Benefiting from IS Research -- Who and How?
A Panel on the Value of IS Research

Panel
Nik Rushdi Hassan (Moderator)
University of Minnesota Duluth
nhassan@d.umn.edu

Izik Benbasat
University of British Columbia
izak.benbasat@sauder.ubc.ca

Jay Nunamaker
University of Arizona
jnunamaker@cmi.arizona.edu

Robert Briggs
San Diego State University
rbriggs@mail.sdsu.edu

Benjamin Mueller
University of Mannheim
mueller@es.uni-mannheim.de

ABSTRACT
This panel reexamines the perennial debate on the relevance of IS from the point of view of the value of IS research, who benefits from it and how these benefits are realized. Following up on previous panels, it promotes a discussion on the kinds of knowledge the IS community produces, the visibility of the IS research, its contributions and what could or should the IS community be working on in the future. Four panelists, who have demonstrated outstanding accomplishments in their respective careers, weigh in and respond to questions on who benefits from their research, what they view as grand challenges that the IS community has addressed, and how as a research community, we can create value. Their discussions on these critical issues are expected to inspire the IS community towards addressing impactful issues that matter to society.

Keywords
Value of research, relevance, impact of research, research benefits, knowledge

PANEL OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVE
This panel asks who actually benefits from IS research and who the panelists think should benefit. Whereas such a debate on the value of IS research is far from new (Benamati et al., 2006; Desouza et al., 2006; Keen, 1991) it is time for the community to engage this issue and suggest some practical solutions. Some may argue that these kinds of research-on-research efforts reinforce unproductive anxiety discourses, whereas others say such critical reevaluations are necessary for a healthy discipline to mature. Do we believe there is something to be said about enhancing the value of our research? The discussion is similar to the rigor versus relevance debate that took place between 1999 and 2001, especially on the question of how PhD students and junior faculty are expected to publish high impact research, but at the same fulfill institutional tenure requirements (Applegate, 1999; Benbasat and Zmud, 1999; Gray, 2001). More recent articles (Straub and Ang, 2011), recent discussions on the AIS listserv and panels at ICIS 2012 suggest that the IS community is still searching for solutions.

[Varun Grover] "We can do very good research, but that doesn't mean we are producing good knowledge … can we create 'better' knowledge? … exciting, innovative and addressing important questions of our time." (ICIS 2012 SIGPhil Workshop)

[Bernard Tan] "I've been looking back at all the work that I've done… I don't think I've done enough to help the IS discipline be known by others outside of the discipline … We really should be doing research that addresses significant global problems … let’s not be too fixated about publishing in MISQ or ISR, we can be publishing in Nature or Science. (ICIS 2012 Panel)

Beyond the issue of relevance, the notion of whether we value our research, care about what others are doing, and believe that our work is truly contributing to the field may be useful. These notions of value of research may not have been thoroughly examined. For example, coming out of the dotcom crash, when IS major enrollments started dropping precipitously, panels were discussing "the MIS discipline again having to demonstrate its value within the business college." (Benamati et al., 2006, p. 658). What exactly is that value we are to speak of? Who do we think benefit from our research? And how are those benefits realized? Perhaps other dimensions of intellectual work such as originality, novelty and creativity should be given more attention.
PANEL LAYOUT/DESIGN
This interactive panel promotes an open discussion between audience and panelists and among panelists. To get started, the moderator will collect views from the panelists during three rounds of questions. The panelists will each respond to four questions:

- What do you see as main benefit and value of your (panelist) own research?
- What do you see as the main benefit(s) and value of IS research over the last decade(s)? In your view what has been the contribution of IS research to society?
- What would you (panelist) like to see as the main benefit and value of IS research? What could/should the IS community contribute? What barriers do you see ahead of us?
- Given the circumstances, what high value research could/should the IS community work towards in the future?

Ample time is provided for answering questions and discussions with the audience. Panelists are asked to limit their responses to less than 3 minutes, allowing each panelist a total of 12 minutes to respond to all the questions.

PANEL PARTICIPANTS

Jay Nunamaker

Dr. Jay F. Nunamaker, Jr. is Regents and Soldwedel Professor of MIS, Computer Science and Communication. He is Director of the Center for the Management of Information and the National Center for Border Security and Immigration at the University of Arizona. Dr. Nunamaker was inducted into the Design Science Hall of Fame, May 2008. Dr. Nunamaker received the LEO Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Association of Information Systems (AIS) at ICIS in Barcelona, Spain, December 2002. He was elected a fellow of the AIS in 2000. He was featured in the July 1997 Forbes Magazine issue on technology as one of eight key innovators in information technology. He is widely published with an H index of 61 (top 1%). His specialization is in the fields of collaboration technology and deception detection.

