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Three Perspectives: If Markus' 1983 Classic Study, "Power, Politics, and MIS Implementation," Were Being Reviewed Today

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PANEL

THREE PERSPECTIVES: IF MARKUS' 1983 CLASSIC STUDY, "POWER, POLITICS, AND MIS IMPLEMENTATION," WERE BEING REVIEWED TODAY

Chair: Allen S. Lee, Virginia Commonwealth University, U.S.A.

Panelists: Michael Myers, University of Auckland, New Zealand
Guy Paré, École des Hautes Études Commerciales, Canada
Cathy Urquhart, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia

Commentator: M. Lynne Markus, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

INTRODUCTION

The 1983 study by M. Lynne Markus, "Power, Politics, and MIS Implementation," is a classic in the study of information technology in organizations. The web version of the Social Science Citation Index shows that over 200 other published studies have cited Markus' classic since 1993 (the earliest year covered by the web version of the SSCI). Furthermore, its universal appeal is evident in its being regarded as an exemplar of not only positivist research (Lee 1989), but also interpretive research (Walsham 1993).

Does our research field of information systems (IS) appreciate Markus' study only for its having offered a theory good for its time (much as physicists still appreciate and even teach classical physics although the theory of relativity has superceded it) or does our field appreciate Markus' study because its theory about information technology in organizations remains as true today as it was in 1983? At the same time, considerations about theory are inseparable from considerations about method: would our field today deem Markus' case research method to be valid, or instead judge it to be dated relative to contemporary qualitative methods?

To assess the merits of Markus' 1983 study today, three panelists will review Markus' study as if it were submitted for publication in *MIS Quarterly*. The reviewers' recommendations (accept, reject, or revise) will be interesting in themselves, but will not tell the entire story. A contemporary reviewing of Markus' 1983 study promises to be interesting not only for a fresh assessment of Markus' 1983 theory and method, but also for providing some signs about how the IS research field has developed since 1983.

In particular, what difference would the advances in IS theory (what we know about information technology in organizations) and method (how we know what we know about information technology in organizations) make to a contemporary assessment of Markus' study? Would we consider the resulting assessment of Markus' theory and method—as exemplary, merely adequate, or outdated—to be itself satisfactory? Would the contemporary distinction of research approaches into separate positivist, interpretive, and critical perspectives still see value in Markus' 1983 study, which made no such distinction? Would the new or different difficulties that Markus' study ends up encountering in the review process in 2000 indicate shortcomings of 1983 research as measured against 2000 research standards (and, hence, progress in the state of the art of IS research), or shortcomings of 2000 research standards as measured against exemplary information systems research (and, hence, a lack of progress in IS research since 1983)?

The preceding questions are only suggestive, not exhaustive, of the different issues that can arise from a contemporary assessment of Markus' 1983 study and to which members of the audience can react. The value of this panel will not end with the content of the reviews that the panelists provide of Markus' study, but will extend to reflections and reactions from the panel's audience on whether there have, or have not, been significant developments since 1983 in matters of broader concern that include the following: IS reviewing practices, IS reviewing standards, IS research genres, the state of the art of IS theory, the state of the art of IS method, and the IS research culture overall.

PANEL FORMAT

Allen Lee, as chair of the session, will take 5 minutes to introduce the panel.

Guy Paré will review Markus' "submission" from the perspective of positivist case research. Cathy Urquhart will review it from the perspective of interpretive research. Michael Myers will review it from the perspective of critical social theory. Each of these three "reviewers" will take 15 minutes to present his or her remarks.

Allen Lee, in the role of "editor," will take 10 minutes to present his decision (accept, reject, or revise). M. Lynne Markus will take 10 minutes to provide commentary. This will leave 20 minutes for audience discussion.

ABOUT THE PANELISTS

Allen S. Lee is Eminent Scholar and Professor of Information Systems at Virginia Commonwealth University. Lee has been an *MIS Quarterly* editor since 1990 and is its current editor-in-chief. He has organized research-methods panels for past sessions of ICIS and has co-edited (with Jonathan Liebenau and Janice I. DeGross) the book, *Information Systems and Qualitative Research* (Chapman & Hall, 1997). He has served as co-senior editor (with M. Lynne Markus) of the special issue of *MIS Quarterly* on the theme, "Intensive Research in Information Systems: Using Qualitative, Interpretive, and Case Methods to Study Information Technology."

