AN OUTLINE OF SOCIAL INFORMATICS

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Rapporteur: Professor John Dobson

An Outline of Social Informatics

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Computers in culture

Culture can shape both adoption and theory

Originally associated with rationality and control

Images of computing as centralized, standardized, etc

Cold War picture of the "closed world"

Growth of popular computing

"Cyberspace" fad in the 1990s

Computerization movements

Persistent problem of millennialism

Cultural digestion of new technologies

Technology adoption as a collective process

Diffusion through social-networks

Thinking about new technologies in culture

Role of the media, trade press, and many others

Interaction with old, powerful cultural themes

Stereotyped genres of writing about technology

Internet supports a vast number of innovations

Ongoing cultural digestion problems

Technological determinism

Two assumptions:

(1) autonomous technology
(2) unilateral causality

But technology is shaped by social processes

And computer use shaped by context

Distinguish quantitative and qualitative improvement

Technology should be only 5% of the story

Orlikowski's study of Notes

Adoption of Lotus Notes in a consulting firm

Driven by management enthusiasm

Readily adopted by technical people and others

Not adopted by vast majority of associates

No way to bill training time

Lack of incentive to share information

Used as personal productivity tool

Lack of fit between technology and culture

Institutional perspective

Institutions are persistent structures of relationship

Negative: rigid standard operating procedures

Positive: complex relationships depend on them

Computing is tightly bound up with them …

… and so it is often hard to switch to new systems

Institutional theories in several social science fields

Nets mediating increasingly complex relationships

Major institutional changes are expected

Web models of system development

Opposed to traditional discrete-entity models

Naturalistic, open systems models

Casting a wider net around the machinery

Mapping the social relationships among the players

Mapping technical and social infrastructure

Mapping the history of computing commitments

The question of cyberspace

Conceiving the net as a parallel space

Not part of original military conception

Draws on older philosophical themes

Transient lack of integration with institutions

In fact, identities are mostly offline

New interface technologies blur the boundary

Need theories of embedding of online interaction

SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS

- 1st (COMP LIB) 1968
- 2nd (COMP LIB) 1969 (On the Teaching of the Design of Large Software Systems)
- 3rd 1970 (The Teaching of Programming at University level)
- 4th (COMP LIB) 1971 (The Teaching of Computer Design)
- 5th 1972 (The Application of Computers in Business)
- 6th (COMP LIB) 1973 (Computers & Communications)
- 7th 1974 (Formal Aspects of Computing Science)
- 8th 1975 (Computers & the educated individual)
- 9th 1976 (Computing System Design)
- 10th 1977 (Digital Systems Design)
- 11th (COMP LIB) 1978 (Distributed Computing Systems)
- 12th 1979 (Data Base Systems)
- 13th 1980 (Artificial Intelligence)
- 14th 1981 (Very Large Scale Integration)
- 15th 1982 (Formal Specification)
- 16th 1983 (Man-Machine Interaction)
- 17th 1984 (Security & Privacy)
- 18th 1985 (Network Protocols)
- 19th 1986 (Programming Environments)
- 21st 1988 (Object-oriented Computing Syst
- 22nd 1989 (Real-T Syste
- 23rd 1990 (System Models
- 24th 1991 (Parallel Computing
- 25th 1992 (25th Int Seminar the Teaching of C
- 26th 1993 (Informatic
- 27th 1994 (Systems Integration & Structuring
- 28th 1995 (The Futu of Software
- 29th 1996 (Algorithm
- 30th 1997 (The Web
- 31st 1998 (Software Architect & Design
- 32nd COMP LIB 1999 (People Computer
- 33rd COMP LIB 2000 (Object Agent
- 34th COMP LIB 2001 (Dependa

LAST IN

- Readme

- 1971: "Computer Design"
- 1970: "Programming"
- 1969: "Design of Large Software Systems"
- 1968: "Computing Science"

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DISCUSSION

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Professor Randell asked whether the six assumptions were to de ascribed to the historical Babbage. Professor Agre replied that they were representative of underlying social attitudes which he probably assumed but perhaps never made explicit in these terms. Professor Cockton observed that from a HCI perspective, the assumptions were ones which the HCI community often ascribed to mathematicians. Professor Agre replied that in the HCI community there had indeed been a lot of effort not to make these assumptions, but the logic underlying them is often still accepted. Professor Dobson questioned whether metonymy and metaphor were always to be deprecated, since they were an inescapable part of language. Professor Agre replied that he was not speaking against the use of figurative language, but against the failure to recognise when it was being used.