

"We've conducted a survey of members and non-members, ... and we've had a deep and exhaustive look at the OD Network member data base ... pulling out some of the key data points about ourselves and our Network."

OD Network: Our Evolution and Growth

By Matt Minahan

WE'RE OLDER, NOT as well educated, and more diverse in some ways, than ever before. We've grown from 2150 of us in 1981 to almost 4,000 today, and we come from 51 different countries on 5 continents. That's some of the story told in the OD Network's member data base. This article summarizes some key demographics of our Network today, and where possible, traces those trends back to 1981 and 1986, when our member data base was first constructed.

Why this, and why now? With the arrival of the new decade and a new Executive Director of the OD Network, Amy Herman assembled a group of member volunteers, including Marilyn Blair, Warren Hoffman, Marti Kaplan, Peter Norlin, and me to work with her and the staff of the Network to do some thinking about the Network, its products and services,

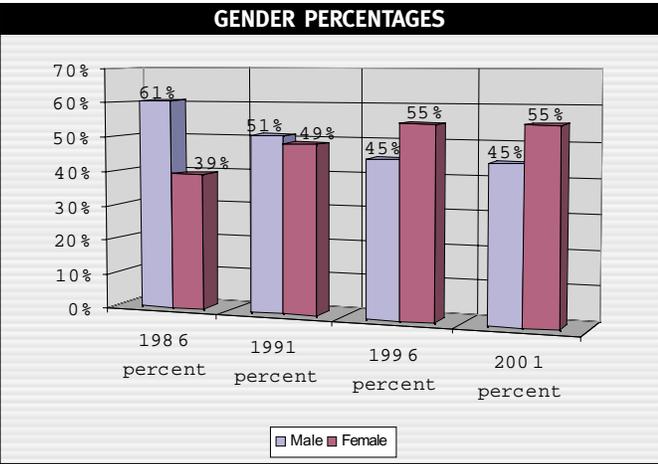
and its future. We've conducted a survey of members and non-members, which Amy summarized at the Annual Meeting of the OD Network at the Vancouver conference, and on which we are reporting in depth elsewhere, and we've had a deep and exhaustive look at the OD Network member data base on which this article is based, pulling out some of the key data points about ourselves and our Network.

As in all research, this could well be interpreted as lies, damned lies, or just plain statistics. There are plenty of reasons to use this data with a grain of salt, as outlined at the end of this article. But, with good intentions and some common sense, I've tried to use all of the sound data available to develop a portrait of who we are as a Network today, and to understand how we've evolved and grown to get here.



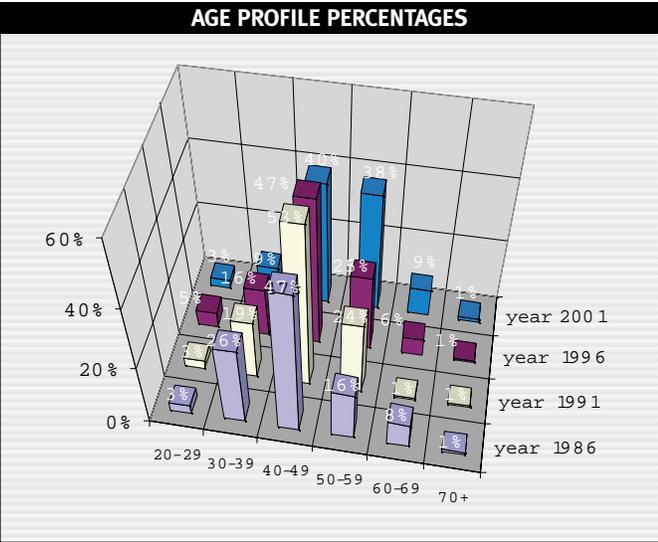
OD NETWORK MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

Membership in the Network over the past 20 years has increased by more than 180%, from 2150 members in 1981 to 3960 members in 2001. After steady growth of approximately 4% per year from 1986 to 1996, the Network rate of growth doubled to 8% per year between 1996 and 2001. Much of the growth appears to track with the expansion of graduate school programs in OB, OD, and HR which occurred during the 1980s and early 1990s (see the Education table) and with the expansion of the internet in last 5 years (see the Email and Web Pages table).



GENDER

During this same period, the Network shifted from majority male (61%) in 1986 to majority female (55%) in 1996, which did not change in 2001.



AGE PROFILE

As a Network, we're noticeably older today than we've ever been. In 1986, most of our members were under 50. By 1991, for the first time, there were more members who were over 50+ than 20-40, and the bell-shaped curve of members begins a slight lean to the right of 40-49.

