Kim Elsbach, University of California, Davis gives us OMT news and reminds us of what makes OMT unique and, of course, "the place to be!"

The OMT Division is a vibrant community of scholars, practitioners, and teachers, with the unifying goal of building theory relevant to organizations and their members. As a group, we continue to grow in both size and scope. Currently, OMT is approaching 4000 members and is the third largest division in the Academy of Management behind OB and BPS. We have proportionally more members from non-US institutions than any other division (over 50%), and we have a highly diverse set of topics covered in our Academy of Management Program - ranging from a more individual focus on identity, leadership, and innovation, to an organizational field focus on alliances, networks, and learning. We continue to be both a center of new ideas as well as a bridge between other divisions in which new ideas originate.

In addition to our long-standing three PDW events (the Dissertation Proposal Workshop, the Doctoral Student Consortium and the Junior Faculty Consortium), other events not to miss this year include the following: Meet OMT, on Saturday from 5:30-7:30, is where you can meet your OMT officers and fellow members over grown-up refreshments. (OMT reviewers get first dibs on the drink tickets.) The Welcome Breakfast and Distinguished Scholar talk, on Monday 8:30-10:20 is where you'll hear from Walter W. (Woody) Powell, the 2008 OMT Distinguished Scholar. And the OMT Business Meeting and Social Hour, is on Monday at 5:30-7:30.

At our annual officer's meeting in February, 2008, we discussed how to shepherd OMT into the next decade. Our foci will be to (1) continue our efforts to define OMT as an important domain for teaching in business programs, and (2) more effectively define and communicate our identity as a Division. I discuss these two foci below.

Teaching OMT
Our past division chair, Jerry Davis, began an effort to return OMT to a place of stature in the curriculums of business programs, especially MBA programs. I am happy to report that this effort has produced several tangible resources for the OMT Division and its members:

1) Teach OMT Wiki: The new Teach OMT wikipedia site is nearly ready to go live (see Kelly Thomson's article from the OMT Teaching Committee in this Newsletter for more details). This site, put together by Kelly Thomson, Jerry Davis, Ellen Auster, and Dave Touve, will gather resources and materials, plus advice and commentary on teaching core OMT courses, as well as bringing OMT ideas into elective courses and seminars. You can see the pilot version at teachOMT.com.

2) OMT Distinguished Educator Award: In the Fall of 2008, OMT (led by OMT Teaching Committee Chair, Anand Narasimhan) will put out a call for nominations for the first OMT Distinguished Educator Award. The Award recipient will be honored at the 2009 Academy of Management Meetings. We hope that this award will highlight the importance of good teaching in OMT and will stimulate discussion on how to improve our impact on business students.

3) Teach OMT workshop in Jr. Faculty Consortium: OMT continues to include a star-studded workshop on teaching OMT in its Jr. Faculty Consortium. This workshop will be an on-going part of the Jr. Faculty Consortium - which is coordinated this year by OMT reps-at-large Marvin Washington and Candace Jones. This workshop aims to provide practical advice to consortia attendees about improving the teaching of OMT in business programs.

The Core Identity of OMT

As OMT grows and diversifies, we find it important to step back and re-affirm our identity as a division. While it is hard to define all the dimensions that make OMT what it is today, the OMT officers continue to talk about what makes us unique. We hope engage you in this conversation in anticipation of our upcoming 5-year divisional review. Some insights that arose
in our February officers' meeting include:

1) OMT is about generating new ideas and theories. As the only Academy of Management division with the word “Theory” in its title, we have become known as the place to go for new ideas, and theory building. This identity dimension is evident in several places:

Our new “Joanne Martin Trailblazer Award.” The first recipient of this award, Arie Lewin, will be honored at our OMT Business Meeting at the 2008 AoM Meetings in Anaheim. This award honors an OMT scholar who has promoted new thinking and paved the way for new ideas over the course of their career. Actions that may indicate “trailblazing” behavior include, starting up or moving forward a journal or scholarly series, organizing a conference or workshop, and beginning or continuing a conversation about a set of OMT ideas. Arie's work to found Organization Science and the associated Organization Science Winter Conference has created a new outlet for innovative research in OMT and helped build communities of scholars in emerging areas of OMT research. He has thus helped strengthen the identity of OMT as a home for new theory and idea generation.

Our OMT Dissertation Proposal Workshop. This workshop is one of the few workshops where PhD students can go to hone their dissertation ideas, in the company of established scholars, before those ideas were set in stone. This Workshop continues to be one of OMT's most popular PDWs and affirms our identity as a place to generate ideas.

Our OMT Research Committee. This relatively new OMT committee over 30 members, and 1/3 of those are international scholars. This committee seeks ways to improve access to and information about OMT scholarship, as well as coordinating the OMT best paper awards and Trailblazer award. The high interest in this committee by volunteers shows the focus of OMT members on research activities.

2) OMT is about making connections. As the most internationally-diverse division, and as a place where cross-disciplinary and cross-theory collaborations routinely take place, OMT has emerged as place for making connections. This identity dimension is evident in several places:

OMT's efforts to partner with other divisions in Academy consortia and workshops. OMT has been at the forefront of sponsoring PDWs, such as the Editor's Panel, that bring together
members of many divisions for a common purpose. We hope to continue such connections with divisions in the future.

OMT's wiki efforts. As mentioned earlier, this public website will allow those who teach OMT around the world to connect to another, by sharing syllabi, course materials, and advice on teaching OMT in business programs. We hope this wiki will be a model for engaging in future connections across scholarly communities. In particular, we hope to build a research OMT wiki for sharing article summaries, works in progress, and access to data sets that may be shared by multiple scholars.

These two dimensions of the OMT identity are only a starting point for discussing who we are and who we hope to be. In the coming year, I welcome your feedback and input about the identity of OMT, and keeping it truly "the place to be."

Kim Elsbach, University of California, Davis