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Customs and Traditions of WG8.2

Oasis is often looked on as an old, established family friend, and so I would like to use the opportunity of this editorial to reminisce about our history and re-examine the workings and traditions of the group. We need to reflect on our procedures and search for ways to improve IFIP WG 8.2. Needless to say, we welcome suggestions for improvement from potential and new participants to our activities as well as established members.

IFIP Working Group 8.2 concerns itself with the interaction of information systems and the organisation (and society at large). Emphasis is towards organisational and behavioural rather than technological aspects of information systems. We wish also to foster international cooperation in the field. As recent conferences have shown, we are as much interested in the research approach as the research application.

Hank Lucas (USA), the first chair of IFIP WG8.2, recalls a meeting in Amsterdam in 1975 of around 15 people that was, perhaps, the first meeting of the group. The first conference was held in Bonn, with its proceedings published by North Holland in 1980 as 'The Information Systems Environment'. Many of our present active members first became aware of IFIP WG8.2 at the 1984 Manchester conference on qualitative research in information systems, chaired by Enid Mumford (UK). This conference made such an impact within and outside the group that working conferences on a similar theme



Peter Alex Nielsen (DK), the "Man with the Horn" may have started a new tradition by using a loud horn to call the session to order at the Aalborg Conference in June.

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Special points of interest:

- Information on the Upcoming Brisbane Workshop
- Boise Conference Update
- Photos from the Aalborg Conference
- Our Chair reveals WG 8.2 Customs and Traditions

Boise Announces Keynoters

Three outstanding keynote speakers will address the Boise working conference. They are Eric Raymond, Bill Curtis, and Michel Parent. This is your opportunity to meet three leading thinkers who are shaping the IS field in innovative and exciting ways in the intimate setting of a WG 8.2 conference.

Eric Raymond is one of the leading pioneers of the Open Source Software (OSS) community, being one of the group who coined the term in 1998. His paper, The Cathedral and the

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Customs and Traditions (continued from page 1)

have taken place in Copenhagen (1989), Philadelphia (1997) and plans are afoot for a 20th anniversary conference in 2004. In her editorial to Oasis in 1985, Enid suggests that the conference proceedings should prove to friends outside 8.2 'somewhat revolutionary and shocking as it questions many sacred cows'. This remark encapsulates the spirit of IFIP WG8.2 as a whole.

Enid chaired 8.2 following Frank Land (UK) and later chairs have included Dick Welke (USA), Hans Oppeland (NL), Ken Kendall (USA), Kalle Lyytinen (SF) and Richard Baskerville (USA).

Our three chief forms of communication are our Website <http://istweb.syr.edu/~ifip/> (our Webmaster is Kevin Crowston - USA), the list-serve, and our twice yearly newsletter, *Oasis*, along with the conference proceedings. *Oasis* was first published in 1983 and is presently edited by our Vice Chair, Julie Kendall (USA).

As well as standing for 'Organisations and Society in Information Systems', an Oasis is a fertile place where good things flourish and grow, and where travellers from different places can exchange ideas, even if surrounded by a desert. The title of the newsletter was well chosen! *Oasis* is published in paper format and on our Website. Usually there are a few short articles, often idiosyncratic, but hopefully always of interest, along with announcements and summaries of events. Occasionally, flurries of discussion also occur on the list-serve, though it is mainly used for e-mailing brief announcements. The Website serves as a source of public information for and about the IFIP WG8.2 community.

We have also debated the possibility of a link to a new or established journal. This has a number of potential advantages. As joint editor of the *Information Systems Journal*, I have no doubt that the *ISJ* would greatly welcome this opportunity. However, there are other journals that would be equally appropriate (and they also feature several members of WG 8.2 on their Boards of Editors) and there are potential risks in linking with only one journal.

