

1987

PANEL 1 INFORMATION SYSTEM RESTRICTIVENESS

Mark S. Silver

University of California at Los Angeles

Follow this and additional works at: <http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis1988>

Recommended Citation

Silver, Mark S., "PANEL 1 INFORMATION SYSTEM RESTRICTIVENESS" (1987). *ICIS 1988 Proceedings*. 22.
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis1988/22>

This material is brought to you by the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in ICIS 1988 Proceedings by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.

PANEL 1

INFORMATION SYSTEM RESTRICTIVENESS

Panel Chair: Mark S. Silver, University of California at Los Angeles

Panelists: Andrew C. Boynton, University of Virginia
M. Lynne Markus, University of California at Los Angeles
Sarima Nidumolu, University of California at Los Angeles
Wanda J. Orlikowski, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Over the last few years, researchers studying a number of different types of computer-based information systems (CBIS) have found a common characteristic that can play an important role in understanding the effects these systems have on the behavior of their users. Referred to here as "system restrictiveness," this attribute is defined as "the degree to which and the manner in which a computer-based information system constrains the information-processing activities of its users." While conventional wisdom holds that increased flexibility in information systems is desirable, hence increased restrictiveness is undesirable, recent studies have found that increased restrictiveness can be closely connected to achieving an information system's objectives. For instance, increased restrictiveness has been used to make systems easier to learn, to make systems easier to use as intended, to enforce organizational communication channels, to structure decision-making processes, and to maintain competitive advantage. This observation suggests that we need to learn more about this important property of systems.

The objective of the panel is to explore the concept of Information System Restrictiveness as it relates to a variety of different types of information systems. In particular, each panel member analyzes the restrictiveness attribute for a different class of systems:

Panel Member	Class of Systems
Andrew C. Boynton	Information Retrieval Systems
M. Lynne Markus	Electronic Communication Systems
Sarima Nidumolu	Interorganizational Systems
Wanda J. Orlikowski	Computer-Aided Software Engineering (CASE) Tools
Mark S. Silver	Decision Support Systems

Each speaker addresses two issues in his or her presentation. First, panelists explore how elements of the particular class of systems manifest restrictiveness. That is, they consider how the features of this type of information system can and do constrain system users. Second, panelists analyze the effects of restrictiveness for the particular class of information systems. For example, they contrast the design objectives favoring greater and lesser degrees of restrictiveness. They consider the ways in which restrictiveness can be good and the ways in which it can be bad.

Consider, for example, Decision Support Systems (DSS). The features of a DSS that restrict its users include its operators, data, models, and representations, since limitations imposed on any of these components constrain users' decision-making processes. Common objectives such as fostering creativity and exploratory learning are associated with lesser restrictiveness, whereas objectives such as prescription and providing structure to the decision-making process are associated with greater restrictiveness. Promoting system use requires a delicate balance between too much and too little restrictiveness.

The discussion by panelists and audience members following the presentations is intended to focus on

- 1) understanding the commonalities and differences across these different types of systems in terms of their restrictiveness,
- 2) considering restrictiveness as it relates to other classes of information systems, and
- 3) identifying critical research issues concerning system restrictiveness.