



# N O R T H E R N N E W S

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## EDRA Conference Highlight

### THE MYTH OF THE PAPERLESS OFFICE

#### Microelectronics Revolution Well On Its Way But Technical and Human Questions Remain

#### Chip vs Chat ?

With microcomputers now on every manager's desk, a Canadian insurance firm took the next logical step: electronic mail. The new system enables office personnel to keypunch notes and memos directly into their desktop terminals for instantaneous transmittal to terminals they designate anywhere in the network. Farewell to stacks of uneven note papers written in illegible pen and pencil scrawlings. Here's to savings in photocopies of those long internal office memos.

Not quite. After months of operation, the electronic mail system begins to resemble the back room of an old center city post office. Choked and clogged, the micro message minder no longer operates efficiently during office hours. Managers wanting to use the network for other data processing functions can now be seen behind the glow of green phosphorus—"greenlighting" after regular office hours trying to catch up on jobs that require file space larger than what was available on the computer during peak use periods.

And that hoped for photocopy reduction? It turns out that these same managers are not content with important memos and draft reports being available only in cathode ray form—they want hard copies too. With everybody asking for more printed output . . . you guessed it . . . the printers are working overtime and running themselves dry. With increasing frequency, ribbons must be changed and print thimbles replaced. Routine maintenance lives on!

#### Fertile Ground for Research

The potential of the wired office is posing some interesting questions about the relationships between people and their working environments. The recent conference of the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) held in Lincoln, Nebraska last April drew significant attention to a number of these in a series of special sessions: information technology and office design; employee satisfaction with the office environment; and models for workplace research.

(continued on back panel)

## JOBS IN PLANNING

The monthly newsletter, *Jobs in Planning*, provides information on sources of employment for planners in the Bay Area and beyond. It is available by subscription and currently has a circulation of approximately one hundred.

This valuable publication urgently needs a new editor to stay afloat. If you are interested, please contact Joan Lamphier at (415) 451-8046 for further information.

## DISASTER PLANNING

"Planning for Natural and Man-Made Disasters" is the subject of a day-long workshop sponsored by the California Chapter—APA to be held in three locations around the state, July 13, 14, and 15.

Topics will include: seismic-related disasters; nuclear catastrophes (plant malfunction and nuclear war); recurring natural disasters (fires, landslides, avalanches, floods, wind storms); and incorporation of emergency preparedness into the General Plan.

Scheduled speakers are: Mark Zierten, Earthquake Project, California Seismic Safety Commission; Jim Watkins, Chief, Planning Division, California Office of Emergency Services; Ken Norwood, AICP, Planning Consultant, Berkeley; Pat Snyder, American Red Cross; Lauren Fields, California Office of Emergency Services; and Nick Nikas of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The workshop will be conducted on Wednesday, July 13, at the Hyatt Regency, Oakland; Thursday, July 14, at the Airport Hilton, Burbank; and Friday, July 15, at the Airporter Inn, Irvine. The registration fee is \$45 per person before June 30; \$55 after that date or at the door. (Non-APA member, add \$10)

For further information and registration, please contact David Nagler, Executive Director  
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Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 444-5489

## SECTION ELECTIONS

Mark your votes, clip the ballot and mail today!

## Northern News UPDATE...

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San Jose State University's Master in Urban Planning degree program has been re-recognized by the AICP National Education Development Committee. Writing on behalf of the Committee, Chairperson Carl Goldschmidt was "very pleased to continue to count this degree" among those meeting APA requirements. The degree is recognized for five years, beginning July 1, 1983.

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The new *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* is scheduled to begin publication in late fall, 1983. The *Journal* will include articles on theoretical and applied research in architecture, urban design, planning and public policy. For further information and subscription, contact: JAPR, Box 19588, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas 76019.

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Planning Awards Program at the Section level has been cancelled due to the low number of applicants. Those who submitted will still be eligible to apply to the Chapter program. Future awards committee efforts will encourage broader participation.

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Advertising space in *Northern News* is now available. Rates for calling card size ad are: \$10.00 single issue; \$50.00 for six issues. For details, contact Daniel Iacofano, Editor, at the address below or call (415) 845-7549.

*Northern News* Staff: Louis Hexter, Daniel Iacofano, and Susan Goltsman

## PAPERLESS OFFICE (continued)

Another conference was held immediately afterwards on the "design of work environments" at UC-Irvine covering many of the same themes. With the billions of dollars being invested in office space design, researchers have strong motivations for examining the impact of technological change on office environmental quality and social functions.

"Decentralized" office personnel working at home away from colleagues on their own micros may display decreased identity and loyalty to the larger organization. Negative consequences of electronic network dependency may be increased professional isolation due to the loss of opportunities for communicating informally with colleagues, at the water cooler or in the hallway for example. But positive benefits such as freedom in choosing working habits and creating personalized workspaces may also ensue. A critical component of human satisfaction appears to be whether or not the individual employee has been given a choice in determining how the computer may be used.

Says Franklin Becker, office researcher, EDRA participant and author of *Workspace: Creating Environments in Organizations*, "the new technology is exciting and offers some incredible possibilities. But even more important, the process of learning about and introducing the new hardware can help us rethink our present methods of organizing work so that we might produce more humane and satisfying work environments."

D.S.I.

  
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