DEVELOPING A NEW SYSTEM FOR MANAGING ASSETS AND ORDERS

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Abstract

When faced with the dilemma of a system that is not giving satisfactory results – what do you do?
Firstly, you need to face the problem (don't run away).
Secondly, find a way to fight the battle.
Thirdly, recruit all necessary resources to defeat the problem.

This presentation will talk about a new effective way of managing large amounts of data such as assets registration / maintenance and purchasing information.

Using Microsoft Access Office software, it was possible to combine all the information in a custom-made database. This eliminated the antiquated system of dealing with reams of paper, lost equipment and records. Now with the new system it is possible to track records and find information in minutes rather than days or weeks.

Introduction

Many people will occasionally encounter situations at work that can be difficult or frustrating to resolve or they may face a system that is unable to give the effective results.
We may want to learn how to improve this system and try to resolve the problem on our own. When we have success, we feel good about being able to manage our own problems effectively. Sometimes, however, even with our best efforts, we are not successful. During these times, you may want to engage all the available resources to manage the problem.
This is my personal experience in trying to resolve one of the difficulties that my workplace is facing at the moment.

The problem:

In the past we were part of the School of Microbiology & Immunology which was a relatively small school, one of my duties was purchasing as well as maintaining asset information, which was manageable during that time. Recently this small school merged with two other schools to form the School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences (BABS), and this was when the problem started. My task was to manage asset records, making sure the information was updated regularly and kept in a central location allowing for better access. Purchasing was now being shared between 6 people spread throughout the building. Maintaining accurate records proved to be very difficult.

Problem   with photos:

- ☹ Reams of paper used for recording asset details and equipment disposal.

- ☹ Equipment not registered by barcode, no valuation records and many misplaced pieces of equipment.

- ☹ Hardcopies of orders can be used but finding a file can be time consuming and sharing information between offices is difficult.

How to find a solution:

The first step in finding a solution is admitting that there is a problem, and to face it by combing all the available resources, I found my resources through:

- Encouragement and support from my supervisor
- Staff development that opened many doors and opportunities
- Computer training that is available to all staff members
- Enthusiasm to make improvements

The solution:

Microsoft Access 2000

Why Microsoft Access?

- It is a program that is available to all IBM computers, it's included in the Office package.
- With a short course (2 days) you should be able to design your own data according to your requirements so you become the programmer, administrator, and the user
- Microsoft Access accommodate multiple users through a network, each user will have their own "log in" name and password each with a limited access according to their needs and requirements.
- It is efficient and has data integrity
- Easier to manage than paper files
- User friendly and
- Modifiable as your requirements change

How Microsoft Access works:

Access is a relational database system (RDBMS).it allows you to create and manage relational database by providing tools to make it easier to enter and update data, analyse data and quickly present information in a sophisticated report,
The data is separated into multiple tables- one for each subject. The tables are then linked using common fields.

Type of tables used for BABS Access database

- Orders related tables:
- Equipment related tables:
- Company details
- Staff record
- Account details