In 2001, the median age leapt up to 50 for the first time, following a gradual trend up from 44 in 1986, 45 in 1991, and 47 in 1996.

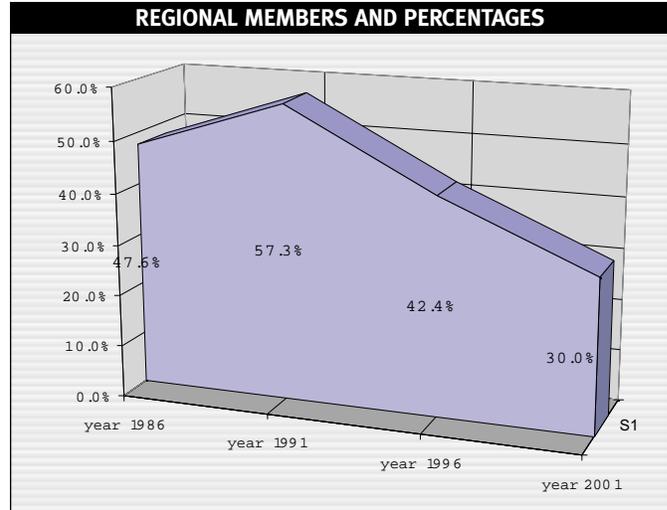
Interestingly, since 1996, the percentage of members between 20 and 40 has dropped, and the percentage of members between 40 and 60 has grown significantly, tracking steadily with the baby boom bulge in the US demographic trends.

The most striking feature of the Age Profile chart is the large increase in 50-59 year old members in 2001, which seems to far exceed the normal aging rate of the overall population.

One additional curiosity: over the years, the percentage of members willing to disclose their date of birth has gone down, from almost 70% in 1986 to just under 40% in 2001.

MEMBERS WHO ARE REGIONAL MEMBERS, TOO

There are two obvious trends in this data, with an increasing percentage of regional members between 1986 and 1991, and then a steadily following percentage between 1991 and 2001. Interestingly, the growth in regional percentages tracks closely with growth in membership between 1986 and 1991, but as the membership growth continues into 2001, the percentage of regional members drops noticeably. This may be partly explained by the fact that a greater number of ODN members are international, where there are no local chapters, but that would only account for a small fraction of the decline.

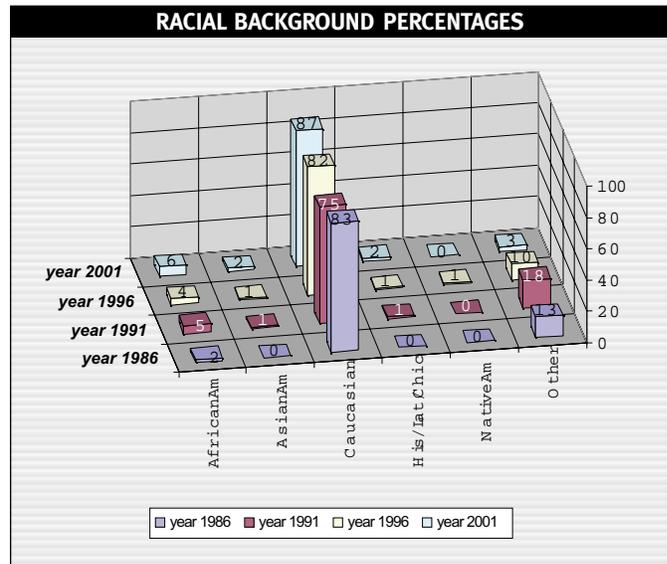


RACIAL BACKGROUND

As a network, we are, and have been, overwhelmingly white. At first blush, it appears that the percentages for all minorities has increased, even if slightly, with the largest increase occurring among members who report themselves to be African American. However, those gains are largely offset by the decrease in people categorized as "other," so the shift may be due to changes in data reporting or recording practices.

The percentage of member who report their racial background has shifted from 94% (1986) to 78% (1991) to 71% (1996) to 80% (2001).

