

Allen County Data Bank

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION CONTROL

LOGIC is an acronym for *LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION CONTROL*. *LOGIC* spells more than a word—it spells the beginning of an era in information collection, storage, processing, and analysis at the local level of government. The end result will be services which will be more economical, accurate, and efficient.

CENTRAL COMPUTER FOR ALL DEPARTMENTS

What makes such a program possible? Computers. The modularity, adaptability, and compatibility of these systems along with its use of random access devices, remote input/output stations, as well as storage protection for the various departments permit amazing versatility in applications.

The configuration of equipment which Allen County will be installing will include an administrative terminal which will be maintained in each of the participating departments. These terminals can transmit and receive information to and from the computer. By these means, each department will have access to the information centrally stored in the computer. It is estimated that the total system shall be operational sometime in 1971.

The total information system is based upon the concept of various departments sharing information which is of common use and interest to the extent of the legal provisions. Each department will contribute information to the system based upon its functions and then each will draw upon this information as best suited to its needs.

At present, the same information is often collected, stored, and processed by different departments. This duplication will be eliminated and the accessibility and usefulness of data will be greatly increased. Integrated into the system will be a method for updating.

To attain a total system many subsystems must first be developed. This allows a number of advantages:

1. Ability to edit and evaluate the data in each problem area.

2. Possibility of some comparative analysis of data as it is submitted from the various information groups.
3. It brings about a mutual understanding of each participating department and its' problems as they relate to each other.

A SUBSYSTEM FOR REAL ESTATE DATA

One of these subsystems now in use in Allen County concerns real estate. The first problem which had to be resolved was the design of a numerical key number for permanent control of each parcel.

The key number is ten digits in size and does have some meaning in itself. There are 15 townships in the county which now break down into 30 taxing units, so the number will quickly identify this fact. It was also deemed necessary to determine if this parcel was in a subdivision, and if so, identify the subdivision so that all parcels could be grouped by subdivision if necessary. If the parcel was not in a subdivision, we wanted to identify the page of the plat book where the parcel could be found. Each book also has a subdivision reference to identify its page number.

Type of property was needed to identify normal property, spaces, nontaxable, utility, leased ground, and government owned property. It was also required that we further break down all utility property to determine: operating or nonoperating right-of-way, and that which was state assessed. We also picked up the lot or parcel number for all property.

Other information which is a permanent part of the record is name and mailing address of the property owner, the date of the transfer, and the instrument number of the transfer, the value of the land, improvements, the legal description of the parcel; as well as, the prior owners and the dates of their transfer. On the record we also show any exemptions by type and the amount. For the loaning institutions that wish to participate, we will indicate who holds the mortgage and whether or not the institution or the property owner pay the taxes. We can maintain the current year and the four previous years by installments for the purposes of delinquent tax, penalties and fines for reasons of tax sale.

We are able to produce surplus tax payment lists as they occur; as well as make distribution of money by taxing units as the need arises.

As of March 1, 1967, the size of the file stands at 96,650 records on real estate alone. We also maintain a similar file on personal property tax payers.

REAL ESTATE DATA FOR COUNTY PLANNING

The real estate record can be expanded to cover many other information areas which is now being maintained as a separate system.

This area concerns county planning. At the present time in a condensed or summary form we are identifying township, range, and section on tracts and the other deviations such as gas, sewage, and water; a dwelling unit factor, the land use code, and the number of such codes within that range and section.

We indicate the fact of whether this area is conforming or non-conforming, the square feet of building area, zoning district, total acreage involved in this zone, and the undeveloped acres for the area, an enumeration district, and the date for which any change or activity took place.

At this particular time county planning is making an effort to incorporate this information into the itemized parcel description record. This, of course, will require additional numbers to be added to the key number. This coding will only effect the planning problem and not the accounting or the tax collection problem. This record may further be expanded to show road or street accessibility, road surface and subsurface, right-of-way allowance, and elements for drainage which will be concerned with the county surveyor. These are only a few of the information areas that can be put on this real estate record. Whatever other information may be required for these departments is only limited to their imagination and their need.

A SUBSYSTEM FOR PERSONAL PROPERTY DATA

Another of these subsystems concerns personal property records. At this time there is no way to tie personal property records to the real estate records simply because the personal property is mobile.

For the first time in 1966, we were able to produce for the assessors' statistical information, as a by-product of the normal accounting and tax function, such things as: the number of personal property tax payers, the number of businesses, and farms; as well as, the number of recorded licensed vehicles, boats, motors, airplanes, and dogs (male and female) by taxing unit. This was the first year that any effort was made to control the tax payer by their social security number. The overall result showed that we have eighty-three percent of all tax payers in the county recorded with their social security number. This will give us a very definite advantage in keeping track of the tax payer if he moves about within the county; and in time, it is hoped that we will be able to determine the mobility within the state.

Through this control it is hopeful that we can reduce the bad-account problem within the county. In the past, the only control was in the person's name and last known address which has presented near impossible situation because of the similarity of names and the movement between taxing units.

In the year 1966, we found 14,135 delinquent tax payers from previous years. After all efforts to collect these taxes, we finally certified to the circuit court 9,237 people for judgment. It is hoped that the future years will reduce this problem and that we will be able to make some comparisons against real estate holders for the collection of this personal property.

A SUBSYSTEM FOR COUNTY LIBRARY OPERATION

Another subsystem concerns the Allen County Library operation. Present functions of acquisitions, circulation, control, and cataloging costs will be minimized. Today in many cases it costs more to produce the 3 x 5 record cards for cataloging than it does to produce that book. Significant cost reduction will be realized by mechanization of these and other functions.

ADVANTAGES OF CENTRALIZED COMPUTER SYSTEM

Some advantages to this centralized information control would be:

1. The duplication of effort now required to collect and up date all of the information will be eliminated.
2. Departments will be provided with more current, accurate, and useful information than is now possible.
3. Departments will be alerted to their own potential participation in the provision of a service from the reported action of some other department.
4. Paper handling costs will be reduced.
5. A considerable savings in space needed to store records will be obtained.
6. Greater efficiency and accuracy in all areas of county government can be realized.