

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



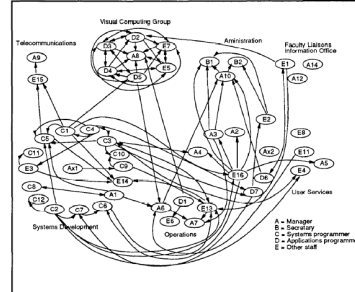
electronic memos?

- 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

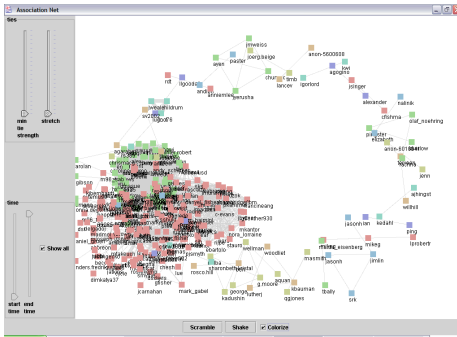
- Milgram's "small world" experiment
 - aka "six degrees of separation"
- "it's not what you know, it's who you know"
 - multiple, overlapping groups
 - remember the functional organisation structure?
- the spread of organisational information
 - how does information spread?

social networks

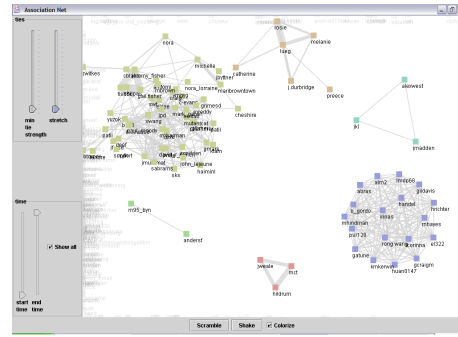


from Mackay, 1990

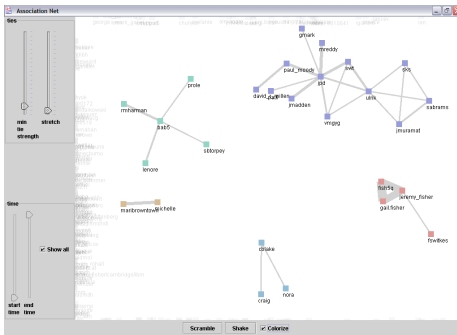
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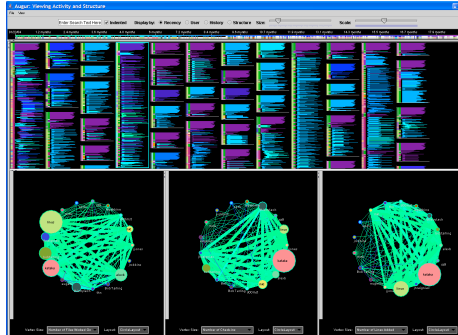
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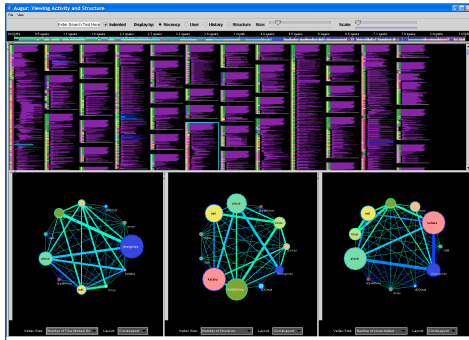
social networks



social networks in software



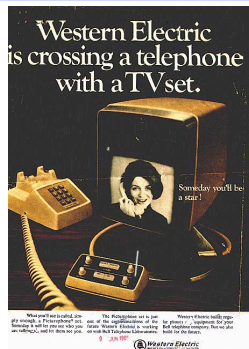
social networks in software



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

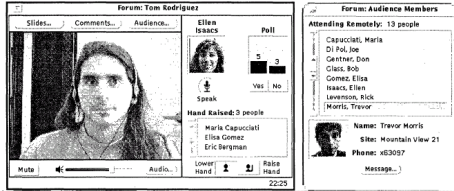
desktop videoconferencing

- desktop videoconferencing is quite different
 - 1990s: H.261 over ISDN
 - ISDN is 128kbps data + 16kbps signal
 - QCIF: 176 x 144, 5-10fps
 - 2000s: 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