

**Magalie JAROUSSEAU, « L'informatisation des bureaux de poste, 1972-1993 », (“Computerization of the post offices, 1972-1993”), Master thesis in contemporary history, under the direction of Professor Pascal Griset, University of Paris Sorbonne – Paris 4, 2012, 207 p.**

Innovation is a part of la Poste's culture. We can say that innovation is continuity at la Poste because the material's replacement is constant. But innovation is also the result of concrete mutations. We can speak about economical mutations like the increase of competition in the financial services or sociocultural mutations like the increase of population during the sixties and the seventies. During the sixties, we can see the beginning of mechanization in the post offices and the beginning of computerization at the Caisse Nationale d'Epargne and in Postal Check treatment centers.

In this context, post offices are faced to the computerization during the seventies. It is very interesting to study computerization in post offices because they are a privileged interface between customers and the postal service. So the aim of this work is to describe the processes of computerization in a technical and human point of view.

The computerization of post offices starts in 1972 and ends in 1993. It is also the time of mutations for la Poste. Indeed, during this period, the postal service will become more “commercial” and decentralized. The computerization goes with this transformation. It will also help this change. For instance, software will be created for the financial advisers of post offices.

During the computerization, la Poste has three prerogatives: improve the customer relationship and the agents' status and realize productivity gains. These objectives have been more or less successful but they show a will from la Poste to propose efficient innovative and human services.

There is three periods for the computerization of post offices. Between 1972 and 1984, it's an experimental step. The equipment has been made exclusively for la Poste. It can do just one kind of operation and it is not flexible. Only big post offices are concerned with this equipment. But this first experience was successful. The computerization is easily accepted by the agents and the customers. So in December 1984, Louis Mexandeau (the Post and Telecommunications minister) decided to set up a big equipment plan: the IBP plan. 14 000 post offices and 30 000 positions of work have to be computerized. La Poste chooses computers from the industry because they became cheaper and more reliable. With these new computers, post offices should be able to treat all the

postal operations. The IBP plan was to finish in 1989 but it ended in 1993 because it was too ambitious. The third period deals with the beginning of the nineties. It is interesting to study the changes of status of la Poste and its impact on the computerization. The management becomes more and more commercial and decentralized with the beginning of the information system for instance.