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OBJECT ORIENTED MODELS OF ORGANIZATIONS: CURRENT AND EMERGING

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Panelists: **Robert Blanning**, Vanderbilt University
Lynda Applegate, Harvard University
Fred McFadden, University of Colorado

An embryonic, though growing, research stream applies object oriented programming (OOP) to organizational modeling. Models of organizational processes, components and perspectives are familiar fixtures in MIS research (e.g., data models, strategic planning models, manufacturing models, and financial models). OOP presents formalisms for effectively representing and exercising these and other models.

The "object" is a natural representation of both the attributes and activities of a modeled entity. In the process of building object oriented models, knowledge about entities and their interactions may be added/changed incrementally. In even the simplest stages of model development, simulations of the modeled system may be conducted as objects act and interact by sending "messages" to one another. Thus prototyping and other analysis/design activities are enhanced.

Panel members have recently participated in research which uses OOP for various facets of organizational modeling. McIntyre has identified benefits of OOP to analysis and design (McIntyre and Higgins 1988), stakeholder analysis (McIntyre and Higgins 1989), and strategic planning (Carlson and McIntyre 1988). Blanning (1987) has identified four issues in organizational behavior for which OOP is useful: organizational structure, management of decision processes, boundary spanning, and simulation (Blanning 1987). Applegate has used object oriented techniques as the basis for representing knowledge in group decision environments (Applegate et al. 1987). McFadden has identified object oriented knowledge representations for computer integrated manufacturing (McFadden 1989).

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