At our conferences, which are held every one or two years, we welcome those people who come from other areas as much as our friends in information systems. To give one example, at the recent St. Louis conference we were addressed by Mark Poster (USA), who is professor of history and director of film and media studies at UC, Irvine. Mark discussed some implications of the Internet, which gave a different view of the net to that conventionally held. Bruno Latour (F) and Shoshana Zuboff (USA) were other speakers at recent conferences. We always try to break new ground in our activities, looking at alternative paradigms, so that even our most experienced members come away from conferences and workshops with many new things to think about. We have also run joint conferences with



Conference dinners are a tradition in WG 8.2. The Aalborg conference dinner was held in Duus Vinkjaelder.

other IFIP working groups, for example, most recently with 8.1 and 8.7. In these ways, we have attempted (and succeeded, we think) in being alive, relevant and growing.

An important aspect of this has been the mix of European and North American traditions (always supplemented with Asian, Australasian and other influences) to be found in our debates. But essential in all of this is quality, and our refereeing processes for conference research volumes are similar to those of top tier MIS journals. On the other hand, acceptance rates are much higher for our workshops (which are also named "Oasis"), where we are looking for originality and interest, rather than a finished research 'product'. We strive here to be 'open', maybe 'anarchistic', (even 'wild') at these workshops in order to nourish our hunger for new ideas.

We have two main categories on our mailing list: members and friends. Attending one of our working confer-

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Report of the TC 8 Meeting in Hong Kong

IFIP Working Group 8.2 is only one of a number of IFIP working groups that are grouped into technical committees. Information systems falls within Technical Committee 8 (TC8). TC8 has 300 members of which 85% are academics. We are the largest working group in TC8 (there are six others) and 8.1 (design and evaluation of IS) and 8.3 (decision support systems) have also been very successful over a number of years.

TC8 meets each year to discuss and agree working group programs and also plan our strategy for the next few years. This year we met at the City University of Hong Kong at the kind invitation of Doug Vogel (USA). Bernie Glasson (AU) is chair of TC8 and also present were most of the chairs of the TC8 working groups and many national representatives of IFIP. You can find out more by visiting the links from our web pages to the TC8 and IFIP pages. They are very interesting!

Some of the two days were spent hearing the reports from the working group chairs and reviewing their plans. You will be pleased to learn that our proposals were accepted enthusiastically by the committee. Our new members were agreed. The Brisbane workshop and Boise working conference were agreed and the proposed working conferences in Barcelona in 2002 and Manchester in 2004 were given 'placeholder' status, that is agreed subject to further information.

We also accepted some propositions effecting all the working groups. For example, we agreed that IFIP would be asked to act as a returning officer for elections and, in principle, everyone attending a conference should pay the normal fees and their other expenses (thus ensuring a general conference fee at a comparatively low

Minutes of the Business Meeting Aalborg, Denmark

June 12, 2000

The meeting was called to order at 1:55 p.m.

1. Introduction

David Avison (F) began the meeting with a brief description of IFIP, TC 8, and Working Group 8.2.

2. Past Workshops and Working Conferences

Tor Larson (NO) requested a clarification of "workshop" versus "working conference." David Avison (F) explained the differences between the two types of meetings. The purpose of a workshop is to provide a venue for newer researchers, or researchers new to WG 8.2, to present work-in-progress and receive feedback in a less formal environment. Working conferences are the regular conferences sponsored by WG 8.2 alone or in conjunction with other groups.

Julie Kendall (USA), organizer of the IFIP WG 8.2 Workshop "IS Research at the Beginning of the New Millennium: Searching for Artifacts, Metaphors, and Methodologies," reported that there were 9 papers presented and 45 attendees at this successful Workshop.

Richard Baskerville (USA) reported that he had audited the books of the 1998 Helsinki WG 8.2 Working Conference with the Organizing Chair. All bills have been paid, and a surplus of \$1000 was left for IFIP. There are 37 copies of the Proceedings remaining.

3. Forthcoming Workshops and Working Conferences

An IFIP WG 8.2 Workshop will take place in Brisbane, Australia, on December 9, 2000, following the Australasian Conference on Information Systems and preceeding ICIS. The workshop will be held at the Women's College, with lunch on site. In addition to short presentations, abstracts and posters will also be solicited. Cathy Urquhart (AU) and Steve Sawyer (USA) are the organizers of this Workshop.

