METHODOLOGY

The methods utilized

The methods utilized for effective programming all involve *investigation*. This investigation is achieved through a variety of techniques:

Observation.

- Programming demands on-site observation of operations. It is only through this "hands-on" observation that the programmer can understand the physical complexities of the client's requirements. Through unobtrusive walk-throughs and inconspicuous observation sessions, the programmer will gain valuable insight into the flow of work, the culture of the organization, the type and pace of activities, and the behaviors of those who inhabit the spaces.

Inquiry.

- The quality of the questions asked directly influences the quality of information received. The programmer should avoid questions that can be answered with a "yes" or a "no," as they provide minimal insight. Questions that evoke substantive responses will allow the programmer to gain insight and then follow up with other probing inquiries. It is important for the programmer to focus on collecting data that is relevant to the project. The programmer should take the lead to sort the data gathered and discard information that could potentially blur or cloud the real issues.

Interviews.

- Interviews should be conducted with key individuals or teams of individuals within an organization. These interviews should be organized to capture the broadest spectrum of input possible. It is often helpful to include a variety of individuals so that the discussion is active and encourages differing opinions. The programmer should serve as a facilitator of open and uninhibited discussion. If individuals in the interview group tend to dominate discussion, the programmer must work to gain participation from other, less vocal participants.

  It is helpful to schedule interviews with ample time for relaxed inquiry, and to provide participants a safe haven to express their opinions. Interviews should be conducted in a place separate from work activities, and questions should be prepared well in advance in order for the interview sessions to stimulate the group's thinking.

It is beneficial to issue a memorandum about the upcoming programming interviews to the participants. If the memorandum highlights the subject matter of items to be discussed, it will enable individuals to organize their thoughts concerning the upcoming interview.

Focus groups.

- In large organizations, focus groups are beneficial to determine the reactions to impending change or gain opinions on multiple options for the facilities.

The programmer may wish to use a facilitator for the focus group to elicit maximum responses on the relevant issues. It will be important to determine a reporting mechanism to communicate the issues and concerns that the focus groups uncover. These issues often form the basis for fear and insecurity about impending change. If the design solutions address and conquer these fears, the success of the project will be enhanced.

Benchmarking.

- Benchmarking can be a valuable tool in programming efforts, as it allows an organization to evaluate its position with respect to competitors or leaders in a given industry. Benchmarking statistics are readily attainable through various industry sources and can be utilized in developing questions to utilize in programming or as a tool to assist the organization in formulating project objectives.

DOCUMENTATION

The statistical data

The statistical data gained from programming efforts serves as a reference for project development. The database will depict the physical situation, headcount and headcount projections, and overall spatial statistics, thereby providing a two-dimensional footprint of space requirements. (See Figures 27-1, 27-2, and 27-3.)

With the database documentation in hand, the client can understand the overall programming projections by detail or in summary. This documentation gives the design team and the client an opportunity to reevaluate business strategies, target areas that need more in-depth study, and define expectations.