

## ***SE 6329 Project Description***

### ***Restaurant Management System***

R. Z. Wenkstern, Dongcheng Li

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The goal for this project is to introduce automation in privately-owned restaurants, that is, small to medium-sized establishments. Typical problems restaurant personnel are facing include:

- Coordination of their work activities
- Anticipating and handling periods of low/high patron traffic
- Recognizing trends early enough to take advantage of bestsellers or abandon the flops
- Lowering operating costs, and increasing efficiency/productivity and profits

Many restaurants are still operated using pen and paper methods, with little or no automation (see Figure 1). Patrons enter the facility to be greeted by a host, who often times has a “dry erase” diagram of the tables. The host can see the status of the tables based on whether or not they or someone else physically updates the diagram. Once seated a waiter tends to the costumers by jotting down the orders onto a piece of carbon paper and delivers it to the kitchen for proper food preparation. The waiter then has to periodically check back to find out when the meal is ready. When the food is done, the piece of carbon paper is saved for proper record keeping by the management. This “old fashion” system works but yields a large amount of tab receipts, wastes a lot of time and is simply out-of-date. In old fashion systems, waiters have to carry pads around to take orders, always have a working pen and be sure to keep each bill organized and “synchronized” with the proper table.

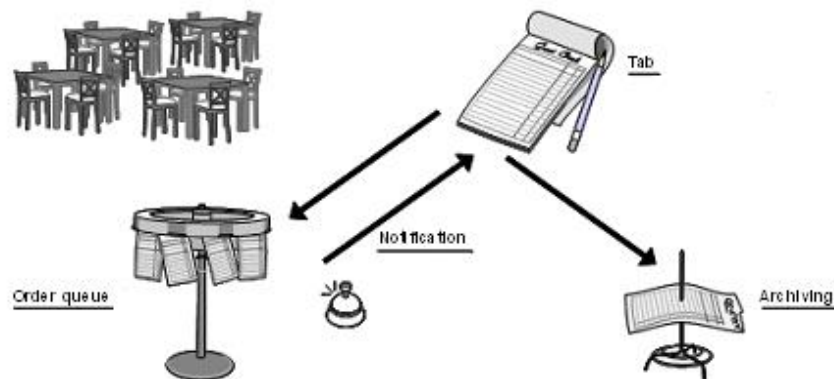


Figure 1. Old Fashioned Restaurant Operation

Another issue is record maintenance. In the old system, when everything is done by paper, the management is responsible to keep all information saved and organized, which is no easy task. Everyday tabs are collected, data needs to be organized and employees need to get paid. This requires a great deal of time and attention from the managers.

This project computerizes restaurant operation so that all information pertaining to patron's orders and staff activity will be conveniently shared and stored over the restaurant's intranet. Hosts will be able to view table status with a click of a button. The wait staff will be able to enter the patron's orders quickly and efficiently and then have it electronically delivered to the kitchen. The kitchen staff will be able to view the incoming orders and notify the proper wait staff when the food is ready. Bus boys will be able to view real-time floor status allowing them to know which tables are clean, dirty, or occupied. Most importantly, all of the restaurant information is organized and saved in the system database for the management viewing and archival. The analysis will consist of by-the-day and by-the-hour breakdowns of:

- Revenue and revenue percentage per menu item
- Menu item popularity
- Personnel efficiency
- Average turnaround time (how long patrons spend in the restaurant)
- Average preparation time (time from when the order is placed to when it is ready)

All data is automatically collected and processed allowing management to focus on analyzing the data rather than calculating it.

## Statement of Requirements

By using a touch screen the restaurant staff can quickly and efficiently log in and complete the desired task. When a waiter logs in, they are greeted with a floor status screen in which their assigned tables are colored in. Their tables are colored according to status; green is open, yellow is occupied, red is dirty (see Figure 2). At this point a waiter can select a table to view its tab. Once a table is selected, the staff can choose from a number of options. If they select to add an item to the table's tab, they are presented with various categories of food items offered. Here they can select the appropriate category and then find the desired item. For example, if a patron

ordered a Caesar salad, the waiter would login, select the table, and choose "Add Item." They would then select the "Soups/Salads" from the category list, and then select the desired salad from the items presented. They are then returned to that table's screen where they can choose to perform another task or logout. This saves the waiter from walking back and forth to the kitchen to deliver and check up on food orders.