The next Working Conference will be held in Boise, Idaho, USA, July 27-29, 2000. The theme of this Working Conference is "Realigning Research and Practice in Information Systems Development: The Social and Organizational Perspective." Contact Program Chairs Nancy Russo (USA) or Brian Fitzgerald (IE) for more information. Submissions are due November 1, 2000. For details see the web site at <http://afis.ucc.ie/ifip2001>.

2001 Conference July 27-29, Boise, Idaho

Realigning Research and Practice in IS Development: The Social and Organisational Perspective

*Initial submissions: November 1 2000
Notification of Acceptance: February 1 2001
Final version due: March 1 2001*

www.ifipwg82.org

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Minutes (continued from previous page)

Edgar Whitley (UK) discussed plans for the Working Conference to be held in Barcelona in December, 2002, in conjunction with ICIS. Eleanor Wynn (USA) and Michael Myers (NZ) are also involved in organizing this Working Conference, themed "Organizational Discourse about IT."

The possibility of a working conference in 2003 was discussed. Due to the difficulty of finding local organizers in Israel for a December conference, and the concern that a summer conference would be too soon after the Barcelona conference, it appears unlikely that a Working Conference will be held in 2003.

Trevor Wood-Harper (UK) proposed a "Manchester 2" conference to be held in 2004, 20 years after the original Manchester WG 8.2 conference.

David Avison (F) mentioned that a joint conference with IFIP WG 9.4 (Social Implications of Computing in Developing Countries) had been suggested. Mikko Korpela (FI) provided some background on WG 9.4.

Several questions were raised about the number and scheduling of meetings (Workshops, Working Conferences, and Business Meetings) by Bonnie Kaplan (USA) and others. Ken Kendall (USA) responded that the Working Group historically has attempted to alternate meeting venues between the US and Europe. Duane Truex (USA) mentioned that attendance at meetings associated with ICIS is typically larger.

4. New Members

Names were solicited for individuals who were qualified and interested in becoming members of WG 8.2. Ola Henriksson (SE), Debra Howcroft (UK), Mikko Korpela (FI), and Brian O'Donovan (UK) were approved for membership, subject to a check on attendance by the Secretary.

5. New Business

Kevin Crowston (USA) asked attendees to check the WG 8.2 web site to verify that their member records are correct. The URL for the site is www.ifipwg82.org.

David Avison (F) and Julie Kendall (USA) showed off the "new face" of the Oasis newsletter. The new issue is on the web and has been mailed to members and friends. News for Oasis should be sent to Julie or David.

Duane Truex (USA) reminded attendees of the upcoming deadline for the *Data Base* special issue on ERP. Guest editors for this issue are Duane Truex and Debra Howcroft (UK).

Richard Baskerville (USA) announced that the electronic versions of papers from the Aalborg conference will be available for ten days after the conference.

David Avison (F) reminded the group that Oasis and the Working Group listserv and web page can serve as forums for further discussion of issues raised at the business meeting.

Gordon Davis (USA) provided some useful information regarding the next Working Conference to be held in Boise, Idaho. Gordon, who was born in Idaho, drew a map of the US to pinpoint the location of Boise and then identified nearby attractions such as Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, and Las Vegas.

David Avison (F) thanked everyone for their participation, and the meeting was adjourned.

Nancy Russo, acting for Michael Myers, WG 8.2 Secretary

*Do you want to contribute an essay or editorial? Do you have a promotion or other news to share?
Please contact Julie Kendall, OASIS Editor at julie@thekendalls.org*

Customs and Traditions (continued from page 2)

ences or research workshops (or simply by asking us, perhaps after visiting our Website) is qualification enough to become a friend of IFIP WG8.2 and thereby receive Oasis and learn of our program. Our membership procedures are more stringent: a friend must attend and participate in two of our last three business meetings. This system aims to ensure that everyone interested can participate in our events, but membership requires long-term commitment to the working group. At the last count we had over 400 people on our mailing list, well over 100 being members (about one-third women). These numbers have been steadily growing over the last few years. It should be noted that IFIP Working Groups do not charge annual membership dues.



