1992

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Recommended Citation

Alter, Steven, "PANEL 7 PARADIGM SHIFT 2001: WHAT WILL WE TEACH BUSINESS MAJORS AS THE TECHNOLOGY BECOMES INVISIBLE?" (1992). *ICIS 1992 Proceedings*. 25.
http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis1992/25

PANEL 7

PARADIGM SHIFT 2001: WHAT WILL WE TEACH BUSINESS MAJORS AS THE TECHNOLOGY BECOMES INVISIBLE?

Panel Chair: Steven Alter, University of San Francisco

Panelists: Heinz Klein, State University of New York at Binghamton
Stuart Madnick, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Robert Weissman, NeXT Computer, Inc.

The first IS courses for business majors focused largely on understanding the mysteries of the computer. With increasing familiarity and comfort with computers, these courses have taken on more of a user and management perspective. Extending this trend ten years into the future, one might wonder whether information systems courses for general business students will appear disappear as the technology becomes even more commonplace, easier to use, and perhaps virtually invisible to users who take it for granted as a standard tool for everyday work. Alternatively, IS courses could merge with general management courses or could remain distinct because the technical content will remain both visible and significant. This panel will explore issues related to advances in technology and their impact on the content and format of what we may teach business majors in the year 2001. Panel members will take different views on the issues.

Steven Alter will approach the topic by presenting a framework that divides the business curriculum into four general areas: information skills, interpersonal skills, knowledge about the value chain, and knowledge about the business environment. This framework helps in identifying what business majors need to learn about information systems.

Heinz Klein will view information systems as social communication systems technically implemented and will argue that technology changes have been very *visible* as they affected the domains of human language and organization. Since the duality of economic/technical efficiency and social acceptance requirements will continue to challenge system developers, a key question for future educators is how to prepare professional system developers for excellence in both of their antagonistic roles of rational design and social change facilitator.

Stuart Madnick will question the idea that the technology is becoming invisible. Even though some schools seem to be teaching that the technology is virtually invisible today, he believes that the technology will never be invisible. The technology will continue to change and the real issue is *what* technology will be visible or invisible in 2001.

Ronald Weissman (a professor at the University of Maryland and Brown University before joining NeXT) will base his comments on a vendor's view of the products currently being sold and developed in the personal computing and networking marketplace. He will explore the implications for the role of information technology in everyday work and the types of things business students will need to learn about information systems.