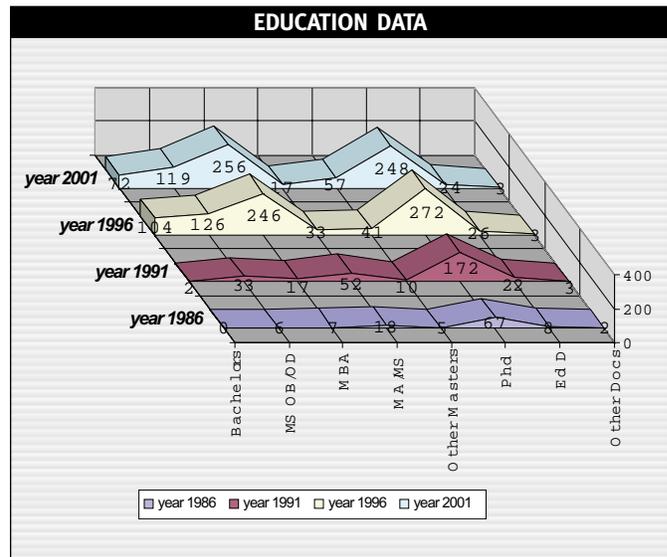
Beyond that, it is difficult to draw many conclusions because the data is somewhat sketchy. First, the names of these categories have changed over time. Second, none of the names have never been defined. And third, the large percentage of "others" in 1991 seems suspect.

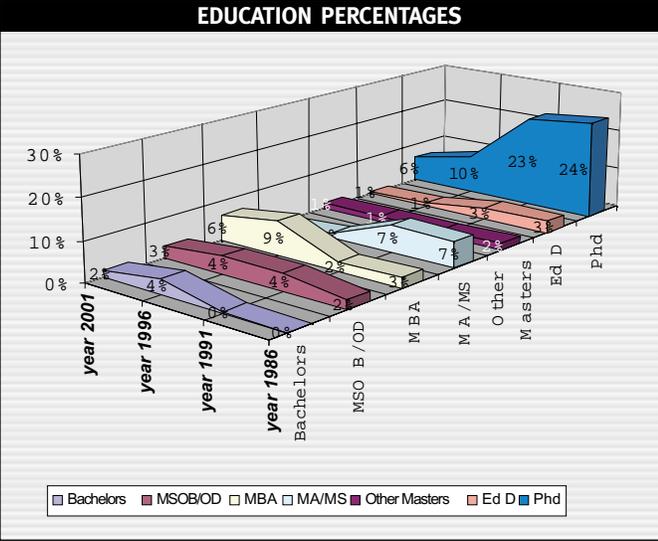


MEMBERS' EDUCATION

Our education profile reflects the huge expansion in the number of masters' degree programs that has occurred since the late 1980s, and it suggests a significant shift from educators and academics to practitioners' degrees. In 1986, members with doctoral degrees outnumbered members with all other degrees combined by 3 to 1. By 2001, masters outnumbered doctorates by 3 to 2, and there were an additional 72 bachelors. Curiously, the number of bachelors, which had risen steadily from 1986 through 1996, dropped by 25% in 2001.

The percentage table, sliced by degree instead of time, points out some other characteristics. In 1986, 28% of members had doctoral degrees (Ph. D and Ed. D) compared to less than 7% in 2001. The reversal in profile from 1986-1991 to 1996-2001 between MBA members and MS/MA members likely reflects the inclusion of OD courses into MBA programs, which began occurring in the early 1990s. It also parallels the

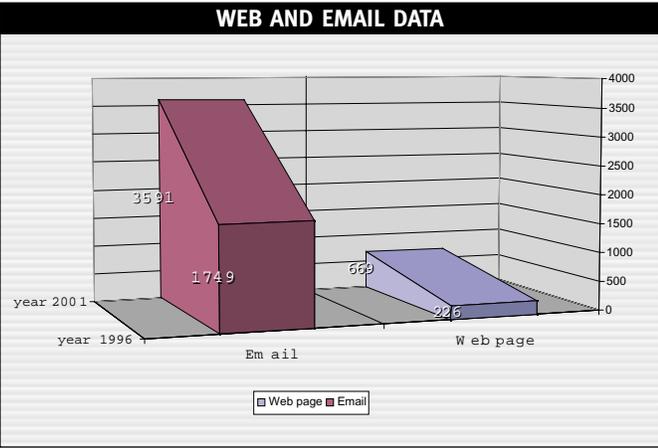




development of “change management” as an OD practice, and likely reflects the inclusion of members from change management consulting firms, a trend which began in the mid 90s and which has leveled off since.

Our members come from many affiliated fields, as well. There 26 who report their highest degrees to be graduate degrees in social work, 19 lawyers, 14 with doctorates in psychology, 2 with Pharm D. degrees, 4 CPAs, one bachelors degree each in nursing, fine arts, electrical engineering, and chemical engineering.

