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Information System Discipline, A Leader or A Follower?

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

The history of information systems as an academic discipline is relatively recent compared to other business and management disciplines. Nevertheless, during that short period, information systems have been established and accepted as a uniquely identifiable research field and demonstrated maturity in many aspects. For example, the Associate for Information Systems (AIS), the premier professional organization for the discipline founded in 1994, has grown to have more than 4,000 members in over 90 countries in 2018 (AIS Annual Report 2018). It publishes nine academic journals and sponsors six affiliated journals, and hosts five international and regional conferences. The IS field has also witnessed an exponential growth of academic journals and articles published in these journals. According to the journal data analysis reported in the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) Journal Quality List, one of the most widely used academic business publication indices, there were 20 journals classified as IS (Field of Research Code 806 by ABDC) in 1990. In 2012 the number grew to 177, significantly more than the number of journals classified as marketing (139), a comparable discipline to IS in nature and history to IS.

While these facts all point to the maturity of the field of IS, there are still lingering questions as to the current state of IS as an academic field, particularly concerning the role and contribution to the business and IT community. The IS discipline's applied, and interdisciplinary nature demands constant and ongoing assessment of its relationship to the business community. This issue has been vigorously discussed and debated in the form of "Rigor vs. Relevance" (Straub & Ang, 2011). It is often criticized for lacking a coherent research foundation and direction theoretically sound and yet practical and relevant to the practicing industry (Ramiller, Swanson, and Wang, 2008). Without such a foundation and leadership, the field could drift aimlessly. Baskerville and Myers(2009) attempted to describe the trend, and the relationship between IS research and practices using the concept of "Fashion Waves" to capture the sudden surge of interest and followed by a loss of interest, IS topics demonstrated by researchers and practitioners. Using a bibliographic research method, they attempted to uncover the relationship between the research community and the practitioner community along with the noted fashion trends. They suggested that despite some similar trends between the two communities, the IS research community must be more proactively engaged in the process of trendsetting.

Building upon Baskerville and Myers (2009), this study investigates if and how the IS research community sets the "fashion trends" to lead and guide the practitioner community.

References (optional)

- Baskerville, R. L., & Myers, M. D. (2009). Fashion waves in information systems research and practice. In *MIS Quarterly: Management Information Systems*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20650319>
- Straub, D., & Ang, S. (2011). Rigor and relevance in IS research: Redefining the debate and a call for future research. In *MIS Quarterly: Management Information Systems*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/23043485>