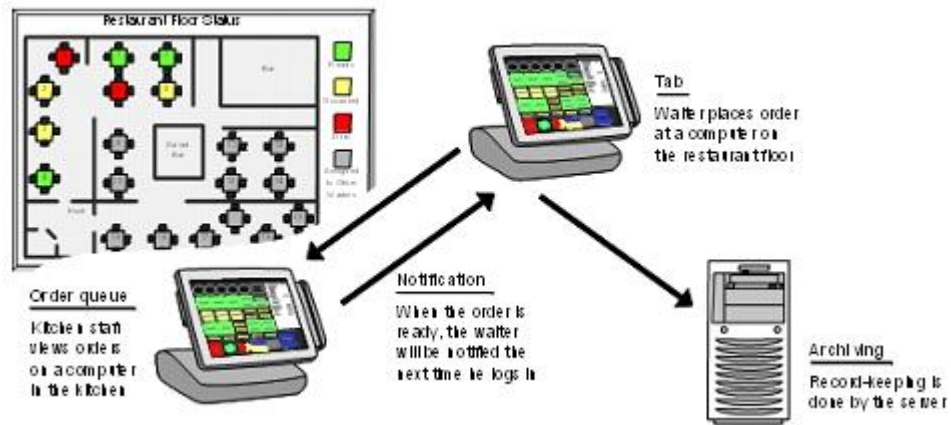


Figure 2. Restaurant Automation

Orders placed by wait-staff using the computer terminals on the restaurant floor are displayed to the kitchen staff through a queue, i.e., on a first-in, first-out basis.

The supported employee roles are: Host, Waiter, Cook, Busboy, and Manager. Some of the direct links between some of the staff include: Host  $\leftrightarrow$  Waiter, Waiter  $\leftrightarrow$  Cook, and Busboy  $\leftrightarrow$  Host. Every user account in the system should have its own privileges. All the role-personalized home screens for each employee will be refreshed automatically when needed (when a table is marked ready; a table's order is prepared; a host assigns a waiter to a table; etc.). The Manager should have administrative power over employee profiles: the ability to create and modify profiles, track employee activities, and authorize restricted waiter activities. If the employee is a waiter, his/her profile also contains information about the tables for which he/she is responsible. From this profile, the individual tabs for those tables can be accessed. The manager should also have ability to manage other aspects of restaurant operations, such as inventory tracking and sale analysis.

The waiters are provided with handheld devices, which will be connected wirelessly to the rest of the system. All other personnel (e.g., kitchen staff, hosts, busboys) access information at stationary terminals. If the waiters are required to use stationary terminals, they must memorize or jot down a specific table's order and then find an open computer, login and enter the information into the system. At this point everything else is done electronically.

Throughout the restaurant there will be computer terminals for the staff to login. The system requires each user to login, complete their task and logout. Since this will require frequent logins and logouts, it may appear as an unnecessary overhead. With a limited number of terminals, staff will not be able to remain logged in since other employees need to use the computers. Logging in

and out events can be exploited to trigger data updates and reorganization, as well as for delivering user-specific notifications of environment changes, such as to announce that the food is done or that a table needs to be cleaned. The only users who will be constantly logged in are the kitchen staff and the host. They will be the only people using the stationary terminals and therefore will not require frequent logouts.

Another design issue is that of how users identify themselves with the system. The considerable options are a touch screen, a card reader, or a typical keyboard. A touch screen allows users to carry less and use the system quickly and efficiently, although they need to memorize their login information. Another option is swipe cards, which would work by having the management assign each employee a swipe card. To make this system useful, a card reader would be needed to accompany every computer station, as illustrated in Figure 2. In order to make new cards for employees, the management would also need a card writer, as well as blank, non-programmed cards. The staff at many restaurants is constantly changing and this ongoing employee turnaround may lead to a considerable waste in time and money for making new cards. Our final option is to use a touch screen.

The final interface issue is specifying the floor plan of the restaurant and the table arrangement. Ideally, this feature should be included with the system to allow managers to alter the floor plan by moving, adding and removing tables. If the development team experiences lack of time in the course of the semester, an acceptable workaround should be sought. For example, a generic restaurant floor plan can be designed specifically for demo purposes. When a restaurant orders our software we will build and develop a floor plan for that specific establishment, making the software package unique to that establishment.

In addition to staff coordination, the system tracks everything electronically then organizes it. Employee hours are kept, allowing for rapid processing of the payroll. Revenue is tracked by day, week, or month. All this information is collected, saved, and then entered into table format for easy reading by the management. The automatically generated statistics allow the management to see what portion of the revenue comes from what item, i.e., what are the most popular items. All this is done automatically and stays up to date with restaurant performance.