

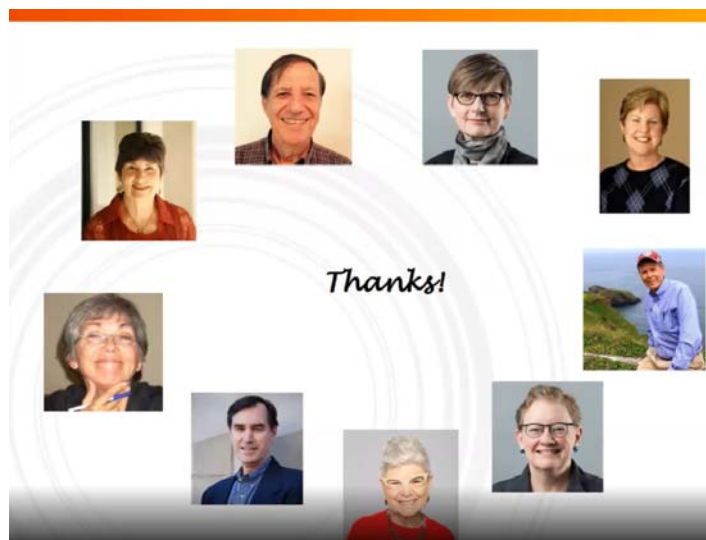
**Janet Fulk, University of Southern California**

*Keywords: subjective historical process, interdisciplinarity.*



It is really interesting to put together some history, several dozen decades of the Division, because it is a long historical process and it is very subjective, and everybody experiences it differently.

And so, what we did, several of us: *Don Hellriegel, Linda Putnam, JoAnne Yates, Wanda Orlikowski, Cynthia Beath, Bob Zmud, Dan Robey, Mary Culnan, Carol Saunders* -- put our heads together and tried to reconstruct the history. They are wonderful people, and they spent a lot of time and effort with me trying to figure out what was the *true* story of what happened, and I really want to thank these people very much. But, of course, I take responsibility for any errors that may occur. And, of course, there are other people in the audience who can talk about the history and share their opinions and viewpoints.



Source: Presentation of Prof. Fulk, keynote speech.

The theme I want to follow is how the Division has developed its *interdisciplinarity* over the last 40 years. There was kind of constructive evolution, with a couple of inflection points, and we try to put together how it was working with all these wonderful people.

If we look at the Division's history, *it goes back much earlier than the early 1980s*. But my understanding from talking to others in the Division is that in the early 1980s, there was a nice mix of *Business Comm(unication)* people and *Comm(unication)* people, but it was dominated by *Business Comm* people originating in the Schools of Management. Also in that time, if you look at the dimension *academic vs. practice* (even if you think of it as a single dimension, a single scale), it tended to be a more practical slant. Orientation towards practice was dominating in the Division, including a number of people who were not on a tenure truck.

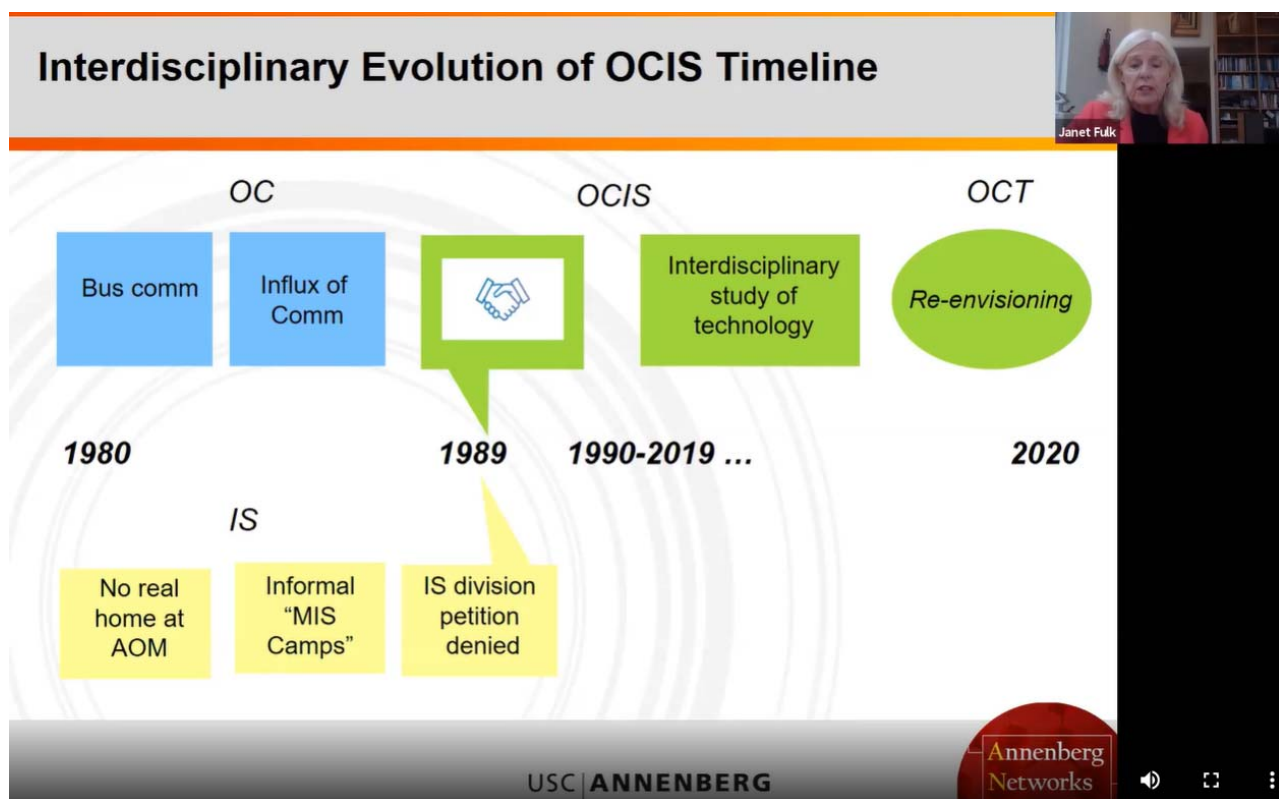
Now let me get to the later 1980s, when a number of people were very interested in working more with people from *Comm schools*, like *Linda Putnam, Scott Poole, Charles Redding, Cal Downs, Howard Greenbaum, Dave Seibold, and Ron Rice*, to name a few. They were more interested in doing

