

Software and procedural tools for productivity enhancement in specialized data entry applications

John C. Nash
(University of Ottawa)

Mary M. Nash
(Nash Information Services Inc., Ottawa)

This paper discusses two separate aspects of productivity enhancement: computer software and operating procedures. The approach presented can be generalized to any information processing area, but the examples are drawn from data entry tasks where there is an emphasis on the accuracy of the content and form of the resulting output. A major example discussed concerns the the generation of catalogue cards for a legal library with the following conditions on the resulting cards:

- adherence to AACR II cataloguing formats
- multiple cards per item catalogued
- majority of items in the French language
- accents for French and German required
- multiple sets of catalogue cards needed for each item, with the number of sets dependent on the item content.

The quality control component of such a data entry project renders appropriate software tools and operating procedures essential to the maintenance of adequate standards. However, software and procedures should not increase, and ideally should reduce, the costs of producing the required outputs.

The solutions presented by the authors are based on the following principles:

1. software and procedures should be as simple as possible to meet the requirements;
2. wherever and whenever it is simpler and/or reduces errors for machinery to do the work, modify the software to do it;
3. software should allow for "dummy" output to test the data files before potentially expensive long print runs are started;
4. the software tools should be built up from familiar pieces and/or present a familiar user interface;
5. the operating procedures established should allow for quick and easy reference to source documents for verification and work measurement.