

## overview

- communication and decision making
  - information systems support decision making
    - information access
    - information sharing
    - coordination
- communication and genre
- communication and organisational structures

## mintzberg on managers

- managers don't spend much of their time "making decisions"
- they spend their time talking to people:
  - to understand the problems they're having
  - to get ideas from people
  - figure out if people are doing the right things
  - encouraging people to do good work
  - helping people sort out problems

## what does communication do?

- various functions
  - sharing information – "all on the same page"
  - getting information from place to place
    - what's happening over there?
    - remember, responsive to environment
  - building trust
- communication supports decision-making
  - three phases
    - preparation
    - informing
    - monitoring

## communication in organizations

- the traditional view
  - communication and work are separate activities
  - communication transfers information so that work can be done
- the 132 view
  - communication and work are interwoven
    - sometimes, communicating IS the work
    - sometimes, the work is conducted THROUGH communication
  - communication isn't just about information
    - it's also the exercise of power and control
    - it's also situated in a historical context

## aspects of communication

- many different forms and styles
  - different technologies, different settings
  - from email to staff meetings
- characteristics
  - formality
  - directedness
  - temporality
  - richness
  - persistence
  - genre

## the emergence of the memo

- the form of the memo
  - “to”, “from”, “subject” headings
  - subheads and lists
  - formal language
  - no greeting or sign-off
- the memo wasn't always around
  - essentially invented between 1870 and 1920
  - why?

## the emergence of the memo

- organisational growth
  - geographical growth
    - everyone doesn't share a common environment
  - structural growth
    - the emergence of middle tiers of management
- Scientific Management
  - documenting the process
  - regimenting and controlling organisational work
- technology
  - typewriters and filing cabinets

## genres of communication

- genre is a social construct
  - it provides a set of expectations
  - it makes actions *meaningful* and *sensible*
    - a framework for interpreting what's going on
  - it supports coordination between participants
  - it emerges from interactions over time
- genre has technical components, too
  - it is tied to the medium of production
    - timeliness
    - distribution

## genres of communication

- the committee meeting
  - the resume
  - the memo
  - the presentation
  - the conference
- 
- what are:
    - their components?
    - their functions?

## using genres



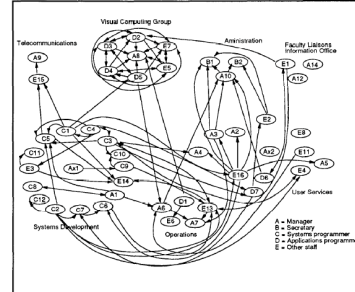
## electronic memos?

- email as a medium for electronic memos
  - email shares some properties with memos
    - the formal structure
    - enabling one-to-many communication
  - in the 80s, many organisations introduced email
    - automating vertical communication
      - distributing instructions, reporting results
    - the unexpected outcome...
- the lesson
  - genres as *systems of practice*
    - not just the information, but the way that it's used

## social networks

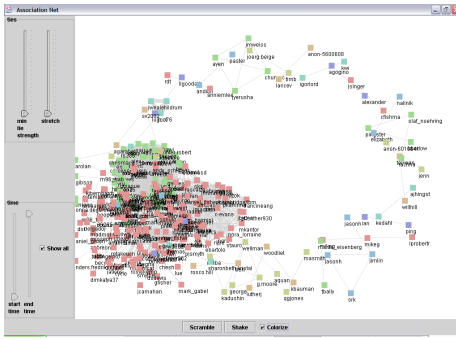
- Milgram's "small world" experiment
  - aka "six degrees of separation"
- "it's not what you know, it's who you know"
  - multiple, overlapping groups
  - remember the functional organisation structure?
- the spread of organisational information
  - how does information spread?

