

14 July 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Miscellaneous Notes on the OCS/ORD Relationship  
(Vintage, Spring 1968)

1. The same problems we had in 1965 are still with us. I remain skeptical that more formal mechanisms will improve communications. While this is cited as the basic problem by IPRD, it is only a manifestation of a deeper problem: "What do we have to talk about"? There is a fundamental barrier between us that is a function of the people involved on both sides, professional jealousies and interests, and organizational responsibilities (in that order of significance, but the irony is that the degree we can do something to change this is probably the reverse order).

STAT 2. [ ] and others in IPRD express their frustration as a communications problem, but I think it boils down to the fact that they want us to agree with them--"If OCS doesn't agree with us, they aren't listening." I can support this with evidence of ORD withdrawal to "we'll see" or other platitudes when we get down to nuts and bolts. We seem to get sucked into one of those games people play called "yes, but." Notwithstanding these bleak realities, I don't think the situation is hopeless, hence I won't stop here.

3. A simple way to express our division of responsibilities (and like all attempts to simplify, this one has its pitfalls) is to say that ORD should fill in technological gaps in OCS, not users' service gaps. Putting it another way, ORD should pick up not where our available time leaves off, but where our knowledge leaves off. Unfortunately, in our view they have not complemented our efforts in this fashion. Some believe it is because they don't know how to extend the technology and at best they can try to keep up by following in our wake, but striking out laterally, encroaching on our domain with a technique that is interesting to our customers--which we

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probably built, or considered and rejected, in the first place. Maybe our reaction is similar to that of the teacher who has mixed emotions about his success with a student who then turns cocky. In summary, I think we can use the idea stated in the first sentence as a basic test.

4. As I said before, another source of problems is the IPRD emphasis on moving the project directly and smoothly into useful operation. The nature of R&D is such that this preoccupation can be destructive:

- It shifts the emphasis away from the problems that warrant calling the project R&D in the first place.
- It provides few opportunities to learn from mistakes.
- It discourages experimentation or thoughtful evaluation of results.
- It often forces CCS into an embarrassing position of not satisfying customer requests with the ease that ORD convinces them we should be able to do.

When we suggest that their orientation may be wrong, they mention the directives to use live data and to have customer involvement. These two requirements do not necessarily imply operational goals, but how can they be convinced of this? In any event, there are easier, cheaper ways to get things going that are within the state-of-the-art--without the insertion of a ponderous facade of pseudo R&D.

5. Another point here is worth focusing on: the implications of an operational goal seem to occur to ORD only after the project starts--long after the usual questions of economic feasibility should be raised. They must either give attention to these questions earlier (as we normally do) or continue to ignore them and not be so intent on making the project go (the latter option being preferred).

6. Another negative point: I believe that R&D people should stay out of the systems building area, that is, building something new from individual well-established techniques and facilities. Information systems building now is a crude art that is best practiced outside the R&D area. By my definition then, building information systems, no

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matter how exotic, from existing tested techniques, is not R&D. This, of course, may not be the case outside the information processing world. What is needed is R&D in new or improved techniques, including a better systems analysis methodology. ORD's reply to this would be that they must have a system to test the techniques, but it seems that system building costs overshadow those related to technique development. You don't need to design and build a new car from scratch to test a new steering wheel. This is another source of OCS "poor communications." How do you get our people interested in helping debug or improve a mediocre, error-ridden operating system that they say is needed to test an attractive idea? Why is it necessary for [ ] to reinvent several programs and hardware packages to test the concept of an analyst's "work station."

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7. This leads to another point regarding hardware versus techniques in R&D projects: which has the primary influence on the other at IPRD? Unfortunately, most of us think that hardware is the dominant factor. I concede that in many cases this must be, but only when hardware limitations are to be considered. It is wrong to force the project to mushroom so that it fills every nook and cranny of the hardware's capability and then perhaps wonder why getting an application going is so expensive.

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