very important additional work in the field of communication. We see that there was a very strong influx of *Comm* at that time period.

In parallel, it was the time, 1987, when *Management Communication Quarterly* was founded with a focus on inclusiveness for scholars based in both *Comm* and *Business Comm* schools. MCQ was co-edited by *JoAnne Yates, Paul Feingold, and Christine Kelly*, with an intellectually diverse editorial board. Among MCQ's aims was to increase the rigor of the work in the field by business communication scholars, many of whom were not on tenure track, and to move toward a model for tenure track scholars.

In the meantime, on the IS side, the IS-people were asking "Where can we send a paper in the Academy of Management? What Division am I sending to? Who is doing the work that would be consistent with kinds of things we study in MIS?" There was a group of scholars, and the answer was from many of them there was not really any home for information science scholars in the Academy. There were things like these informal *MIS Camps* that took place in and around of Annual Meetings, for example, 1987 in Anaheim, and there was a MIS Camp with a lot of MIS-scholars in Malibu where assembled a sort of community they were building.

So as the IS community who was interested and tried to find a home in the Academy, they put together a petition to present to the Board of Governors. *George Huber* presented it to the Board of Governors to develop, to form IS scholars' own Division in Information Systems.



Source: Presentation of Prof. Fulk, keynote speech.

A little bit of context for this. This was [50 years after the founding of the Academy of Management](#), and the Board of Governors was very, very concerned about what they called *proliferation* of Divisions and Interest Groups. I know that IS was not the only community that got their onset during this period. Just to note to make it an interesting context: today, with 17,000 members, the [Academy of Management has 26 Interest Groups and Divisions](#). If you compare to institutions like [International Communication Association](#) or the [Association for Information Systems](#), they each have less than third of this number of members (5000) and each has more than 30 Divisions and

Interest Groups. So, we see even today the concern with proliferation of Divisions and Interest Groups.

So, they presented the petition to the Board, and the Board said "*Nope, I do not think that we need any more Divisions*". This was the point at which I became involved in 1988-89 when [Don Hellriegel](#) was Past President. What he asked me to do is to talk to the people at the *Org Comm Division* and to talk to the people who have prepared this petition, and see if a some kind of a partnership could be developed between the *IS* and *Org Comm*. For me, I was just coming on the Board at this time, it was the easiest task I ever did for the Academy. Because all of us at *Org Comm*, and in *IS*, -- we were all very enthusiastic about this merger. One of the reasons that people told me was that several top IS-scholars: *Bob Zmud, Dan Robey, Gerry DeSanctis, Carol Saunders, and M. Lynne Markus* actually had PhD-training in organizational theory, in organizational behavior, -- in addition to information systems. And it seemed that it was a really good fit. IS programs of that time included interests and focus on the organizations in which the information systems were embedded, but this is less true today since there is a heavy focus on analytics. And there were a lot of common interests among scholars in *Org Comm* and *Information Sciences*, in that some *Org Comm* scholars like *Scott Poole, Bill King and Ron Rice*, for example, were studying computer mediated communication and computer supported groups.

And so the OCIS Division was formed. From there we see the Division that most of us have experienced over the last couple of years. There was strong focus on the interdisciplinary study of technology, on really trying to have high-quality research and programming. And we can see that very quickly a number of the IS-scholars became leaders and have been moving the Division forward.

And so, we are getting to where we are today. I know there are other speakers who will talk about that: there is another inflection point where we are trying to recraft domain statement and the Division name.

Now I turn the floor over to other scholars to talk about this reimagining process.

And please, feel free to ask questions if you think I misrepresented something or left something out.

Thank you.