M. Lynne Markus is Professor (Chair) of Electronic Business at the City University of Hong Kong. She is on leave from the Peter F. Drucker Graduate School of Management, Claremont Graduate University, where she is Professor of Management and Information Science. Professor Markus' research focuses on electronic commerce, enterprise systems, and the business value of investments in IT. Dr. Markus was formerly a member of the faculties of the Anderson Graduate School of Management (UCLA) and the Sloan School of Management (MIT). She has also taught at the Information Systems Research Unit, Warwick Business School, UK (as Visiting Fellow), at the Nanyang Business School, Singapore (as Shaw Foundation Professor), and at the Universidade Tecnica de Lisboa, Portugal (as Fulbright/FLAD Chair in Information Systems). Dr. Markus has received research grants and contracts from the National Science Foundation, the Office of Technology Assessment (U.S. Congress), The Advanced Practices Council of SIM International, the Financial Executives Research Foundation, and Baan Institute. She is the author of three books (including *Data Warehousing: More than Just Mining*, which has just been published) and numerous articles in journals such as *MIS Quarterly*, *Management Science*, *Organization Science*, *Communications of the ACM*, and *Sloan Management Review*. She serves on the editorial boards of several leading journals in the information systems field. She has served as AIS Council member for the Americas and as VP for Academic Community Affairs for SIM International. Markus holds a B.S. in Industrial Engineering from the University of Pittsburgh and a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from Case Western Reserve University.

Michael D. Myers is Professor of Information Systems in the Department of Management Science and Information Systems at the University of Auckland. His research interests are in the area of information systems development, qualitative research methods in information systems, and the social and organizational aspects of information technology. His papers have appeared in a wide range of journals, including *Accounting, Management and Information Technologies*; *Communications of the ACM*; *Ethics and Behavior*; *Information Systems Journal*; *Information Technology and People*; *Journal of Information Technology*; *Journal of Management Information Systems*; *MIS Quarterly*; and *MISQ Discovery*. He is co-author of three books, including *New Zealand Cases in Information Systems* (with J. Sheffield, Pagination Publishers, 2nd edition, 1992). Myers is Editor of the ISWorld Section on Qualitative Research, Editor of the *University of Auckland Business Review*, an Associate Editor of the *Information Systems Journal*, an Associate Editor of *MIS Quarterly*, and on the Editorial Boards of *Communications of the AIS*; *Information, Technology and People*; and *Journal of Systems and Technology*. He authored the study, "Critical Ethnography in Information Systems," in the book *Information Systems and Qualitative Research* (edited by A.S. Lee, J. Liebenau and J. I. DeGross, Chapman & Hall, 1997, pp. 276-300).

Guy Paré is Associate Professor of Information Systems at École des Hautes Études Commerciales in Montreal, Canada, where he is also Director of the Research Group on Information Systems. For his doctoral research at Florida International University, he conducted a series of positivist case studies of clinical information systems implementation at Jackson Memorial Hospital. He has co-authored "Using Case Study Research to Build Theories of IT Implementation" in the book, *Information Systems and Qualitative Research*, (edited by A.S. Lee, J. Liebenau and J. I. DeGross). He has also published articles in *Health Services Management Research*; *International Journal of Healthcare Technology and Management*; *International Journal of Technology Assessment in Health Care*; *Journal of Medical Systems*; *Journal of Information Technology Management, Behavior & Information Technology*; *European Journal of Information Systems*; and *Information Resources Management Journal*.

Cathy Urquhart is Senior Lecturer and Head of Information Systems at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Her research interests are in analyst-client communication and the social processes of adoption of IT including eCommerce. She also teaches qualitative research methods for IS and takes a strong interest in how they are applied in the field. She has published a number of qualitative research papers nationally and internationally in conferences and journals including ICIS, IFIP 8.2 refereed proceedings, and *Information Technology and People*. She was the recipient of the "Outstanding Paper" Award for *Information Technology and People* in 1999. She is an enthusiastic member of her national and international IS community, is involved in various editing and reviewing activities, and regularly reviews qualitative research manuscripts for IS journals. She holds a Ph.D. in Information Systems from the University of Tasmania, Australia.

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