

OPINION NO. 84-042**Syllabus:**

Word processors are a type of automatic data processing equipment and, thus, fall within the jurisdiction of a county automatic data processing board.

To: Anthony G. Pizza, Lucas County Prosecuting Attorney, Toledo, Ohio
By: Anthony J. Celebrezze, Jr., Attorney General, July 31, 1984

I have before me your request for my opinion on whether word processors are within the jurisdiction of a county automatic data processing board.

R.C. 307.84 provides for the establishment of automatic data processing boards as follows:

The board of county commissioners of any county may, by resolution, establish a county automatic data processing board. The board shall consist of the county treasurer or his representative, the county recorder or his representative, the clerk of the court of common pleas or his representative, a member or representative of the board of county commissioners chosen by the board, and the county auditor or his representative who shall serve as secretary. The members of the county automatic data processing board may by majority vote add to the board any additional members whose officers use the facilities of the board.

After the initial meeting of the county automatic data processing board, no county office shall purchase, lease, operate, or contract for the use of any automatic data processing equipment without prior approval of the board.

As used in sections 307.84 to 307.846 [307.84.6] of the Revised Code, "county office" means any officer, department, board, commission, agency, court, or other office of the county. (Emphasis added.)

R.C. 307.842 sets forth the duties of an automatic data processing board in the following manner:

The county data processing board shall coordinate the use of all automatic data processing equipment in use throughout the county offices at the time the board is established.

The board may, in writing, authorize any county office to contract for automatic data processing services, or operate or acquire automatic data processing equipment, where the board determines such action is desirable. The authorization shall be signed by a majority of the members of the board and shall be filed in the office of the board of county commissioners.

The county automatic data processing board may establish an automatic data processing center which shall provide a centralized system for the use of automatic data processing equipment for all county offices.

See R.C. 307.843 (acquisition of automatic data processing equipment); R.C. 307.846 (contracts with other public authorities for the provision of automatic data processing services).

In determining whether word processors are a type of automatic data processing equipment, and thus, under the jurisdiction of a county automatic data processing board, I am cognizant of R.C. 1.42 which states: "Words and phrases shall be read in context and construed according to the rules of grammar and common usage. Words and phrases that have acquired a technical or particular meaning, whether by legislative definition or otherwise, shall be construed accordingly." See Carter v. Division of Water, City of Youngstown, 146 Ohio St. 203, 65 N.E.2d 63 (1946).

Word processing is described as follows:

Word processing (WP) is a term commonly used to describe a system for accomplishing office work through people, procedures, and technologically advanced equipment. Originally limited to improved production of written communications generated from dictation in an office, WP has expanded to encompass all business communications generated by an organization, including the entire spectrum of office work. Although still commonly used, the term, which in the United States dates back to the early 1960s, fails to reflect this comprehensive expansion into the storage, retrieval, manipulation, and distribution of information and, most recently, a growing interdependence with electronic data processing. As a result, new descriptive terms such as information processing, administrative systems, and office systems are being used.

. . . Now, a wide range of advanced equipment is available to electronically record keystrokes in electronic memories and on a variety of magnetic storage media—tape, card, cassette, or diskette—and electronically assist in correcting, editing, revising, and manipulating text material. . . . Retyping is limited to changes and corrections; perfect copy is automatically produced by pressing a button. Once stored, words, sentences, and paragraphs can be automatically rearranged, reassembled, and retyped repeatedly and customized versions produced. Distribution of the finished work has also been affected. . . .

14 McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology 708 (5th ed. 1982).

"Data processing" is defined as "the recording and handling of information by means of mechanical or electronic equipment." Webster's New World Dictionary 360 (2d college ed. 1978). Data processing systems are described as:

Electronic, electromechanical, or mechanical machines for transforming information into suitable forms in accordance with procedures planned in advance. The term data-processing system is also applied to the scheme, or procedure, that prescribes the sequence of operations to be performed in processing the information.

. . . .

Data processing systems can be broadly classified as manual, semiautomatic, or automatic, depending on the degree of human effort required to control and execute the procedures. The trend is to reduce human effort, and automatic methods are becoming the dominant mode of processing. . . . Automatic systems are usually built around electronic digital computers and termed electronic data-processing (EDP) systems.

4 McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology 28 (5th ed. 1982). In describing the applications of data processing systems, the McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology states:

Typical business applications of data-processing systems include record keeping, financial accounting and planning, processing personnel information (including payroll processing), sales analysis, inventory control, production scheduling, operations research, and market research. Data-processing systems are also used to process correspondence and other information in business offices. These systems are called word processors. (Emphasis added.)

Id. See 3 McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology 489 (5th ed. 1982) (one area in which digital computers have had a major impact "is the growing application of digital computers to word processing, including the entire concept of office automation. Given the ability of even modest computer systems to store, organize, and retrieve very large amounts of information, one may expect the very nature of business offices to change radically").

From the foregoing, it is apparent that, as commonly used and understood, word processors are a type of automatic data processing equipment, and thus, are subject to the jurisdiction of a county automatic data processing board.

In conclusion, it is my opinion, and you are advised, that word processors are a type of automatic data processing equipment and, thus, fall within the jurisdiction of a county automatic data processing board.