

Changes in the Information-Intensity of the U.S.
Workplace Since 1950: Has Information Technology
Made a Difference?

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Abstract. This paper explores the effects of the recent massive shift in investment spending towards information technologies on this long-run trend of occupational restructuring. We make use of a new occupational classification scheme to define "information-centered" segments, "people-centered" segments, and "material-centered" segments of the labor force. We find that information-centered occupations as a whole grew steadily in employment share over the 1950-85 period, people-centered occupations held about the same share in 1985 as in 1950, and material-centered occupations declined in share in each decade. But a closer examination reveals that information workers had substantially higher growth in employment in the 1980's than in the previous decade. We surmise that the more rapidly an industry (firm) can restructure its work force in response to investments in information technology, the more competitive it will become.

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