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MANAGEMENT GUIDE TO OFFICE AUTOMATION

G L Simons

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Management Guide to Office Automation

G L Simons

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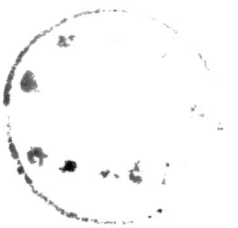

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Preface

For many years the National Computing Centre has been highly active in the field of Office Automation (OA). Seminars have been run, advice offered to (actual and intending) users, and a wide range of books and reports published. Most of the publications have been in particular specialist areas and, until now, we had published few titles that purported to give managers an overview of office automation as a whole. Two books – *Successful Management of Office Automation* (Malcolm Peltu) and *Automating Your Office* (Geoff Simons) – provided a useful overview, but in general terms without much information about actual OA systems.

The present book aims to give a comprehensive overview of all the main OA aspects that are important to managers. Trends in the OA environment are charted, and detail is provided of specific OA systems, products and companies. Attention is also given to such crucial considerations as justification, implementation, systems design, ergonomics and staffing. A comprehensive bibliography, checklists and other appendices are included.

A central aim of this Guide is to introduce managers to the sources of detailed information in the journal literature. It seems essential that managers subscribe to appropriate journals – to keep abreast of trends, to learn about sources of expertise and products, and to learn from the experiences and activities of other OA users. Thus sources of more detailed information are often given in text, with full references cited in Appendix 1. Scrutiny of this appendix will acquaint readers with the journal titles that are appropriate to their current interests.

Some of the material in the Guide is culled from other NCC books and reports (see Acknowledgements). It is also derived in part from up-to-date articles and discussion with colleagues. To some extent the Guide represents a much expanded version of *Automating Your Office,* and I have reproduced material from that publication. I have also used sections, of particular relevance to OA interests, from three of my other successful NCC books – *Introducing Word Processing, Towards Fifth-Generation Computers* and *Expert Systems and Micros.*

However it should be emphasised that, despite the fact that some of the material has already appeared elsewhere, the bulk of the Guide has been drafted afresh to highlight current OA trends and to accommodate the most up-to-date information. Moreover, the Guide includes material – for example, on the prewired building (the 'intelligent building', the 'smart building') – which NCC has not published before, but which is of crucial importance to managers contemplating the acquisition and implementation of office technology.

We hope that this Guide will provide a useful overview of office automation, indicating trends and developments, giving details of available office systems, highlighting problems and difficulties, and showing where more information can be obtained. There is no doubt that the scope of office

automation will expand in the years ahead, and that in consequence managers need to be acquainted with possibilities, pitfalls and options. We hope that the present Guide will help to meet this need.

Geoff Simons
Chief Editor, NCC Publications

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I am also very grateful to Tim Johnson (of Ovum Ltd, 44 Russell Square, London WC1B 4JP) for making available his excellent report, *Natural Language Computing: the Commercial Applications;* and for giving permission to use material from that publication (my Figures 8.1, 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4 are taken from the report). Thanks are also due to the following for permission to reproduce material:

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Particular NCC books were very useful and deserve mention:

Managing Viewdata Systems (Rick Firth)

Graphics and Image in Office Systems (Steve Newton)

Introducing Teleconferencing (Bernard Bleazard)

Networking with Microcomputers (Colin Pye)

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Geoff Simons

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2 Office Automation Systems (sponsored by Harris Systems Ltd)

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5 Personal Computers (sponsored by British Olivetti Ltd)

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