Prof Nunamaker's points

“How can we make a bigger impact?” It is an increasingly common question in the Information Systems (IS) discipline. It is a question that reflects a social desire and imperative to produce something of value. It is a question that challenges the IS discipline’s identity and viability. A viable approach to generating greater real-world impact is moving away from “silo research” addressing small problems on a conceptual level, and moving toward multi-methodological, multidisciplinary, collaborative programs of research designed to address major real-world issues through a concept to cradle approach. Human, operational, and fiscal resources afforded by sustained research centers make it possible to shepherd concepts from the ideation stage all the way to realized, real-world impact.

Izak Benbasat

Izak Benbasat is Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and Research Chair in Information Technology Management at the Sauder School of Business, University of British Columbia. Professor Benbasat was ranked as the most influential MIS researcher in terms of publications cited by others and as the most prolific author in Human-Computer Interaction research in MIS during 1990-2008. For the years 2002-2012, as well as 1990-2012, he is the author with the highest number of publications both in Information Systems Research and in MIS Quarterly.

Prof Benbasat's points

Prof. Benbasat will discuss his current research interests that create value including investigating the methods for customer service provision on the Internet, evaluating product recommendation agents used in electronic commerce, including those for social shopping networks, and designing tools to help reduce risk and deception in electronic commerce. The value of this work can be seen in its continued support by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the University of British Columbia Hampton Grants.

Robert Briggs

Robert O. Briggs is Professor of Information Systems and Director of Doctoral Studies at San Diego State University where he recently established a doctoral program in IS, the first in the College of Business Administration. He is a founding director of the Center for Collaboration Science at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He researches the cognitive foundations of collaboration and uses his findings to design new collaborative work processes and new collaboration systems. He is co-founder of the field of Collaboration Engineering, Co-inventor of the ThinkLets design pattern language for collaborative work processes, and inventor of Computer Assisted Collaboration Engineering (CACE), an approach to packaging
collaboration expertise with collaboration technology in a form that non-experts can use with no training on either the techniques or tools.

Prof Robert Briggs's points

The unique and enduring purpose that defines IS as an academic discipline is to understand and improve the ways people create value with information. An information system is, by that definition, a way to create value with information. We must therefore be visionary masters of IT possibilities. To advance our research, we must sometimes invent new technologies where none before existed. While IT is a most valuable asset, however, it does not define us. The most important information system I ever helped to design, for example, involved no computers, but rather depended on large desks and a coffee pot. We don’t study technology. We study ways to create value with information. We use technology where it serves use, but we should stay focused on design, not on tools.

Benjamin Mueller

Dr. Benjamin Mueller is Assistant Professor at the University of Mannheim, Germany. He received his doctorate from EBS Business School in Wiesbaden, Germany in 2010. Prior to that, Benjamin studied Business Administration and Information System at both EBS Business School and at Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA and holds graduate degrees from both institutions. Recently he was a Visiting Scholar at Bentley University in Waltham, MA. Benjamin is currently researching the interplay of organizational and technological facets of Enterprise Systems. Benjamin has received the ECIS 2010 Best Paper Award and was a Best Paper and Ciborra Award nominee at ECIS 2007. Beyond his research, Benjamin has worked as a consultant in the area of IT strategy and IT benchmarking and gathered practical experience with corporations in the US and Europe.

Benjamin Mueller’s points

Thinking about the value or impact of a research discipline, one perspective is to look at what this discipline’s unique selling proposition is in terms of helping to solve some of humanity’s grand challenges – such as, for example, the achievement of the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals. By definition, addressing these is an effort larger than any one discipline alone and will have to integrate the unique capabilities and resources of scholars from a variety of disciplines. But which of the topics, methods, and theories of the IS discipline can be interpreted as valuable enough to constructively contribute to solving grand challenges? And is what we as a discipline do really rare and inimitable enough to ensure that others will turn to us? Inspired by the discussion started at ICIS 2012, Benjamin takes the perspective of a junior scholar and asks what the role of younger scholars in this strive towards impact of the IS discipline could be. How to contribute to such larger research initiatives while being on the tenure clock? This also raises the question of how productivity and thought leadership relate to one another and whether the IS discipline would need more of an intergenerational contract amongst its scholars.

EQUIPMENT NEEDS

No specific equipment needs.

REFERENCES

7. Straub, D., and Ang, S. (2011) Editor's comments: Rigor and relevance in IS research: Redefining the debate and a call for future research, *MIS Quarterly* 35, 1, iii-xii.