

System Review Operating the system means new opportunities but also new problems. Productivity and service should increase; all the old procedures be replaced by the new. The only way to really know if all is working well and meeting needs is to have formal review processes. Users are undoubtedly in the best position to know whether the system really works but often don't volunteer the information; it has to be extracted. A review should be active rather than passive.

The review, and the passing of time, will lead to requests for upgrades and enhancements and the necessity to fix problems or bugs.

Maintenance Computer hardware will need fixing, new versions of the software will be released and the users of the system need to be supported. This maintenance is a normal feature of systems and needs to be factored into operations. Hardware and software maintenance is usually specified in the RFP and contract but often user maintenance is overlooked. Equipment maintenance can usually be purchased from the vendor or a third party for 10–15% of the purchase price annually. Software maintenance will be quoted by the vendor. It can be expensive and it should be clearly described in the contract. Other ongoing training and support can be provided inhouse or also from third-parties. There are many fee structures but training is usually contracted for by the day (rates from 500–1,000/day) and technical support by the hour (50–100/hr).

Operations The major operations issues to be considered are:

- responsible person
- protecting data and equipment
- ensuring performance

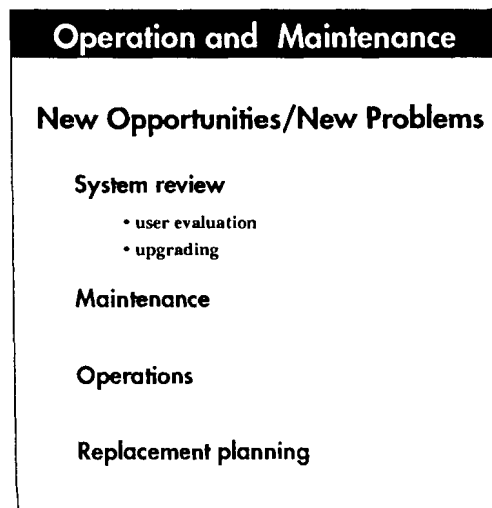


figure 49

Performance statistics and operational logs should be kept that can be used as quantifiers when writing future specifications. It is useful to run all or a standard subset of the acceptance test procedures at periodic intervals to document performance as the system increases in size and number of users.

It is also a good time to document in-house procedures.

There is an unquestionable need for a person to be responsible for overseeing the daily operations of the system. Careful thought should be given to how this is provided since it can easily become a fulltime job. If it is going to be done by existing staff seconded from other jobs it will be necessary to revise job descriptions and assignments. This work must be acknowledged and made legitimate.

The system and its data must be protected from corruption or unauthorized use. Three essential steps are: to monitor security arrangements and access regularly; to install surge protection and uninterruptible power supplies (to protect hardware and storage devices from power related destruction) and implement comprehensive backups.

Replacement Planning

It's hard to believe but true that immediately after implementation is the right, but difficult, time to be thinking about the replacement system. One consolation is that all the effort expended on getting to this point can be used as a point of departure for the next system. Requirements and specification documentation should be carefully filed and a strategy determined for recording the changing and emerging requirements as the new system is used.

References

1. David Bearman, "Automated Systems for Archives and Museums: Acquisition and Implementation Issues", *Archives and Museum Informatics Technical Report 4*, 1987/88.