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COMPUTER SYSTEMS FOR MANUFACTURING CONTROL^{1/}

SUMMARY

by

William G. Stoddard*

Several significant patterns have emerged in recent years in the evolution of manufacturing systems and in the environment in which they are being applied. Improved manufacturing control system techniques and new computer and communications equipment, coupled with data management software to handle the complex interrelationships inherent in manufacturing systems, provide the potential for substantially improved information and operations control. At the same time, operating costs and investments in plant, equipment and inventories are rising sharply. As a result, managers are placing greater emphasis on improved manufacturing systems performance. This requires that production and systems personnel become more than technicians, and be more aware of the specific business problems and objectives of the enterprise.

A variety of application software systems for manufacturing control have been developed recently. Some of these are well-designed and are properly documented. Others lack important controls and features, are difficult to install and maintain due to poor documentation, and are expensive to operate.

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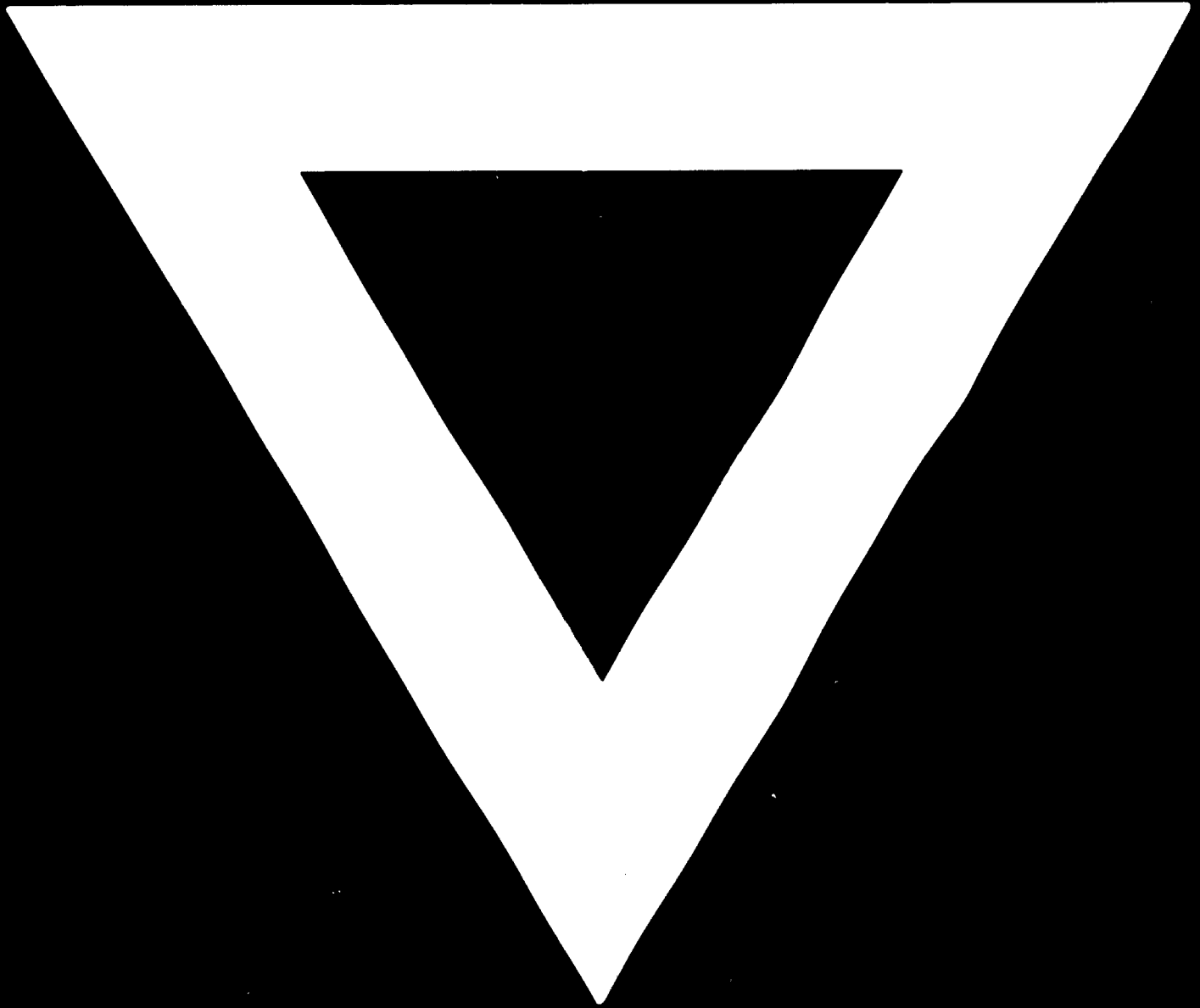
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The paper centres on a planning chart which identifies the key application modules of a typical integrated manufacturing control system. The flow of information and functions performed within each module are discussed. Recent developments in packaged manufacturing control software systems are analysed and guidelines to assist in their selection are presented. The paper concludes with some practical suggestions on preparing to install such systems, with particular emphasis on the training of user and systems personnel.



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