Graphical Representation of Systems

In ICT we often draw diagrams to help us to understand how different systems work – these diagrams will include the use of flowcharts. A flowchart is made up of a series of different shaped boxes, which are connected by lines and the different steps which have to be taken are written inside the boxes.

Here are the main flowchart symbols:

- **TERMINATOR**
  (Start or End)

- **PROCESS**
  (Done by the Computer)

- **INPUT or OUTPUT**

- **DECISION**

- **CONNECTOR**
System Flowcharts

When you are developing a new system you firstly need to understand how the old system worked. The people who develop new systems are called systems analysts and they use diagrams a lot to help them to explain how the task is done now and how it is going to be done in the future.

A system flowchart shows what happens to data when it is input, processed and output by the computer; it is a more general view of the whole system then a simple flowchart, which only concentrates on one part of the system.

System flowcharts show us the types of input and output methods and also the type of backing store used. The process boxes tell us what is happening to the data during processing – in addition to the basic flowchart symbols there are several other symbols which are used in construction of system flowcharts:

- **Manual Input (e.g. a keyboard)**
- **Punched Tape**
- **Manual Operation (done by hand)**
- **Magnetic Drum**
- **Magnetic Disk**
- **Communication Line**
- **Document or Printout**
- **Magnetic Tape**
- **Punched Card**
- **Visual Display Unit (VDU)**