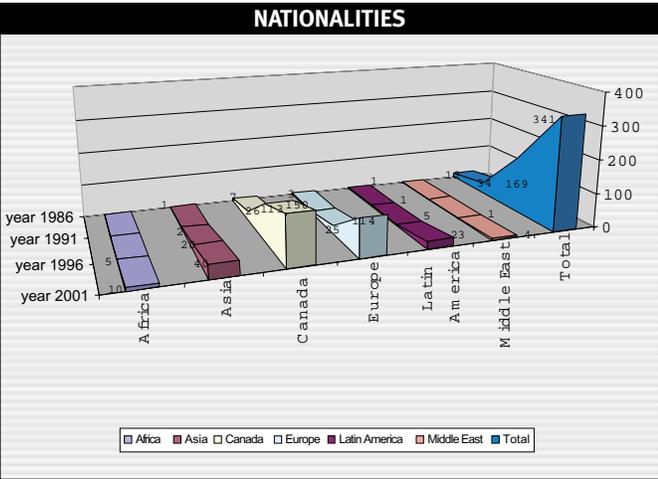
There is one additional curiosity in this data. The percentage of members who reported their education has dropped consistently from 46% in 1986, to 40% in 1991, to 26% in 1996, to just 20% in 2001.



EMAIL AND WEB PAGES

Over the past 5 years, the number of ODN members with email accounts has almost doubled, and the percentage of members with email addresses has increased from 60% in 1996 to 90% in 2001. Access to email does not appear to correlate with age; members born in the 1920s and 30s appear to have email accounts in the same proportion as members born in the 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s.

The number of members with their own home pages on the world wide web has almost tripled over the past five year, the percentage of members doubling, from 8% of members having their own web page in 1996, to 16% in 2001.



NATIONALITIES

Overall, the network is very predominantly US based, but it has become almost twice as diverse between 1986 (4.4% of members from outside of the US) and 2001 (8.6%). Most of the growth among Canadian members occurred between 1991 and 1996; otherwise, most of the international growth has occurred between 1996 and 2001, particularly in Europe and Latin America (which includes Mexico and the Caribbean.)

In 2001, 341 members were from outside of the US, residing in 50 countries, however a full 70% of international members live in two countries, Canada (150), the UK (89). Australia is 3rd (12), followed by Mexico (10), South Africa and Singapore (7 each), India (6), Germany (5), Netherlands and Belgium (4 each), Argentina and France (3). There are 9 countries with 2 members (Chile, Hong Kong, Hungary, Japan, Philippines, Qatar, South Korea, Switzerland, and Venezuela), and 24 countries with one member.

Though most of the international growth parallels the growth in the overall network, we have had 1 member each in

Germany, Mexico and Singapore, 2 in England, and 7 in Canada who have been members since 1986.

A NOTE ABOUT THE DATA AND METHODOLOGY

All of the data for this research has relied upon hard copy Membership Rosters going back to 1981 (thanks, Tom Chase!), and the member data base of the OD Network. In the 20 years under review, the association has moved across country, hired full time staff only in the past 7 years, and changed database systems at least twice. In addition, because the data is all self-reported, it's not complete, and in some cases where noted, amazingly so. Where there was obvious data error – such as dates of birth in the 1990s – the data was ignored. Where there were coding errors – such as racial data recorded one year as

A, B, and C, with no key to interpret the data – it was also ignored.

The OD Network's member data base was constructed before relational data bases were widely available, and as a result, the data for any given year was assembled by issuing a series of queries regarding the member's date of joining the ODN and their last payment date. The resulting samples are neither complete nor random, but hopefully are representative; conclusions drawn from this data need to be tentative and taken carefully.

Finally, many thanks to the staff of the ODN, especially Associate Executive Director, Maggie Hoyer, who has kept this database together with chewing gum, bailing wire, and lots of love. To the extent that any analysis is possible, it is due to Maggie's love and care of the data, and the members it represents. ■

OD Practitioner

Call for Articles

For Vol. 34 #4 Issue (Fall 2002)

Special Issue on Nonprofit Organization Development Issues

Some examples of the kinds of articles we are seeking.

- Current applications of organization development in the nonprofit/civil society sector.
- Ways organization development processes/approaches are being used to bring together nonprofits, management service providers, and community groups to work on community-wide issues.
- What is distinct about the nonprofit sector and how that affects the organizational change process.
- How consultants can effectively make the transition from for-profit to nonprofit organization development.

Please submit your manuscript by Aug '02 via e-mail as an attached WORD document to ODPSubmit@ODNetwork.org.