Option window
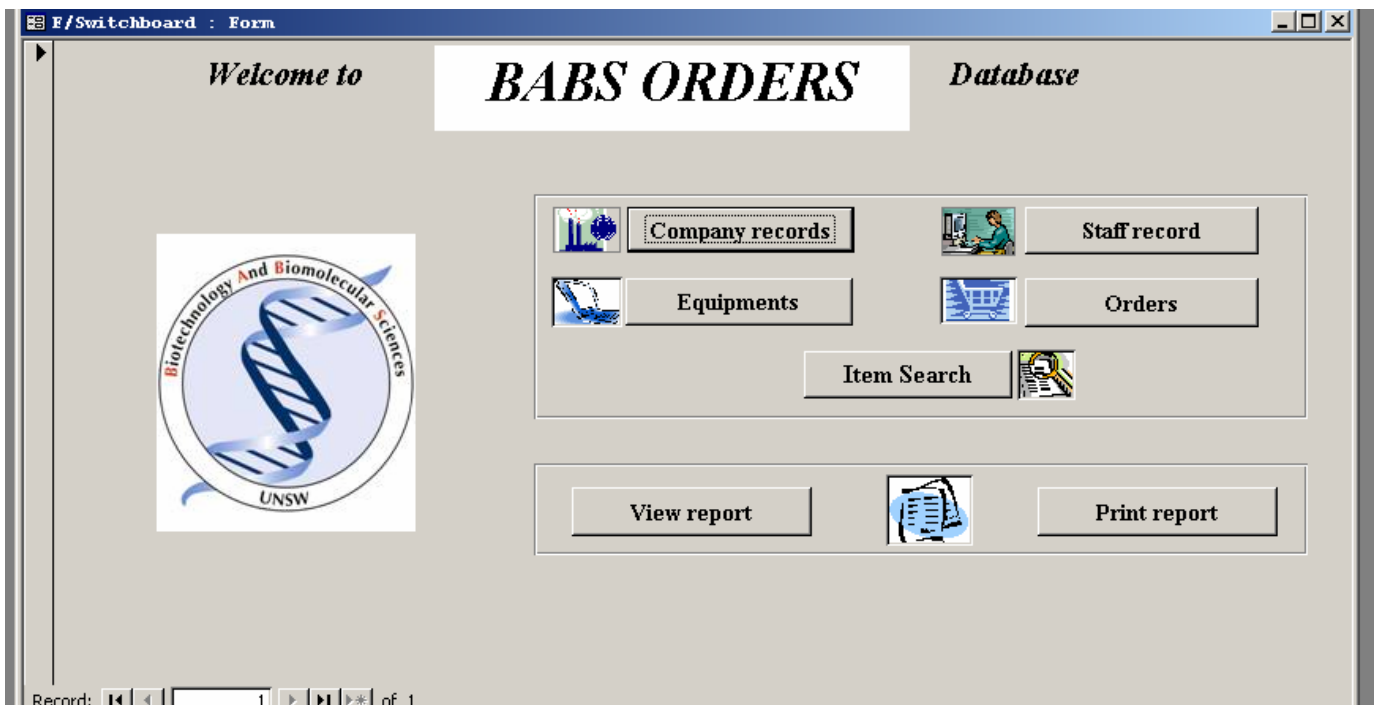
From this window you can choose to view, search, add, or print any record from

- Company records: including all related details as address, web page, type of products, company representative contact details.
- Staff or student record: as contact details and student supervisor details
- Equipment details: as Location, Barcode, Serial no, Model no, type of equipment , Custodian , Service details and Electrical testing dates.
- Order record: Including order date and number, type of order, account details, description of goods and total cost of order
- Item search: allows quick search for a specific item, and price
- Report function: to view or print any of the following reports:
  - Total class expenditure for any required time mentioned
  - Item and supplier report
  - Company and products
  - Assets Location and details
  - The total spending for each purchaser

BABS Order record window

BABS Equipment record Window:

Therefore, we found the answer to all our problems:

- ☺ One database that has all the details for Orders
- ☺ Same database for all information related to any type of equipment.
- ☺ Database that can be used by different users in different locations
- ☺ You can View and print any type of report at any time.
- ☺ You can customise the database according to your needs and expectations.

Conclusion:

We are not living in an ideal world and definitely not an ideal workplace, there will always be obstacles and systems that do not yield to wanted results.
Our rule is to apply all the available resources to manage the problems. If you have a problem in managing your assets and orders, Microsoft Access with so little can offer you so much, it can offer you the answer and can give you more than what you expect. Just look around and think what you can do to make your workplace a better place.

References:

Microsoft Access 2000 Introduction/Intermediate Manual from Spherion Education
http://www.fgcu.edu/support/office2000/access/
http://office.microsoft.com/home/default.aspx