

« Information Ecosystems »

24th Colloquium in the History of Management and Organizations

March 27th-29th 2019 in Nice

[\[Conference Website\]](#)

Organised by the French Association for the History of Management and Organizations (AHMO) and Université Côte d'Azur - EDHEC Business School, GREDEG (UMR 7321) and MSHS Sud-Est (USR 3566)

« Like pipes in a wall crucial to having running water in a home, the **informational infrastructure** was nearly **invisible**. Use of information proved so **routine**, indeed mundane, that like using a faucet or bathroom fixtures, people did not think about it, because it was **always present**. It is information's pervasive, **embedded** nature that perhaps accounts for why we [...] have not paid much attention to it. But now we should, because as happens, once a phenomenon is named or is made obvious, it becomes easier to **optimize its use**. »¹

In his book on the history of information in the United States, James W. Cortada argues for the need to understand evolving characteristics of information ecosystems. Cortada defines these ecosystems as facilitators of three activities of our contemporary societies: 'appreciating what needs to be understood, seeing how this understanding should be developed, and seeing how it could be used'².

Since World War II, the amount of information stored and processed in organisations has grown exponentially, giving rise to a new category of 'knowledge workers' performing in horizontal information structures³. Based on the assumption that each firm and each industry develop idiosyncratic knowledge, organisation and strategy scholars of the 1970s introduced information as a fourth factor of production. Then, in the 1980s, the information 'revolution' shook up traditional industrial structures with changes in competitive rules and the introduction of new forms of competitive advantage⁴.

Since then, the use of information with respect to accounting, finance, personnel, prices, logistics or customers significantly expanded, especially with the increasing computerisation that helped people to better store, process and share information to improve strategic decisions⁵. These recent changes have led to new forms of science that became necessary to support professional managers' decisions and to develop new knowledge-based approaches.

¹ Cortada, J.W. 2016. *All the Facts – A History of Information in the United-States since 1870*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

² *Ibid*: 303.

³ Regarding this, cf. pioneering work conducted by M. Aoki on Japanese (*versus* American) firms and their information structures in the 1980s – Aoki, M. 1986. « Horizontal versus Vertical Information Structure of the Firm. » *American Economic Review* 76(5): 971-983.

⁴ Porter, M.E., and V.E. Millar. 1985. « How Information Gives You Competitive Advantage. » *Harvard Business Review* 63(4): 149-160.

⁵ The use of information in decision-making was discussed much earlier in 1960s by: Simon, H. A. 1960. *The New Science of Management Decision*. New-York: Harper & Row.

The 24th Colloquium in the History of Management and Organizations aims to generate a historical perspective to our understanding of the use of these different forms of information in organizations. Papers aligned with four sub-themes are particularly welcomed:

- **The evolution of the use of information for organisations:** While accounting information is often considered as one of the first languages in organisations, other accounts (relative to finance, personnel, price, logistics and customers) appeared relevant to store with the aim to assist decisions and strategic choices made by firms. What have these evolutions been? For which types of information? And for what aim?
- **The history of scientific knowledge and its diffusion in management and organisation studies:** The rise of information in organisations has coincided with the professionalization of managers who express the need to formalise and transfer their managerial knowledge. The diffusion of knowledge in accounting⁶, finance⁷, marketing⁸, human resources management⁹, logistics¹⁰ or strategy¹¹ has attracted the attention of scholars. What trajectories have taken these diffusions? For which type of knowledge? In which institutional contexts?
- **The account of information as an intangible asset in organisations:** given the immaterial nature of information and tacit knowledge, the challenge to transform this asset in value creation has long questioned scholars. Currently, the idea to re-materialise or to make more visible these information infrastructures has led to new issues and to new research avenues aligned with sociological oriented approaches dealing with materiality in organisations. Concerns related to security and standardization could also be considered¹².
- **Digital transformation and new forms of value for information:** Considered by some scholars as a fourth industrial revolution, current digital transformation is seen as a phenomenon based on unprecedented technological changes such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality and the Internet of Things. The consequences of these technological innovations, despite being very uncertain regarding their social impacts, put the user at the heart of innovation processes providing value to personal data and disrupting traditional business models. To what extent are these current transformations part of a longer history of computer science and of management information systems¹³?

These sub-themes are non-exhaustive and given the main theme of the colloquium, pluridisciplinary research is particularly encouraged (within management studies or with other sciences such as computer science, law, sociology, economics, psychology, etc.).

⁶ Lamendour, E., and Y. Lemarchand. 2015. « La magie du chiffre. » *Entreprises et Histoire* 79(2).

⁷ Hautcoeur, P.-C., and A. Riva. 2012. « The Paris Financial Market in the Nineteenth Century : Complementarities and competition in microstructures ». *Economic History Review* 65(4): 1326-1353.

⁸ Cochoy, F. 1999. *Une histoire du marketing – discipliner l'économie de marché*. Paris : La Découverte.

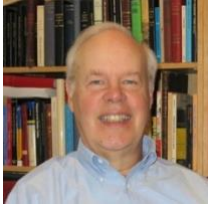
⁹ Collings, D.G., and G. Wood. 2009. *Human Resource Management: A Critical Approach*. London: Routledge.

¹⁰ Van Creveld, M. 1977. *Supplying War – Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹¹ Cailluet, L. 2008. « La fabrique de la stratégie : Regards croisés sur la France et les États-Unis ». *Revue Française de Gestion* 188-189(8) : 143-159.

¹² Murphy, C.N., and J. Yates. 2009. *The International Organization for Standardization (ISO): Global Governance through Voluntary Consensus*. London: Routledge.

¹³ Bounfour, A. (coord.) 2010. « De l'informatique aux systèmes d'information dans les entreprises ». *Entreprises et Histoire*. 60(3).



Keynote Speaker: James W. Cortada is a business historian and Senior Research Fellow at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Cortada spent nearly 40 years working at IBM in sales, consulting, management and executive positions. He is the author of both ICT management books and business history. He is the author of *All the Facts: A History of Information in the United States Since 1870* (2016) and *IBM: The Rise and Fall and Reinvention of a Global Icon* (2019).

Doctoral workshop

The Colloquium will start with a doctoral workshop organised on 27 March at EDHEC Business School. Ph.D. students who seek to present their work should send a ten-page document presenting research area (theme, research questions), theoretical framework, methodology, first results and main bibliographical references.

First- or second-year Ph.D. students or Ph.D. students incorporating a historical dimension in their dissertation in management are strongly encouraged to apply.

Important deadlines

- Submission of Papers: Short papers (3000 words) written either in English or French should be submitted no later than **14 December 2018**. Full texts will be accepted.
- Notification of Acceptance: Notification of papers accepted for inclusion in the conference program will be made by **25 January 2019**.
- Final version of papers (30,000 in 50,000 signs): **22 February 2019**. Final papers should be written either in English or French with summaries in French and English.

Scientific Committee

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Proposals should include:

- A research question;
- A fieldwork / primary sources or a corpus

Proposals should be sent to: jhmo2019@gmail.com