Editor's Introduction

Need for Consistency in Information Systems Research

After witnessed three decades of development in information systems research, I find that we need to develop a new way to further enhance the area. One important issue is that constructs in our area are often defined and/or applied "flexibly" by researchers. As a result, different findings could be inconsistent, non-duplicable, and not directly comparable. This, in fact, strongly violates the basic rule of scientific research and is often under the criticism of natural scientists.

We certainly have a number of good reasons to defend ourselves – information technology and social behavior are constantly changing; we cannot manipulate research objects in our laboratories, organizational problems are too complicated and we have limited research instruments for observation, and so on. We can put together a long list of reasons to justify that information systems research, as a subset of social science research, is complicated and a wide range of research findings on the same issue is acceptable.

To enhance the value of our research outcomes, however, we also need to think of ways to alleviate the problems. I find the following three directions to be helpful in better cumulating and refining our knowledge.

First, **conducting more meta-analysis**. Most individual research projects can test a small number of constructs with small sample sizes. Meta-analysis can aggregate findings from a group of related studies and derive more consistent findings that can be repeatedly observed in future research. Conducting meta research is certainly not without limitations. We need to have enough number of exploratory studies on the same issue and have sufficient statistical data reported in these prior studies. Meta-research is also limited by pooling together findings from different sources of data, which has the risk of comparing oranges and apples together, although they are all fruits.

In order to make our research findings more comparable, the second important issue is to **standardize our definition and measurement of constructs**. I know that this sounds to be difficult for many researchers, as construct measurements may need to be adapted to reflect the idiosyncratic nature of a project. However, I just cannot think of how can consistent results be observed, if the measurement instrument is not standardized? Taking the important construct "trust" for example, you can find some articles include comfort and some do not, some focused on cognitive perspective while others focus on the emotional attachment. If the measurement is different, it's no surprise that the findings are different and the value of meta-research will be marginal.

Another issue related to enhancing the value of meta-analysis is to **require complete reporting of statistical information in published primary research**. In order to conducting a quality meta-research, adequate statistical information (such as correlations) is essential. Unfortunately, we often find published papers that do not report key statistics. This deficiency could be because of space limitation or the ignorance of the authors or reviewers. We may need to develop some guidelines for disclosing statistical information in published articles in information systems. The Association for Information Systems (AIS) may be able to help in this regard.

In this Issue:

This is the last issue of 2011 and concludes the third year of publication of the journal. Two articles are included in this issue. The first one by Nir Kshetri examines the privacy and security issue of social media. The beginning of 21st century is featured by the explosion of social media. Facebook has become many people's daily necessity for both communication and entertainment. However, many people unknowingly release their private and sensitive personal information because of the use of this new technology. The article develops a framework that provides a simple, explicit mechanism for understanding privacy and security issues associated with social media. It is useful for scholars who are interested in this important issue.

The second paper by Liu, et al. reports results from a meta-analysis on applying the social exchange theory to analyzing knowledge sharing behavior. Plenty of prior studies have identified factors that may affect knowledge sharing, but some findings are inconsistent. This article consolidates previous findings to provide more conclusive observations for future researchers.

New Editorial Members:

As the journal grows, we would like to welcome two new senior editors to join the editorial teams: Eric T.G. Wang and Chih-Ping Wei. Eric is a chair professor at National Central University and has served as an AIS council member to represent Region 3. He is an expert in information economics and IT outsourcing and has published extensively in top-journals. Chih-Ping is a Professor at National Taiwan University. His expertise is design science research, particularly in data mining and knowledge management. He has also published extensively in top journals and has been very active in helping PACIS and WEB conferences. Their joining the team will definitely enhance the quality and potential of the journal.

Ting-Peng Liang

Editor in Chief