

The Use of Computer-Assisted Auditing Techniques in the Auditing Course: Further Evidence

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This paper reports on the use of an auditing software package, Audit Command Language (ACL), in the auditing course at our university. As the professors teaching this course, we realized the importance of introducing our students to technology in auditing. Students used the educational version of the ACL program to perform audit procedures on data files developed by accounting faculty at Bentley College (Gelinias, Levy and Thibodeau, 2001). We address the importance of introducing audit software in the auditing course, and review some logistical issues involved with using an audit software program in a university setting. Copies of our three cases, and the related student feedback, are provided. Practicing auditors from several accounting firms in the area encourage the use of computer-assisted audit techniques in the auditing course. We describe how using a software package can help students develop skills necessary for forensic accounting and fraud auditing. We also discuss why some auditing instructors might choose to use the educational version of ACL and the material developed by Gelinias et al., despite the availability of auditing textbooks that come with an auditing software package.

INTRODUCTION

Paperless audits are no longer a thing of the future, but reflect the current state of auditing. As one information technology (IT) auditor states, "Performing audits without using information technology is hardly an option" (Sayana, 2003, p. 1). External and internal auditors are increasingly using computer assisted auditing techniques (CAATS) to perform a variety of audit procedures. CAATS, at a minimum, should perform tasks such as footing numbers, computing sample sizes, selecting sample items, scanning for unusual items, and computing financial statement ratios and trends for analytical procedures (Arens, Elder and Beasley, 2004).

We decided to revise the auditing course at our university to reflect the increasing use of CAATS in practice. The reason for this revision was to help our students become more "technologically adept," a top 5 competency identified in the American Institute of Certified