.92

6 FIRE SAFETY

2.6.1	Introduction	2.95
2.6.2	Building automation system role	2.97

PART 3: IMPLEMENTATION

1 MANAGEMENT ROLE

3.1.1	Introduction	3.1
-------	--------------	-----

2 INITIAL INVESTIGATION

3.2.1	Introduction	3.4
3.2.2	The structured approach	3.7
	Energy costs	3.7
	Energy usage correction	3.7
	Identification of major loads	3.9
	Identification of operational patterns	3.9
	Identification of energy breakdown	3.10
	Examination of major loads	3.13
	Definition of control actions	3.15
	System cost	3.16
	Payback periods	3.18
	The report	3.19
3.2.3	The visits to site	3.20
	General discussions with operational and maintenance staff	3.21
	Visits to operational or functional areas	3.23
	Ventilation	3.23
	Lighting	3.23
	Temperature and humidity	3.24
	Boiler room	3.25
	Air handling plant room	3.26
	Compressor plant room	3.27
	Meter and switch rooms	3.28

3 FUNCTIONAL SPECIFICATION

3.3.1	Introduction	3.30
3.3.2	Layout of invitation to tender	3.34
3.3.3	General section	3.36
	Introduction	3.36
	Names of parties	3.36
	Outline requirement	3.37
	Time schedule	3.39
	Procedure for tender submission	3.39
	Content of tender	3.40
	Responsibilities of the parties	3.40
	General commercial conditions	3.41
	Special commercial conditions	3.42
	Internal, safety and other standards	3.44
	Installation and commissioning	3.45
	Acceptance testing and handover	3.48
	Maintenance and post sales support	3.48
	Continuance and enhancement	3.52
	Documentation	3.52
	Training	3.53
	Environmental requirements	3.53
	Local site specifications	3.55
	Requirements for each local station	3.56
	Requirements for the central station	3.58
	Sensors/actuators	3.59

Override facilities	3.60
Fallback facilities and failure mode	3.60
Performance requirements	3.60
Functional software requirements	3.61
Technical appendices	3.62
Site appendices	3.62

4 IMPLEMENTATION

3.4.1	The system supplier	3.67
3.4.2	The system user	3.71
3.4.3	The parties involved	3.76
3.4.4	The implementation process	3.78
3.4.5	Tender assessment	3.84
3.4.6	Visits to support the tender assessment	3.94
3.4.7	Site preparation	3.95
3.4.8	System installation	3.98
3.4.9	System commissioning	3.106
3.4.10	Acceptance testing and handover	3.108
3.4.11	Documentation	3.113
3.4.12	Training and personnel	3.118
	Management	3.119
	Operational staff	3.121
	Maintenance staff	3.121
	Energy manager	3.125
	Project manager	3.127
3.4.13	Maintenance	3.130
	The plant interface	3.130
	System hardware and basic software	3.131
	Functional software and the data bank	3.134
	The maintenance agreement	3.135

5 COSTS AND SAVINGS

3.5.1	Introduction	3.136
3.5.2	System costs	3.137
3.5.3	Central station	3.143
3.5.4	Outstations	3.145
3.5.5	Sensors/actuators	3.146
3.5.6	Cables	3.150
3.5.7	Installation	3.150
3.5.8	Communications	3.151
3.5.9	Software	3.153
3.5.10	Commissioning	3.155
3.5.12	Maintenance	3.156
3.5.13	Design	3.156
3.5.14	Documentation	3.157
3.5.15	The savings	3.158
3.5.16	Energy	3.160
	Space temperatures	3.162
	Humidity	3.164
	Time switching and optimum start/stop	3.166
	Compressor control	3.167
	Other routines	3.168

3.5.17	Tariff surcharges	3.169
3.5.18	Reduced equipment cost	3.172
3.5.19	Manpower	3.175
3.5.20	Miscellaneous cost reduction	3.178
3.5.21	Investment criteria	3.178
3.5.21	Performance review	3.190
3.5.22	Government funding	3.195

PART 4: THE SUPPLY

1	THE FAILURE OF BUILDING AUTOMATION SYSTEMS	4.1
2	THE STATUS OF SUPPLY	4.4
3	THE ROLE OF THE SYSTEMS HOUSE	4.6
4	THE ROLE OF THE CONSULTANT	4.7
5	SUPPLIER LISTINGS	4.8
	Explanation	4.8
	UK suppliers	4.9
	UK suppliers	4.14

APPENDICES

1	RS 232 C Serial interface	A1
2	Numbering systems	A7
3	Degree days	A11
4	Psychrometrics and climatograms	A14
5	Drawing symbols	A19
6	Units and conversions	A24
7	Acceptance test procedures	A42
8	Maintenance agreement	A53
9	Typical plant interface	A59
10	Recommended further reading	A61

CHAPTER 1

THE COMPUTING SPECTRUM

1.1.1. INTRODUCTION

Part I of this book concerns the technology of building automation systems. It opens with a comment upon computers in general; the purpose of this is to indicate the type of computers applicable to building automation and where these fit into the overall spectrum of computing. It is in no way intended to explain how computers function or what they contain for there are many excellent books on these subjects.

The second chapter outlines some of the considerations and concepts applicable to the architecture of distributed computing systems and, more specifically, to building automation systems. Later chapters concentrate upon specific aspects of the technology: sensors and actuators (Chapter 3); field equipment (Chapter 4); computing hardware (Chapter 5); communications (Chapter 6); and software (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 is concerned with control methods which are available for tackling the energy management problem. Finally, there is a brief discussion (Chapter 9) of computer based modules which are dedicated to particular, rather than general, energy management tasks.

However, the present chapter is concerned with computers in general. This is a wide subject indeed and one which depends very heavily upon the technology of microelectronics. The term thus features prominently, not only in the present chapter, but throughout this book.

