Excerpt from Data Training, 1982

Training for DP is big business today. Colleges, institutes, equipment and software suppliers, training companies, independent trainers, and in-house training departments are all involved in training the operators, systems and applications programmers for the vast array of available computers.

Robert Blumfeld, Director of Education at SYS-ED says, "Training in the DP industry is becoming less and less a side issue." He points to the contrast between DP educations of the past, which took place in vacated offices on blackboards, and today's array of training directors, training centers, and organized curriculum.

Several DP trainers attribute the new emphasis on DP training to a combination of increased complexity in subject matter and lower tolerance for the cost of error. Still others point to the fact that, in this industry of extremely high turnover, training is an important motivational tool.

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This company uses all kinds of training options, depending on the number of students to be trained. When the number of people to be trained is less than 20 per year, it relies on a training vendor. The company also sends people to IBM or brings IBM to them. Highly technical subject matter, forces reliance on vendors, because it is cheaper to buy than develop.

Instructor/Developer Concept

After several years of using self-study IBM began to look for a more cost efficient way to provide this instruction, as well as high quality classroom instruction. Experience had shown IBM that the least expensive and quickest course to develop was the stand-up classroom course. Self-study tended to be more expert give up front, because more preparation was necessary to anticipate all possible needs and questions. By 1978, IBM had tackled the problem by replacing the old central development group, which had created and dispensed materials to instructors and users, with the concept of the instructor/developer in this mode, trainer and subject expert also became the developer of the education scripts.

IBM made another major change during 1978, dedicating its DP training locations in an effort to meet needs created by increasingly complex operating systems communication software and the multitude of new products added to the IBM line. Education centers began to specialize along product lines, and the company began conducting the bulk of its courses in four large U.S. cities - New York, Washington, Los Angeles and Dallas. Each center was responsible for different course concentrations. However, this meant that many trainees had to travel a lot further for education, and many users instead chose another training alternative.

Project Re-entry

This January, IBM responded to competition by adding ten new Technical Education Centers. These centers will be subsets of the larger Advanced Education Centers. Courses taught at the centers also go on the road to other cities 25% of the time.

IBM is making some other significant changes this year in what looks like a new thrust to re-enter the training business.

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…subject matter knowledge know-how, its ability to reach the training director community, its media creativity. Educational content between IBM classrooms and SRA self-study programs will seldom overlap. Subject matter that SRA develops in the self-study style will be material adjudged to be specifically suited for independent learning.

The System 360, introduced by IBM in 1964, marked the division of training into specialty areas of system and application programming. The teaching method remained classroom instruction, with sample problems done as machine exercises. Most classes were held at the IBM education centers in the major cities where, for the first time instructors were trained side-by-side with sources. During this time period, other training began to surface - independent vendors, colleges, and technical institutions. This development, according to many trainers coincided with a perception that IBM was dropping out of the mainstream of training and was failing to meet user needs.
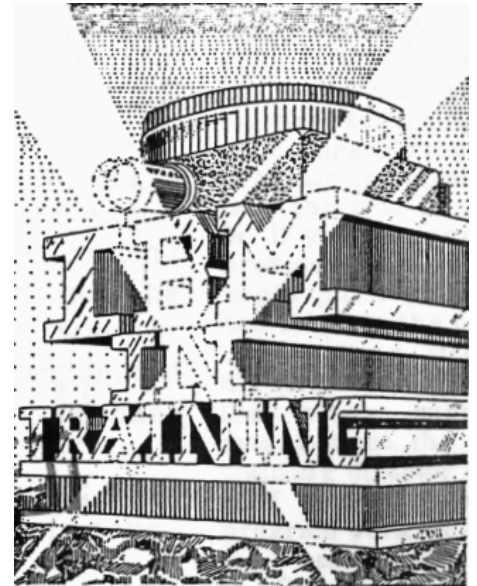
Several vendors credit their success to the terse nature of IBM manuals. Dave Shapiro, marketing sales manager at SYS-ED says, "In the IBM manuals, users cannot differentiate between important and unimportant information. SYS-ED manuals, on the other hand, are a product of the three-and one-half month instructor training period, during which instructors write and develop a leader manual. "This becomes a foundation upon which to communicate knowledge to students in a practical and encompassing way. Our trainees can go back to their jobs and do something," says Shapiro.