## social networks

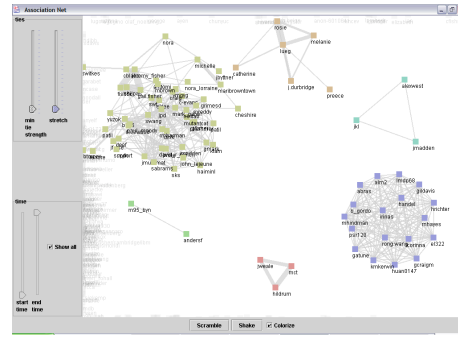


from Mackay, 1990

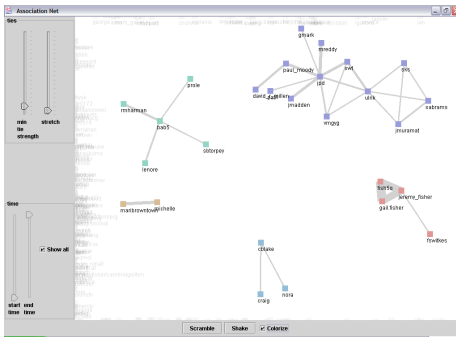
## social networks



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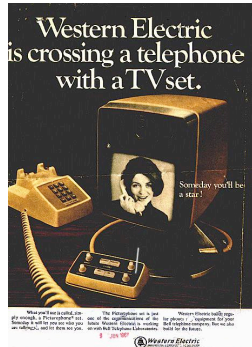
## social networks



## newer forms

- communication is always evolving
  - different technologies support different genres
- newer forms:
  - desktop videoconferencing
  - corporate intranet
  - enterprise information portal
  - workplace IM

## videoconferencing



## the failure of videoconferencing

- 1970s videoconferencing failed spectacularly
  - technical reasons
    - interacting with artifacts
    - resolution, field of view, etc
  - cultural reasons
    - why won't you come to meet me?
    - the formal and informal aspects of meetings

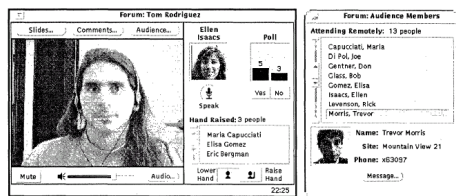
## desktop videoconferencing

- desktop videoconferencing is quite different
  - 1990s: H.261 over ISDN
    - ISDN is 128kbps data + 16kbps signal
    - QCIF: 176 x 144, 5-10fps
  - 2000: Internet
    - Quicktime, RealPlayer, streaming video
- what factors make it more successful?
  - a different niche
    - less expensive makes it less formal
    - spontaneity
  - immediate control of technology
  - combined with other forms of communication

## distance learning

- video for distance learning?
  - California Master Plan for Higher Education
  - opportunities
    - extending reach
    - accessing archives of material
  - problems
    - interaction – asking questions, getting answers
    - feedback – hard to gauge how material is going over

## distance learning



This is from Sun... interesting work from Microsoft too...

## email

- transitions in genres
  - from memos to communication between peers
- a new set of communicational practices
  - e.g. undirected requests for help
- a new set of organizational concerns
  - communities of practice
  - knowledge management
- but still uneasy
  - the bandwidth wars and recreational email

## instant messaging

- increasing role of IM in organizations
  - supporting distant coordination
    - presence indicators as well as communicative content
- IM and other forms of communication
  - what does IM replace? telephone? email?
  - the question of “formality”
    - formality is an aspect of *practice*
  - not a substitute
    - supports informal interaction
    - doesn't support undirected communication

## continuum of communication

- communication media exist in a context
  - research suggests that media don't substitute
    - new media are additive; communication level increases
- both *instrumental* and *symbolic* value
  - the role of formality
  - presence in a business meeting
  - exchanging documents at the IMF
  - the medium is the message

## summary

- communication isn't just bits on the wire
  - communication achieves coordination
  - communication supports decision-making
- communication isn't just what's said
  - genres shape and structure our expectations
  - genres provide resources for interpretation
  - communicative forms as systems of meaning
  - instrumental and symbolic value