(l to r.) Jan Stage (DK), the Aalborg conference Program Co-Chair, Lynne Marcus, General Co-Chair, Richard Baskerville, Program Co-Chair, and Heinz Klein, General Co-Chair beginning to relax after a successful day.

Our business meetings usually take place immediately following a conference or workshop. In the past, they have been described as both 'democratic' and 'anarchistic' in spirit. We agree the programs for IFIP WG8.2 at the meetings and vote new members in,

but there have also been contentious debates there in the past. We remember debates on the role of women in the group, whether to affiliate with particular journals, the cost of attending conferences and the role of the 8.2 chair, which were fun (at least for some) and permitted members to air their opinions in an open forum.

More recently, business meetings have become larger, more organised, much shorter and formal. Debates have taken place in more casual environs and later, on the list serve. Some members regret this change, whilst others prefer shorter and more formal and focused business meetings. Maybe it would be nice to have a specific spot during our conferences to debate issues of substance and strategy for the group, and such debates might lead to more formal working papers and propositions later. Such a timetabled conference activity could also be used to brainstorm future conference themes and panels.

IFIP Working Group 8.2 has a number of other traditions. One has been to ensure the chair has already been secretary and then vice chair. This ensures that the chair has experienced all the work of the group first. As each position is for three years, a member standing for election as secretary agrees to take on a nine-year responsibility. Such a person will normally have been program or organising chair of at least one WG8.2 working conference.



The custom at WG 8.2 conference dinners includes a song competition that rivals the Eurovision Song Contest in length, intensity, and quality.

We try to alternate these roles between North America and the rest of the world (the present chair is from Europe (David Avison, F), the vice-chair from North America (Julie Kendall, USA) and the secretary from Australasia (Michael Myers, NZ)). This reflects our membership, as 50% of our members are from North America (unusually for an IFIP working group) and the rest spread around the world. Again, to keep an international profile, we alternate our working conference sites between North America and the rest of the world. Our one-day workshops tend to run immediately before ICIS. Whereas our membership criterion is a rule, these traditions are more custom and practice, but they have been followed for over ten years.

Another tradition is the encouragement to practi-

tioners to attend and participate in our conferences. A related tradition is our abject failure at achieving that goal. Even a modest goal of 5% practitioner participation is rarely achieved. This is embarrassing. IFIP is supported largely by practitioner groups, such as national computer societies, and our research intends to influence practice. We need inquisitive and reflective practitioners to participate more in our activities, especially working conferences. Practitioners, for example, provide real criticism as well as encouragement for our research.

Over the years we have set up a number of ad hoc committees to report on our activities, the most recent being those on our publications and communications, journal affiliation and membership, along with the program and organising committees for each of our working conferences. Each year our standing committee meets and normally recommends a member for an IFIP Distinguished Service or Silver Core award, eventually presented to the IFIP General Assembly.

Our working conferences are usually attended by between 60 and 120 participants. We publish formal proceedings in well-produced book form at the beginning of the conference and this makes sticking to deadlines particularly important. Our

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An Oasis by Any Other Name ...



Julie Kendall, Editor of OASIS at the now defunct Oasis Motel in Camden, NJ just before its demolition.

We are all proud of the word OASIS. We use the word to refer to our IFIP WG 8.2 newsletter, and we call our ICIS working meetings OASIS as well. But will we always be able to hold the name OASIS in high regard? Will someone take our name someday?

I took this photo of Julie Kendall, our Vice Chair and OASIS Editor in front of the OASIS motel in Camden, New Jersey just before its demise. The governor of New Jersey, in preparation for the Republican National Convention, in the summer of 2000 used her powers and the principle of "eminent domain" to buy up a

mile of offensive property along the route Republicans dignitaries would take to drive (or be driven) to the convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The OASIS was a motel property that had seen better days. Perhaps it was used for nefarious purposes, but in any case it was demolished, along with many other businesses. No one complained.

