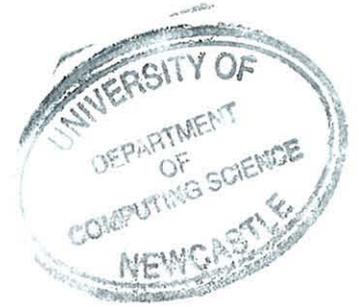


AN OUTLINE OF SOCIAL INFORMATICS

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

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LAST IN

■ [Readme](#)

- [1971: "Computer Design"](#)
- [1970: "Programming"](#)
- [1969: "Design of Large Software Systems"](#)
- [1968: "Computing Science"](#)

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DISCUSSION

Rapporteur: Professor John Dobson

Professor Randell asked whether the six assumptions were to be 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.