The types of computing system are many and varied. So also are their applications. However, diffuse as it may be, there is a pattern which relates the two and it is this which should now be explored. The whole computing spectrum may be partitioned into several categories, each of which is self-contained and well established. It is important to list these categories, for only then can the equipment which relates to each be considered within a proper framework.

Firstly, there is the traditional area of batch data processing. Jobs, i.e. programs together with data to be processed by those programs, are entered via some form of peripheral device when the computer is free to begin the processing or when it releases a peripheral to commence the input function. All input is on punched cards or similar media or it may already be available on some form of backing store such as a tape or disc. When a job is

completed, the results are printed or sent to backing store for later access. Batch processing is used extensively for many forms of commercial operations and for technical/scientific computations. Programming is generally in a high level language, typically Fortran for technically oriented jobs and Cobol for commercial purposes, and supported by a wide range of standard software. The machines used in this way vary enormously in power and cost and it should be noted that the simple pocket calculator is itself a batch processor.

This approach is extended by placing input/output terminals remote from the computer such that jobs can be run from those terminals via fixed cables or telephone lines. The use of these remote job entry (RJE) terminals removes the need to take the job to the computer for processing. However, processing is still performed in a batch mode, even though in this case, as in that above, the machine may well be able to accommodate more than one concurrent job stream.

The use of RJE terminals is only one step away from using a small data processing system to meet local requirements e.g. at a branch office, and calling on a head office large computer for extra processing power and for integration and coordination of the functions of the smaller systems. The latter act exactly as RJE terminals as seen from the central machine or mainframe and may be anything from intelligent terminals to small to medium mainframes systems in their own right. The term 'mainframe' is used here to distinguish these computers from the mini or micro-computers noted later. This approach is one of distributed processing, a technique which is rapidly gaining ground in many organizations which, having established monolithic data processing empires in a move towards centralization some years ago, are now changing course and giving local centres as much autonomy as possible. The universities for example, although for rather different reasons, have moved well away from the use of a single large centralized computer; they now prefer in-house medium power minicomputer systems linked to a downgraded but nevertheless still large mainframe.

One may then move to a time sharing system in which a number of low speed terminals communicate directly with the mainframe and operate under a time sharing executive. The executive software services each

terminal according to a given priority structure so that the processor tackles a small portion of a job before temporarily dumping the interim results to backing store and moving to the next job in line. These systems are usually, but not necessarily, associated with the use of interactive or conversational languages by means of which the user can develop his program on the terminal; the consequent saving in elapsed time is considerable. The input at the terminal is usually from a VDU/keyboard, paper tape or cassette tape and the output arrives similarly. Time sharing systems are generally applied to technical and scientific data processing rather than repetitive commercial functions. Facilities are available from a number of major computer bureaux, perhaps the best known being that operated by Honeywell in which processing is performed within a massive computing network spread across the globe. In this and similar cases, the user has effective access to nearly unlimited computing power and storage areas, albeit at a high cost. Also, many medium sized in-house mainframe systems now offer internal time sharing facilities. With teleprocessing, one returns to the commercial field. A number of enquiry terminals are linked to a mainframe computer, often via some intermediate computing stage. These are usually simple keyboard/VDU stations which are used for interrogating a data base located on the central machine or for accessing a program which is located centrally. Examples include an airline reservation system; a stock exchange enquiry system; and stock control systems now used in many large production organizations. The terminals are serviced by the computer to which they are attached under the control of a program called a teleprocessing monitor. This program allocates priorities to the servicing of each terminal in order to minimise the response time. It is this response time i.e. the elapsed time from making a request to receiving a reply, which determines the success or otherwise of a teleprocessing system. The central computer operates in much the same manner as in the previous case of time sharing applications, both being multi-access or multi-user situations. However, as noted, it is only in the teleprocessing case in which speed of response, as distinct from job turn around time, is vital.

So far, mention has been made only of those situations in which data is fed to the computer from a simple peripheral or from another computer. One now turns to the use of a computer for monitoring and controlling

equipment such as process plant. Here, the input data is of three types: analog signals from sensors which indicate the plant status; digital signals which do likewise; and instructions or commands from the process operator. The analog data is converted to digital signals by the computer; the various input channels are scanned sequentially; and the incoming data is stored in memory ready for access by the programs which determine how it is to be processed. On output, the converse applies, the computer sending either digital or analog signals to the plant where they drive actuators, contractors and so forth. In these applications, the monitoring of input data and the generation of output signals is often the major task with the actual data processing programs being relatively simple. In some situations, however, these programs can be extremely complex, especially when the control method to be applied depends on some complex algorithm. In very many cases, the computer has to be linked to a time base which is synchronized with that of the plant - i.e. it is driven by a 'real time clock'. This enables it to access plant data at regular or predefined times and to respond to time dependent instructions from the operator.

The type of computer used for these applications is very different to those used for the purposes outlined previously. The various forms which it may take when built into a working system are discussed later and it is necessary to note here only that they are today based almost entirely around mini and micro computers, even though those devices are not used exclusively for control applications. One may also note that the present category of computing may include a simple electronic washing machine controller; a large system operating a petrochemical plant with the aid of perhaps a single operator; or a computer controlling a radar scanning system on board an aircraft.

Finally, a meaningful distinction can now be made between the terms 'off-line', 'on-line' and 'real time'. A batch data processing system (and its several variants) operates off-line in that it is a stand-alone system with no external input other than the customary range of peripherals. Time sharing and teleprocessing systems communicate with terminals which require to be serviced within a short time from that at which a request or other input is made. They are said to be on-line terminals. The RJE facility is often termed on-line also but this is incorrect. Real time, i.e. an ability to operate within an actual time framework, is a term confined