Names are important. But in the Web-based world, search engines and parental control software do not necessarily recognize or respect good names. Take for example the case of Beaver College, a 147-year old institution, (which is rather old for the United States). Beaver College, soon to be designated a university by the State of Pennsylvania, was the butt of many jokes because the word is slang for a part of the female anatomy. It is only because parental control software is preventing access to the official university Website <www.beaver.edu> that Beaver is being forced to change its name. I quote from their Website as of October 16, 2000, discussing their name change, "We don't know what it is yet, but when we know, you will too. And when you first see or hear it, you'll immediately recognize that it represents everything about us that sparked your interest in the first place." (Perhaps they will take note of the current spark of interest in WG 8.2 and call themselves "OASIS University.")

I would like to have a serious discussion about Web names, domains, ownership, search engines, and parental control and how they impact Organizations And Society in Information Systems with the WG 8.2 community during our Brisbane meeting. Or perhaps we should do this in Boise, where the local TV channel preempted the television show "The God, The Devil, and Bob" because it feared that the animated characters would be offensive. But in the mean time, let's enjoy the word OASIS while it represents something worthwhile.

Ken Kendall, Past Chair, IFIP WG 8.2

Customs and Traditions (continued from previous page)



Intellectual discussions continue over lunch at the Aalborg WG 8.2 Conference

publisher is now Kluwer, who bought Chapman & Hall.

ur last conference, held in Aalborg, Denmark, was an unqualified success even before it began. So much so that the organizers were put into the difficult situation of having to turn away potential attendees due to space considerations. This was a very difficult decision to make. We feel much of the positive aspects of these conferences would be lost if they became much larger. On a smaller scale still, our one-day workshops are also highly valued for their discussions and debates, and in particular the opportunity for us to hear about new research. They are usually attended by around 40 or 50 people.

On re-reading the above, we seem to be saying, with one or two exceptions, that the story of IFIP WG 8.2 is one of the few unalloyed success stories of the last 25 years. Well, there have been many achievements. But the story has been made possible by being continuously open to the influence of new ideas, new blood, and the contributions of many members and friends. We will decline sharply and quickly if we do not continue this tradition. Indeed, we have hinted above at possible issues for reconsideration and debate: the lack of practitioner participation, lack of gender balance, our membership procedures, our communication procedures, journal links, business meetings procedures, size of conferences and a proposal for a mid-conference session on the future of the group.

In the last edition of *Oasis*, we issued a challenge, which was more than fully met. This time we issue another challenge. We want a suggestion (or reaction) from each member and friend to be distributed on the IFIP WG 8.2 list serve (IFIP82-L@listserv.binghamton.edu). The suggestion may be for a conference theme, a panel theme, a reassessment of our scope and aims, a contribution that may even be 'somewhat revolutionary and shocking'.

Whatever it is, get it off your chest and into the IFIP WG 8.2 community. Hopefully we will have the opportunity to develop the ideas further through the list serve and at Brisbane (for our workshop, entitled Oasis 2000) and next summer at Boise for the conference.

From Our Secretary: IFIP WG 8.2 Top Twelve Business Meeting Attendees

As for the IFIP 8.2 business meeting top twelve, Richard Baskerville (US), Ken Kendall (US) and Julie Kendall (US) are vying for the top spot of the most attendance at business meetings. I think we need a penalty shootout or a tie-break to determine who deserves

19	Richard Baskerville	13	Nancy Russo
19	Julie.Kendall	13	Duane Truex
19	Ken Kendall	13	Trevor Wood-Harper
17	David Avison	12	Rudy Hirschheim
16	Bonnie Kaplan	12	Marius Janson
15	Heinz Klein	12	Ojelanki Ngwenyama

Boise Keynote Speakers (continued from page 1)

Bazaar, which represents one of the first rigorous and thorough analyses of the OSS phenomenon has become the classic reference in the area. Eric Raymond has written extensively on the OSS phenomenon, with insightful articles such as *Homesteading the Noosphere* and *The Magic Cauldron*. These papers are very much concerned with the social aspects of software development; thus, they will have a good resonance with the spirit of the IFIP 8.2 group. He is a very forthright and committed speaker and is very much in demand in this role nowadays. His address on Open Source Software can be anticipated to provoke much debate and discussion.

