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Special Issue

Enid Mumford's Contribution to Information Systems Theory and Theoretical Thinking: Introduction to the Special Issue

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We launched this special issue in order to stimulate discourse on how Enid Mumford has influenced and continues to influence information systems theory and practice. The work on the special issue began with an interview of Enid Mumford several years ago. The purpose of this interview, which is the first paper of the special issue, was to find out from Enid, herself, how she saw the status of her career at the time. After the interview, it seemed that a special issue that would show different sides of her influence would celebrate and push forward her intellectual contributions. A prominent group of senior IS scholars volunteered their time as editorial board members and as reviewers to show the variety of Enid's legacy.

When we suggested the special issue on Enid Mumford's contribution to theory and theoretical thinking to JAIS a few years ago, we had no idea that her career was going to come to an abrupt end just a few months into the call for papers. Enid Mumford passed away on Friday, April 7, 2006 after a massive stroke had left her unconscious early that year. As a result of her unexpected passing, this special issue became a commemorative one in the middle of the process. Enid Mumford will forever be greatly missed.

Fortunately for all of us who continue our work promoting more human use of computers, Enid Mumford was a prolific author. She continued to write until the very end of her life, often reviewing her own past and present projects against her own assumptions. She left behind candid evaluations of where the socio-technical principles had worked and where they had failed – sometimes miserably. While we will never read Enid's final take on the application of ethics, systems theory, socio-technical principles, or action research on improving life for all human kind, we have her plentiful writings and many personal accounts to rely on. In our collective memory and in the field's shared work, Enid will live on.

Enid Mumford, Emeritus Professor, Manchester Business School, was a recognized world leader in the application of socio-technical principles to information systems design. Enid Mumford's first degree was a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science, which she received from Liverpool University. She then spent time in industry, first as a personnel manager at an aircraft factory and later, as a production manager at a factory manufacturing alarm clocks. The first was the most valuable job experience she ever had, as it involved looking after personnel policy and industrial relations strategy for a very large number of women staff members. Her second job proved invaluable, as it gave her the experience of running a production department, an experience that is unusual for academics. She next joined the Faculty of Social Science at Liverpool and carried out research in industrial relations in both the Liverpool docks and the North West coal industry. In order to get in-depth information for the dock research she became a canteen assistant in three canteens used by the stevedores for meals. The coal mine research required her to spend many months underground talking to miners at the coal face. These are hardly the usual places to find academics, but are indicative of Enid's strong desire to understand the 'social' side of work.

After a year at the University of Michigan where she worked for the University Bureau of Public Health Economics, she joined the newly formed Manchester Business School. Here, she had many research contracts to study the human and organizational impact of computer-based systems. At Manchester she was professor of organizational behavior and director of CAWDRU, the Computer and Work Design Research Unit. She was also director of the MBA program for four years.

While at Manchester, Enid developed close relations with the Tavistock Institute. Her other influences included ethics, general systems theory, sociology, and anthropology. She applied her knowledge to the design and implementation of information systems by developing a method called ETHICS (Effective Technical and Human Implementation of Computer-based Systems) (Mumford 1983). The basic principle behind ETHICS is that individuals who participate in designing their information systems will be happier with their working circumstances, which will increase their productivity. Later in her career—after many years working in the IS domain—Enid worried that much work in academia was devoid of real substance, and thus turned her attention to broader social issues. She applied socio-technical concepts to solving complex, wicked global problems related to cybercrime and drugs. This interest culminated in a fascinating book entitled *Dangerous Decisions: Problem Solving in Tomorrow's World* (Mumford 1999). In the book, Enid argued for problem solving that was not naïve and simplistic. She eschewed such simplistic notions that merely throwing more resources at them can solve complex problems. Indeed, complex problems such as drugs and cyber crime defy simple solutions, and she admonished academics and politicians for not bringing more appropriate principles – such as socio-technical concepts – to understand and help solve these complex problems.

Enid was an active participant in the international arena. She received the Warnier Prize in 1983 for her contributions to Information Science. She was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Jyväskylä, Finland in 1996. She was a Fellow of the British Computer Society, and a companion of the Institute of Personnel Management. She was a founding

member and ex-chairperson of the British Computer Society Socio-technical Group; a member of the U.S. Socio-Technical Round Table, and founding member and chairperson of IFIP's TC8 WG8.2 – a working group whose focus was on the organizational and social implications of information systems. In 1999, she was amongst the first to receive the Association for Information Systems Leo Award for Lifetime Exceptional Achievement in Information Systems.

