

Which Blogs and Community Sites Offer Helpful Tax Material?

Tax professionals have developed a number of forums for interaction over the web, including the posting of questions and answers for peers to provide feedback. Law Professor Blogs (<http://www.lawprofessorblogs.com/>) maintains a network of blogs on legal topics, including Tax Profs Blog; Wills, Trusts & Estates Prof Blog; Elder Law Prof Blog; and Nonprofit Law Prof Blog. These blogs combine regularly updated resources and links, along with daily news and information of interest. Roth & Company, P.C. Tax Update Blog (<http://www.rothcpa.com/blog-index>) is another useful tax blog.

What Are the Best Websites for General Tax Resources?

The following are some of the best:

- Findlaw (<http://tax.findlaw.com/>)
- Legalbitstream (<http://www.legalbitstream.com>)
- Tax and Accounting Sites Directory (<http://www.taxsites.com>)

- Tax Topics (<http://www.taxtopics.net>)
- Small Business Tax Guidance (<http://www.smbiz.com>)
- American Bar Association (<http://www.americanbar.org/groups/taxation.html>)

It should be noted that some organizations have created and promoted websites only to abandon them. Even some of the sites listed above may not exist in six months. The best advice is to always check the date of the last revision, particularly for proprietary sites. □

Peter A. Karl III, JD, CPA, is a partner with the law firm of Paravati, Karl, Green & DeBella, LLP in Utica, N.Y., and a professor of law and taxation at the SUNY Polytechnic Institute (Utica-Rome). He is the author of <http://www.1031exchange-tax.com>, and a member of The CPA Journal Editorial Board.

The Historical Need for Computer Controls and Security

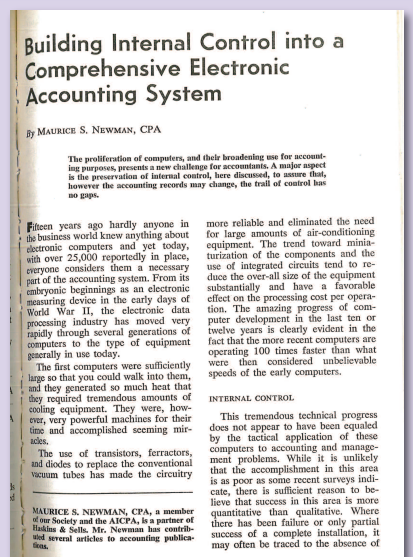
As other articles throughout this issue illustrate, keeping information secure is a paramount concern for today’s businesses and their advisors. Cybersecurity is critical for accountants and auditors because CPAs are entrusted with keeping client data safe.

The profession has always adjusted to technological change. At the dawn of the computer age, when machines were powered by transistors and programmed by punch cards, companies began using “electronic data processing” to make necessary calculations and adjustments. *The CPA Journal* addressed the knowledge gap 50 years ago—for example, in the June 1966 article “Building Internal Control into a Comprehensive Electronic Accounting System,” by Maurice S. Newman.

Newman was particularly concerned with both management and accountants’ understanding of an organization’s goals for its computer system: “No electronic data processing equipment should be ordered until there is a clear understanding on the part of executive management of how they may use such equipment effectively.” He also discussed the then-theoretical possibility of an “all-purpose accounting system” cutting across organizational lines and encompassing all of the company’s information processing and reporting needs. (Today, this would be called “accounting software” and an “intranet.”) Such a system, he said, would require “sufficient internal control to assure the reliability and accuracy of the basic accounting data.”

Newman then focused on the precise controls necessary for a 1960s state-of-the-art electronic accounting system. While he had many recommendations, the common theme among them was mutual communication and understanding between accountants and computer operators. It was, in his eye, crucial for both of these departments to understand what was needed of the accounting system and the particulars of how it worked in order to achieve the best results. Even though every accountant today—indeed, every professional—is a “computer operator,” it is still useful to have a foundational understanding of how software programs work. One piece of advice that sticks out is the suggestion that accountants learn the programming language COBOL; apparently, “learn to code” was popular advice even then.

Newman’s article shows that adjusting to technology has always been a concern for accountants, and that certain principles about best use of computers still hold. The complete original article is available from <http://www.cpajournal.com>.



Reproduced with permission of copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.