Bill Curtis has a vast amount of direct experience in the software development area, and has worked with the leading exponents in this area over the years. His work with the Software Engineering Institute on software process improvement has been of enormous influence. His paper in the Communications of the ACM in 1998 (with Herb Crasner and Neil Iscoe) is very widely-cited within the IFIP 8.2 group. Bill will discuss his experiences in the software industry over the years. One might expect that his view would represent an 'establishment' one which would be in extreme contrast to the revolutionary position of Raymond. However, Bill Curtis' opinions are deeply insightful and do not readily fit within any 'establishment' straitjacket. We welcome Bill back to the group. He was originally a keynote speaker for us in Minnesota in 1993.

Michel Parent has spent half of his time in research and academia at such places as Stanford University and MIT in the USA and INRIA in France where he is currently the program director of the R&D effort for "La Route Automatisée", a program he initiated following his research into a novel public transportation system based on small automated electric cars. Praxitele was the first version of such a system, and it has been successfully tested in the city of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines between 1997 and 1999 with 50 electric cars from Renault. Michel was the president of the French Robotics Association between 1982 and 1990 and is the author of several books on robotics and vision and of many scientific papers. He has organized several national and international seminars or conferences and has been teaching at various schools and universities. Michel has an engineering degree from the French Aeronautics School (ENSAE), a Masters degree in Operation Research and a Ph. D. in Computer Science from Case Western Reserve University, USA.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Information Systems Journal Special Issue on Open Source Software

While the concept of free software is as old as software itself, there has been an explosion of academic and commercial interest in the topic since the coining of the term "Open Source Software" (OSS) in 1998. The OSS concept abounds with paradoxes and tensions. On the one hand, there are the advocates who suggest that OSS represents a paradigm shift which can solve the 'software crisis'. However, countering this Utopian view, there are those who suggest that OSS is just the latest 'silver bullet' in the software industry, that it is over-hyped, a strategy employed by the weak with marginal products to compete with the strong. To date, there have been few rigorous analytical studies which have investigated the OSS phenomenon in detail.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND IMPORTANT DATES

Manuscripts should be between 4000-6000 words in length, and should follow the format of the Information Systems Journal (<http://www.blackwell-science.com/isj>). As all contribution will be subjected to a double-blind review process, a separate title page should contain the names and addresses of the authors. Manuscripts should be sent, electronically if possible, to either guest editor by February 1, 2001. Authors are also encouraged to discuss potential contributions with the editors.

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*Organizations and Society in
Information Systems*

OASIS

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December 9, 2000 Workshop in Brisbane, AU Intersecting Issues, Approaches and Methods Down Under

OASIS—an IFIP WG 8.2 research workshop to be held on Saturday, 9th December 2000, at Womens College, University of Queensland, immediately preceding ICIS which starts 10th December. The venue is a short and enjoyable ferry ride from the center of town. The OASIS workshop is open to all interested scholars and professionals researching in the area of organizations, IS and society.

Each conference attendee and presenter is required to register and pay for the event at the door (a receipt will be provided). There will be a nominal registration fee of approximately A\$35, payable in Australian dollars to cover the cost of lunch, breaks and the copying of the abstracts.

All workshop attendees and anyone interested in WG 8.2 are encouraged to attend the business meeting that will follow the workshop.

Questions: Email any questions regarding this workshop to the Co-Chairs: -
Cathy Urquhart, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia, urquhart@usc.edu.au
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Congratulations

Kevin Crowston, Steve Sawyer, and Rolf Wigand (USA) were awarded a National Science Foundation grant.
Michael Myers delivered his Inaugural Address as Professor at University of Auckland Business School, NZ.
Bob Galliers and Claudio Ciborra moved to LSE to take chaired positions at the school in the Information Systems department.