

Decision Support Systems: Frequently Asked Questions

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According to legend, Socrates, when was asked why he had not written any book, resorted to the metaphor of the painted portrait. He said that the most beautiful portrait is not able to answer the simplest question. Therefore, Socrates preferred to utilize the lively dialogue, based on questions and answers, to approach the most complicated aspects of life.

The people of the IT community have frequently resorted to the method of developing a FAQ ("Frequently Asked Questions") to share their knowledge with newcomers to a particular domain. Such FAQ can also be helpful to people that possess a richer body of knowledge and want to add more structure to it. This reviewer remembers how the systematic presentation of the fundamental concepts of AI ("Artificial Intelligence") contained in a FAQ – type paper¹ developed by McCarthy helped him to organize his knowledge about AI.

At present, Decision Support Systems (DSS) are viewed as a distinct particular subclass of information systems and a significant field of research and development efforts carried-out in both academia circles and the IT industry.

Dr. Dan Power, a professor of Information systems at the University of Northern Iowa, has been, for many years, one of the most outstanding scientists and "advocates" of the DSS movement. Besides writing papers and books in the field, he has created a portal (DSSResources.com) which has been appreciated by many people (consultants, researchers, managers, teachers, and students) that are interested in DSS and look for a reliable source of high quality knowledge. The associated "DSS News" bulletin of Dan Power has contained, since its third issue of the first volume (6th June, 2000) a column entitled "Ask Dan!" to answer various possible questions about DSS.

This book is a systematic integration and an added value extension of the best "Ask Dan" columns. The author chose 83 (out of 100) FAQ and grouped them in eight chapters addressing meaningful categories such as: i) DSS foundations, ii) DSS theory, iii) building DSS, iv) data mining, communication, knowledge, group DSS, v) data-driven and document-driven DSS, vi) model-driven DSS, vii) DSS applications, and viii) evaluating DSS projects. Each chapter starts with an "Introduction" section. An alphabetic list of questions and a complete list of column references are given with a view to making the study of the book as effective as possible.

This book, which is the condensed product of a five-year effort by the author, naturally complements his previous work². It can help and stimulate both managers and the DSS technologist to enhance and systematize her/his knowledge about utilization of technology and the development of decision support systems.

Having read the book and written this review, I would like to thank Dan for his marvelous and generous effort to share his knowledge with all who read his books and papers, access the portal he maintains, and ask questions.

Florin G. Filip

¹ McCarthy, J. (2004). What is Artificial Intelligence?
(<http://www-formal.Stanford.edu/jmc/whatisai/whatisai>)

² . Power, D.D. (2002). **Decision Support Systems: Concepts and Resources for Managers**. Quorum Books, Westport, Connecticut.