Book Reviews

S.I. GASS, H.J. GREENBERG, K.L. HOFFMAN and R.W. LANGLEY (eds.)

Impact of Microcomputers on Operations Research

Volume 5 in: Publications in Operations Research Series, ORSA. Proceedings of a Symposium sponsored by the Computer Science Technical Section of the Operations Research Society of America, held on March 20–22, 1985, at the University of Colorado at Denver, Denver, Colorado, USA. North-Holland, New York, 1986, viii + 255 pages, \$59.00

These are the proceedings of a symposium sponsored by the Computer Science Technical Section of the Operations Research Society of America, held on March 20–22, 1985 at the University of Colorado in Denver, USA.

Timeliness is a major issue if the subject is the impacts of microcomputers, since developments in that field are quite rapid and drastic. There is no time to write a book that plays a role for more than a year in disseminating knowledge and developments. Therefore this dissemination process relies on meetings, conferences, papers distributed and journal articles. What value does this proceedings volume add to this list?

It certainly plays a role in documenting the things that happened (papers presented) at the meeting in Denver. But if there would have been no proceedings, most of the papers would have found their way to regular journals and some (preferably) not. Then, apart from the documenting aspect, the value of this proceedings volume must lie in bringing together papers that normally would not have been brought together. We believe this to be the case; there are nice papers on many different technical aspects, viz. statistical software,

mathematical programming, vehicle routing and simulation, but also some application-oriented papers. It is refreshing to see some attention being paid to the Operations Research process of finding out what the situation is, defining the problem, working with clients, analysing the problem and generating alternative approaches. In our view the impact of microcomputers on Operations Research should not be an improved ability to do more (cheaper, faster) of the same technical stuff, but to free the analyst of the technical burden and focus on the really important practical situation. Some of the papers in this volume take a few cautious steps in that direction.

Overall, this proceedings volume contains papers of varying quality (as most proceedings do) but the diversity of the subjects in one single volume may be attractive to some people in the OR community.

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