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## Senior Scholars Panel: What Do We Like About the IS Field?

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# WHAT DO WE LIKE ABOUT THE IS FIELD?

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## **Introduction**

Some of us have been in the information systems field for a long time. What do we like about the field? (Grover et al. 2009). We think the field of information systems is distinctive, perhaps with respect to subject, methods, and a certain way of thinking (Baskerville and Myers 2002; Benbasat and Zmud 2003; Sidorova et al. 2008). Assuming we are not simply drowned in cognitive dissonance, there are important reasons for us to believe in this field and for us to hope that it prospers. We might or might not have a clear and common message about the distinctive nature of the field, but we can at least get some views from some senior scholars who are both smart enough to have jumped ship if they had wanted, and committed enough to see it through. We invite them to present their views, and then we invite the audience to engage in a discussion about the field. Perhaps we might even come up with some clear and common things to say about the field?

## Organization of the panel

Michael Myers, one of the panel co-chairs, will introduce the panel discussion. He will briefly outline the motivation for this year's senior scholars' consortium and introduce the speakers. This will then be followed by presentations by the three panelists: Suzanne Rivard, Carol Saunders and Ron Weber.

To answer the question of "What do we like about the information systems field?" Suzanne Rivard will use three conjugations of the verb "like." Using the past tense, she will comment on what she liked about the field when she first discovered it as a Ph.D. student and as a participant in the ICIS doctoral consortium in 1981. Using the present tense, she will then focus on what she likes about how the information systems field has matured. Finally, using the conditional she will express her wishes about what would make her like the field even more in the future.

Carol Saunders will describe how the information systems field has continued to offer exciting opportunities for exploration since the time she first worked on the Apollo project to land a man on the moon through the new virtual worlds that populate the ether. She will reflect upon these opportunities in light of the discipline's "boom-and-bust" cycles.

Ron Weber will discuss the information systems field's remarkable resilience. Early in its history it struggled to establish its legitimacy within universities. As it was starting to mature, it experienced the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the lead-up to Year 2000 and the dot-com boom. Over the last five years, it has had to deal with the consequences of severe declines in student numbers. Throughout its history, however, it has been sustained by an enduring belief among its members of the fundamental importance of computer-based information systems to ongoing human development.

Following these presentations, John King (panel co-chair) will briefly summarize the discussion so far and suggest some key points for debate. He will then facilitate what promises to be an interesting and lively discussion with the audience.

## Panelist Bios

**John Leslie King** is Professor of Information and Vice Provost for Academic Information at the University of Michigan. His research concentrates on the relationship between technological change and social change, and especially that involving information technology and institutions. Recent work has focused particularly on common carrier communication, transportation, and higher education. In addition to his time at Michigan he has been a professor at UC Irvine, Canon Distinguished Visiting Professor at Nanyang Business School, Marvin Bower Fellow at Harvard Business School, and Fulbright Distinguished Chair in American Studies at the University of Frankfurt. He has served as Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Information Systems Research* and is currently an editor of Viewpoints for *Communications of the ACM*. He holds a PhD in Administration from UC Irvine, is a Fellow of the Association for Information Systems, and a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He currently serves as liaison between the Advisory Committee for Cyberinfrastructure and the Advisory Committee for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences at the National Science Foundation, and as a member of the Council of the Computing Community Consortium.

**Michael D. Myers** is Professor of Information Systems and Head of the Department of Information Systems and Operations Management at the University of Auckland Business School, New Zealand. His research work has focused on the social and organizational aspects of information systems and the use of qualitative research in IS. His research articles have been published in many journals and books. He won the Best Paper award (with Heinz Klein) for the most outstanding paper published in MIS Quarterly in 1999. This paper has been cited over 1000 times and is third most cited paper to appear in MISQ. He also won the Best Paper Award (with Lynda Harvey) for the best paper published in Information Technology & People in 1997. He currently serves as Senior Editor of Information Systems Research and as Editor of the AISWorld Section on Qualitative Research. He previously served as Senior Editor of MIS Quarterly from 2001-2005, as Associate Editor of Information Systems Research from 2000-2005, and as Associate Editor of Information Systems Journal from 1995-2000. He also served as President of the Association for Information Systems (AIS) in 2006-2007, and as Chair of the International Federation of Information Processing (IFIP) Working Group 8.2 from 2006-2008.

**Suzanne Rivard** is the HEC Montréal Endowed Chair in Strategic Management of Information Technology and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Her research is in the areas of enterprise systems implementation,

outsourcing of information systems services, software project risk management, and strategic alignment. She has received several best paper awards including the *Management Information Systems Quarterly Best Paper* award. She served as associate editor for *Information Systems Research* and the *MIS Quarterly* and is currently senior editor for the *Journal of the Association for Information Systems (JAIS)* and serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Management Information Systems (JMIS)* and *Systèmes d'information et management (SIM)*. She has served in many roles (program co-chair, Ph.D. consortium co-chair and associate editor) for ICIS and for AMCIS (MIS Camp co-chair). Her work has been published in such journals as *Communications of the ACM*, *Journal of Information Technology*, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, *MIS Quarterly*, *Organization Science*, and others.

**Carol Saunders** is currently Professor of MIS at the University of Central Florida. She served as General Conference Chair of ICIS'99 and Telecommuting '96. She was the Chair of the Executive Committee of ICIS in 2000 and inducted as an AIS Fellow in 2003. She has served on a number of editorial boards and was Editor-in-Chief of *MIS Quarterly* from 2005-2007. She is currently the Senior Editor of the IS Research Perspectives section of *Journal of the Association for Information Systems (JAIS)*. She received the Distinguished Fulbright Award at the Wirtschaftsuniversität – Wien (WU) in 2009 and the Professional Fulbright Award with the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute in 1993. She and her co-authors received the *MIS Quarterly Best Paper Award* in 2002.

**Ron Weber** was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Information Technology at Monash University in February 2004. Previously, he was Professor of Information Systems and Research Director in the Faculty of Business, Economics and Law at The University of Queensland. He has held visiting appointments at the University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, City University of Hong Kong, University of Minnesota, Nanyang Technological University Singapore, New York University, and University of Otago. Ron is a Fellow of the Australian Computer Society, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia, CPA Australia, the Association for Information Systems, and the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. In 2000, Ron received the Accounting and Finance Association of Australia and New Zealand's inaugural Outstanding Educator Award and the Notable Contributions to the Accounting Literature Award. In 2000, he also won the Australian Prime Minister's Award for University Teacher of the Year. From 2002-2004, he was Editor-in-Chief of the *MIS Quarterly*.

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