Enid was a pioneer. She was the first woman to set foot underground in the mines of the North West Coal industry in the UK. At the Manchester Business school she was the first person to do research on the human side of computing. She was amongst the first to introduce the principals of the Tavistock Institute and the socio-technical school to the information systems field. She also was amongst the first IS scholars to recognize the need to broaden the scope of research methods in the field by organizing the now famous Manchester conference on alternative research methods in 1984. This resulted in the publication *Research Methods in Information Systems* (Mumford et al. 1985).

The special issue begins with a paper by the guest editors: *"A Lifetime of Theory and Action on the Ethical Use of Computers - A Dialogue with Enid Mumford"* by Jaana Porra and Rudy Hirschheim. In the beginning of the paper, we briefly summarize Enid's four theoretical foundations in ethics, socio-technical theory, general systems theory, and action research. We also introduce four representative projects of her career. The major contribution of the paper is the authors' last interview with Enid Mumford in the summer of 2003. This interview includes Enid's own take on her career, contribution, and remaining frontiers. We end the paper with a brief snapshot of Enid's legacy.

The second paper by Bernd Carsten Stahl is entitled "ETHICS, Morality and Critique: An Essay on Enid Mumford's Socio-Technical Approach." This relevant and thought provoking conceptual paper expands upon Enid Mumford's work on ETHICS and ways to design information systems and use technology in an ethically acceptable manner. The author suggests that critical research in information systems (CRIS) and computer and information ethics can be used to clarify and strengthen Enid's argument and that the three approaches can cross-fertilize one another in order to take further Enid's humanistic aim to improve life using information and communication technology.

In the third paper, entitled *"Citizen participation and engagement in the design of e-Government services: the missing link in effective ICT design and delivery,"* Wendy Olphert and Leela Damodaran review 20 recent citizen engagement case studies from around the world and reflect these against Enid Mumford's views on the benefits and process of participation. The authors then analyze the status of current e-Government initiatives in the United Kingdom against this backdrop and find they are techno centric with minimal citizen engagement. E-government systems are also frequently not widely adopted by the citizens. The authors suggest benefits governments could achieve if they would adopt a more socio-technical, participatory approach.

The fourth paper by Erica L Wagner and Sue Newell is entitled *"Exploring the Importance of Participation in the Post-Implementation Period of an ES Project: A neglected area."* In their paper, the authors examine user participation in information system initiatives as a universal value. Whilst they adopt Enid Mumford's assumption that user participation is necessary to achieve socially and technically successful systems, this is not applicable in the context of packaged software such as ERP and CRM because users are not involved in software design. The paper includes a cross-case comparison and an analysis of the role of user participation in two enterprise systems (ES) projects. The authors suggest that when pre-implementation user participation is problematic, post-implementation involvement can still be effective in promoting user interest and assistance.

The last paper by Jennifer Xu, G. Alan Wang, Jiexun Li, and Michael Chau, called *Complex Problem Solving: Identity Matching Based on Social Contextual Information,* shows how Enid Mumford's three-stage problem solving framework of seeing the total picture, developing strategies, and taking actions can help organize research combating international crime. This paper, positioned in the third stage, consists of an attempt to operationally address the criminal identity matching problem by including social context factors. This paper has many qualities that are in concert with Enid Mumford's values. The authors tackle a real, complex problem of crime by using actual criminal data in an attempt to produce a practical solution.

We hope that you will enjoy this informative collection of papers building on Enid Mumford's theoretical thinking and her practical approach to research. The process of producing this special issue provides a glimpse of how broad and varied Enid Mumford's influence on the discipline continues to be. In the review process, we saw several more papers that had the potential to expand the horizons even further, but the papers would have required additional rounds of revisions and we did not wish to delay the special issue any longer than necessary. We invite all of you to continue to build on Enid Mumford's rich legacy to the information systems research field for years to come. She will continue to be an inspiration to us all.

We wish to thank the editorial board of the special issue as well as the reviewers who gave of their time to review the papers that were submitted.

Members of the editorial board were:

Jim Backhouse (London School of Economics)
Gordon Davis (University of Minnesota)
Robert Galliers (Bentley College)
Juhani Iivari (University of Oulu)
Frank Land (London School of Economics)
Allen Lee (Virginia Commonwealth University)
Kalle Lyytinen (Case Western Reserve University)
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Lars Mathiassen (Georgia State University)
John Mingers (Kent University)
Michael Myers (University of Auckland)
Mike Newman (University of Manchester)
Leiser Silva (University of Houston)
Geoff Walsham (Cambridge University)

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