

INFORMATION SERVICES MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Information Services Division (ISD) is responsible for assisting the County Board of Supervisors, all county administrative offices, managers, and staff in improving work methods and productivity through the application and use of a variety of automated services and methodologies. ISD maintains the integrity and security of official county information as the county conducts its business. The county has 1,200 personal computers and 52 servers. This does not include laptops. The old data processing mainframe computer system was sold and has been removed. ISD bills out actual costs; labor is on an hourly rate and comprises two-thirds of the budget of \$800,000. There are direct expenses: utilities, software programs, license fees of \$400,000. There is a financial license cost of \$32,000 and a yearly Informax software program cost of \$20,000. This software program only runs on a Hewlett Packard server that costs \$15,000. The Humboldt County Grand Jury has received several complaints concerning the computers and automated systems.

PROCEDURE

The grand jury surveyed several county offices regarding services and support of ISD problems pertaining to the following areas: equipment/software, programming, output and maintenance/technical services. Several department heads were interviewed, and a tour of the ISD was conducted.

FINDINGS

F-1 There appears to be a lack of overall security procedures in place; there have been reports of missing or stolen computer equipment.

F-2 There are no personal background checks on ISD staff.

F-3 ISD personnel have access to county personnel records, court records, social services files, county financial accounts, mental health records, and other confidential files.

F-4 Witnesses reported that ISD lacks complete security procedures for security of information.

F-5 At times, newly ordered computer equipment sits up to two months unopened; sometimes, the warranty has expired before computers were unpacked.

F-6 Some computer components were found to be missing and/or switched to other departments.

F-7 Because of programming oversights during upgrading and conversions, there have been delays that have caused problems.

F-8 On more than one occasion, a programmer said, the specific job was completed and errors were still found, delaying work.

F-9 It was reported that there is a lack of communication existing between programmers and users.

F-10 ISD has performed data base management and maintenance without communicating with user departments.

F-11 Witnesses testified that after going down, there are times it takes several days before servers are back on line or running properly.

F-12 It was reported that there are delays in rewriting programs and installing them in a timely fashion.

F-13 It was reported that county departments are not getting timely technical services.

F-14 The county lost data due to conversions of some systems; the criminal justice system suffered loss of data during Y2K conversions.

F-15 Between printed pages, blank pages are produced in some office systems. This is caused because ISD sets up for matrix printers when users have laser printers.

F-16 Because of an inefficient financial program, ISD is billing county offices different dollar amounts for the same period of time and services.

F-17 When the ISD "motherboard" goes down, most county office computers go down.

F-18 Computer users are not being advised when ISD is running program backups and/or program upgrades.

F-19 Several county departments are using other technical services rather than services provided by ISD.

F-20 There are conflicts between vendors and ISD when ISD alters or customizes licensed vendor software.

F-21 To avoid having user systems down during normal working hours, ISD procedure allows only off-hour access to vendors who wish to upgrade their systems and perform maintenance.

CONCLUSIONS

C-1 ISD has not effectively established procedures for overall security of computers and systems.

C-2 ISD is not effectively organized to provide all the services needed by the county.

C-3 ISD is not communicating effectively with user departments.

C-4 ISD technical services is not set up to support user departments adequately.

C-5 ISD does not have the equipment and/or procedures for back-up when systems go down.

C-6 Some county offices may not be able to accurately budget for their ISD charges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THE HUMBOLDT COUNTY GRAND JURY RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING:

R-1 ISD establish procedures for overall security of computers and their systems.

R-2 ISD be restructured or decentralized to better serve the county.

R-3 Personnel require extensive background checks on all new ISD staff.

R-4 The County bond the current ISD staff.

R-5 The County acquire new accounting system so that county departments can accurately budget for computers and their systems.

R-6 County departments have stand-alone system servers with mirrored hard drives.

R-7 ISD establish procedures for security of information.

RESPONSES

THE FOLLOWING RESPONSES TO REPORT 01-02 ARE REQUIRED PURSUANT TO P.C. 933 AND THE STANDARD FORMAT FOR RESPONSES.

1. The Board of Supervisors respond to all findings and recommendations.
2. The department head of Information Services Division respond to all findings and recommendations.