

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Databases and database technology have a major impact on the growing use of computers. It is fair to say that databases play a critical role in almost all areas where computers are used, including business, electronic commerce, engineering, medicine, genetics, law, education, and library science. The word database is so commonly used that we must begin by defining what a database is. Our initial definition is quite general. A database is a collection of related data. By data, we mean known facts that can be recorded and that have implicit meaning. For example, consider the names, telephone numbers, and addresses of the people you know. You may have recorded this data in an indexed address book or you may have stored it on a hard drive, using a personal computer and software such as Microsoft Access or Excel. This collection of related data with an implicit meaning is a database. The preceding definition of database is quite general; for example, we may consider the collection of words that make up this page of text to be related data and hence to constitute a database. However, the common use of the term database is usually more restricted.

A database has the following implicit properties:

- A database represents some aspect of the real world, sometimes called the miniworld or the universe of discourse (UoD). Changes to the miniworld are reflected in the database.
- A database is a logically coherent collection of data with some inherent meaning. A random assortment of data cannot correctly be referred to as a database.
- A database is designed, built, and populated with data for a specific purpose. It has an intended group of users and some preconceived applications in which these users are interested.