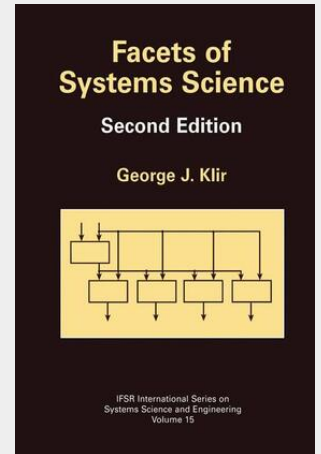


Klir

Facets of Systems Science

This book has a rather strange history. It began in spring 1989, thirteen years after our Systems Science Department at SUNY-Binghamton was established, when I was asked by a group of students in our doctoral program to have a meeting with them. The spokesman of the group, Cliff Joslyn, opened our meeting by stating its purpose. I can closely paraphrase what he said: "We called this meeting to discuss with you, as Chairman of the Department, a fundamental problem with our systems science curriculum. In general, we consider it a good curriculum: we learn a lot of concepts, principles, and methodological tools, mathematical, computational, heuristic, which are fundamental to understanding and dealing with systems. And, yet, we learn virtually nothing about systems science itself. What is systems science? What are its historical roots? What are its aims? Where does it stand and where is it likely to go? These are pressing questions to us. After all, aren't we supposed to carry the systems science flag after we graduate from this program? We feel that a broad introductory course to systems science is urgently needed in the curriculum. Do you agree with this assessment?" The answer was obvious and, yet, not easy to give: "I agree, of course, but I do not see how the situation could be alleviated in the foreseeable future."

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