

December 1996

Panel 9 Are There Barbarians at the Gates of Information Systems?

Jane Fedorowicz
Bentley College

Denis Lee
Suffolk University

John Sviokla
Harvard University

Bruce Weber
New York University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis1996>

Recommended Citation

Fedorowicz, Jane; Lee, Denis; Sviokla, John; and Weber, Bruce, "Panel 9 Are There Barbarians at the Gates of Information Systems?" (1996). *ICIS 1996 Proceedings*. 67.
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis1996/67>

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 1996 Proceedings by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.

PANEL 9

ARE THERE BARBARIANS AT THE GATES OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS?

Panel Chair: **Jane Fedorowitz**, Bentley College

Panelists: **Denis Lee**, Suffolk University
John J. Sviokla, Harvard University
Bruce Weber, New York University

Information Systems educators frequently hear dire predictions of the impending demise of the academic MIS department as well as its industry counterpart, the centralized information systems function of the firm. On the academic side, we worry about “our” curricula diffusing into other academic departments, whose faculty increasingly recognize the extent to which information technology has transformed industry practice in their discipline. On the corporate side, “our” graduates’ jobs are being grabbed up by non-IS majors as computing power migrates from the IS core to the masses in the functional areas.

Are there “barbarians at our gates”? Is the field of IS leading or losing out in the race for relevance, as researchers and teachers in other disciplines find it necessary to teach and research “our” issues? Are IS researchers and educators likely to experience a new professional obsolescence as a result, when competence in other business school disciplines is increasingly linked to competence in Information Systems? Should we defend our gates or revel in the new opportunity to move beyond them?

Similar questions assail our colleagues in other business disciplines as well. We aren’t the only field feeling the impact of advances in information technologies. In Accounting, for example, financial statements resulting from annual external audits do not carry the same weight with investors as they have in the past, thanks to the widespread demand for and availability of real-time financial data. Auditors, as a result, will need to move to a continuous audit function and diversify their consulting offerings in order to avoid becoming extinct.

The world of Finance is also a world transformed: financial markets have become globally linked “cybermarkets,” demanding that financial services firms invest in the most sophisticated trading and risk management systems and “rocket science” approaches just to be able to participate. In Operations Management, EDI and the World Wide Web have enabled manufacturing firms to truly enact just-in-time systems. Computer-integrated design and manufacturing have facilitated mass customization, and concurrent engineering has dramatically changed new product development. Retailers have placed the replenishment burden on the shoulders of suppliers. In Marketing, technology has created a new virtual marketplace, challenging conventional beliefs about how to advertise, price and sell products.

All of these changes parallel the trends we note in IS. This panel will discuss many of the trends *from the perspective of these other fields*, then contrast changes the other fields are experiencing with what we observe within our own. We will discuss the implications of and for globalization upon the curricula, professional practice and research in these fields. Finally, the panelists will give their views on where our field should plan to move in order to stay ahead of the flow of technology in the near future. We will debate whether IS should increasingly adopt the research methods of the disciplines of accounting, finance, marketing, operations and strategy in order to study problems in business technology initiated in these areas. We will discuss how to teach at the periphery of current IS curriculum to take advantage of opportunities to teach about technology across the spectrum of business school disciplines.