

Teaching Data Management / Data Administration in Management Information Systems

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Management Information Systems (MIS) is a field with many nuances, with many areas of interest. Well-schooled in the ways of businesses and computer systems, MIS professionals meet a demand for effective delivery of informational power to organizations. However, the majority of institutions that teach MIS do not place much, if any, emphasis on the role of data management/data administration in their curricula.

Just as an architect absorbs the details and nuances of a client's vision of a structure and translates this intelligence into reality, an MIS professional considers information and technology options and expectations for their use within the context of the organization's goals and objectives. The more fully MIS professionals understand how information is used in an organization, and the more sensitive they are to the data needs of clients, the more accurate their MIS analysis and design will be. Further, the increase in the understanding of data's role in building and maintaining effective information systems will increase the level of usage and respect that the organization as a whole has for MIS.

MIS practitioners must consider the impact of information systems on people, the changes those systems will require in how people do their jobs, how the users interface with others and the impact of information usage on businesses and society. These goals can be effectively addressed by including a course in data management/data administration in a traditional MIS curriculum. The discipline contributes to the use of the resource of information as central to the success of an organization. Understanding and applying business concepts to information sciences is the focus of MIS.

Building a curriculum around data/information could be the defining focus for an institution that desires to have a unique MIS program. With constant changes in the field, the challenge of being an MIS instructor is to maintain currency with the discipline's literature, learning new concepts and applying them through technology into practical usage. A data/information-centric program can give MIS instructors a fulcrum around which to structure a consistent yet current curriculum.

This presentation provides an overview of the teaching approach used by the author for integrating the instruction of data management/data administration into a traditional MIS database course at the university level, as well as in a separate course for an MIS Seminar. The presentation describes the concepts of data management, relates them to database management, shows the application of logical data management in a semester-long student project and gives a rationale for incorporating the teaching of data management into the standard MIS curriculum.