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Memorandum 6M-3375  
Supplement 1

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Division 6 - Lincoln Laboratory  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Lexington 73, Massachusetts

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SUBJECT: EDITORIAL SUPPLEMENT, BIWEEKLY REPORT OF 11 FEBRUARY 1955

To: Jay W. Forrester

From: John B. Bennett

COVER SHEET

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Page 1 of 4 Pages

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## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	1
Section I - Edited Copy	2
II - Miscellaneous	3
III - Requested Copy	4

## INTRODUCTION

By now, those who read this Supplement will have an idea of our most troublesome writing difficulties. The most persistent of these are:

1. Superfluous words or ideas;
2. Weak organization;
3. Level of detail (either too high or too low).

Awareness that these problems exist should be of assistance in overcoming or guarding against them.

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Memorandum 6M-3375  
Supplement 1

Page 2

I. EDITED COPY

Display-Line Drivers (Original Copy)

(H. E. Ziemann) (UNCLASSIFIED)

Some modifications were made in the line-driver amplifier to improve the margins on four of the stages. These stages now have margins of +50 volts on the -300-v line. A problem still remains in removing a hysteresis effect in one of the stages. A third marginal-check line on the regulator section still has to be improved. However, since this checking was proceeding too slowly, the checking of the amplifier has been temporarily discontinued to complete the marginal-checking of two decoder circuits.

A second line driver has been modified to incorporate the changes existing in the first. Both amplifiers behave similar enough to expect satisfactory performance from the production models. The output stages are completely interchangeable without affecting the response noticeably. The preamplifiers are not interchangeable without some adjustment of the position and mean-level controls.

Marginal data on the decoder circuits is presently being compiled.

Display-Line Drivers (Edited Copy)

(H. E. Ziemann) (UNCLASSIFIED)

Modifications in the line-driver amplifier improved margins on four of the stages. These stages now have margins of +50 volts on the -300-v line. A hysteresis effect in one of the stages must still be removed, and a third marginal-check line on the regulator section must be improved. (Since this checking was proceeding too slowly, it has been temporarily discontinued to complete marginal-checking of two decoder circuits.)

A second line driver has been modified to incorporate the changes made in the first. Both amplifiers behave with sufficient similarity to promise satisfactory performance from production models. The output stages are completely interchangeable without a noticeable effect on the response. The preamplifiers are not interchangeable without some adjustment of the position and mean-level controls.

Marginal data on the decoder circuits is presently being compiled.

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Supplement 1

Page 3

Comments

1. An excess of words is still the single most common flaw in the writing of this Division. At worst, whole sentences can be deleted without loss of sense; examples have been cited in previous Supplements. Much less of a problem is material such as that above. In this case, note that the first word of the original, "Some," is unnecessary; note further in the last sentence of the first paragraph that the original phrase "the checking of the amplifier" can without ambiguity be replaced by "it." Very little is written that cannot be tightened up (and improved) in this way.

2. One use of parentheses is to set off a sentence inserted by way of comment. The last sentence of the first paragraph meets this requirement.

3. The proper function of an adjective is to modify a noun or a noun equivalent. In the original second sentence of the second paragraph, "similar" is incorrectly used to modify the verb "behave." Although the adverb "similarly" would have been correct, it has (to me) an awkward sound; an adverbial phrase has been used in its place.

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II. MISCELLANEOUS"Data"

"Marginal data...is presently being compiled."

"Data were plotted point by point."

Many writers regard "data" only as the plural form of the Latin "datum." Linguistically, this is of course correct. However, the word is now accepted (by Webster's) as singular with the sense of "a body of facts." This is the sense of the first example above. But "data" may still retain its plural sense of "several discrete facts" as in the second example. The writer must determine which sense he intends and use a singular or plural verb accordingly.

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Abbreviations (again)

"...an over-all view of the MTC Computer..."

Those who commonly use an abbreviation in place of the words it stands for (as "MTC" for "Memory Test Computer") sometimes make the error of redundancy which is made above. Here, if the abbreviation were to be written out the phrase would read "the Memory Test Computer Computer." A

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Memorandum ~~GM~~-3375  
Supplement 1

Page 4

common instance of this redundancy is the incorrect phrase "a-c current."

Proofreading

vol. vii) "...pilfrometer (for a description of this instrument, see...  
but up to the present..."

"This<sup>is</sup><sub>^</sub> a common characteristic of the cliché."

One of the last responsibilities of a writer for any copy is proofreading. It is a responsibility which should not be delegated to others. Nor is it a responsibility which can be hastily discharged. In the examples above (from the last issue of this Supplement), the errors overlooked are of relatively little significance; unfortunately, however, no guarantee exists that errors not found will be all of this sort.

## III. REQUESTED COPY

The following material was not submitted until requested:

1.1.2 Cape Cod System Operation

(O. T. Conant) (CONFIDENTIAL)

The major portion of my time during the last biweekly period has been spent on documentation of my Cape Cod programs. I have completed and turned over to Benington and Chandler annotated program forms for the following programs in the master makeup and display group: conditional-switch and height-switch interpretation; identification-switch interpretation; and track-cycle and antiaircraft-switch interpretation. The flow diagram of the identification-switch program has been completed, primarily through the efforts of Betty Bedrosian and Maureen Cronin. I will complete the flow diagrams of the two other above-mentioned programs by 18 February.

Up to now, only a small part of my time has been spent on XD-1. Following completion of the above work, XD-1 planning and programing will consume all of my efforts.

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