

9-2018

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Hongwei Zhu

Univeristy of Massachusetts Lowell, hongwei_zhu@uml.edu

E. Vance Wilson

Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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Recommended Citation

Zhu, Hongwei and Wilson, E. Vance (2018) "AMCIS 2017 Panels Summary Report," *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*: Vol. 43 , Article 16.

DOI: 10.17705/1CAIS.04316

Available at: <https://aisel.aisnet.org/cais/vol43/iss1/16>

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AMCIS 2017 Panels Summary Report

Hongwei Zhu

Manning School of Business
University of Massachusetts Lowell
hongwei_zhu@uml.edu

E. Vance Wilson

Foisie Business School
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Abstract:

The 23rd Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS'17) included nine panels over three days. In this report, we overview each panel and provide the contact information of each panel's moderator so that readers can reach out to obtain additional information. The panels addressed a range of ongoing and emerging concerns of our discipline: one panel addressed IT security auditing, two addressed pedagogy, three addressed digital infrastructure, and another three addressed academic programs in analytics and information systems. We also discuss logistics of organizing panels, which individuals who organize future panels at AIS-affiliated conferences should find helpful.

Keywords: AMCIS 2017, Panels, Organizing Panels.

This manuscript underwent editorial review. It was received 12/06/2017 and was with the authors for 1 month for 1 revision. Christoph Peters served as Associate Editor.

1 Introduction

The panels track at the 23rd Americas Conformation on Information Systems (AMCIS'17) received 11 proposals. We (the track's two co-chairs) carefully reviewed each proposal and deemed that all submitted proposals needed to meet the following criteria that the program committee set:

AMCIS 2017 provides an opportunity for attendees to explore topics in a discussion panel format. We especially invite panels addressing the AMCIS 2017 theme, A Tradition of Innovation. A panel typically has a moderator (who poses several questions related to the topic) and three to four knowledgeable panelists with alternative views or perspectives on the topic. The plan should include time for attendee discussion. Panelists can be from the academy and/or from industry. Proposals on topics related to the conference theme, as well as other relevant topics of interest to AMCIS attendees, will be considered. (Association for Information Systems, 2017)

After considering availability of panelists, we included nine panels in the conference program. Appendix A provides the list of the nine panels. Following Ball (2002), we introduce the panels here so that readers can get a glimpse of the topics covered. The proceedings for AMCIS'17 publish the nine proposals. Readers can also obtain additional information by contacting the panelists via their contact information in the proposals. For convenience, we also include the contact information of each panel's moderator.

In addition to overviewing panel topics, we also discuss the logistics of organizing panels. This information should help future organizers and contributors of the panels track at conferences affiliated with the Association for Information Systems (AIS).

2 Panel Topics

Presented by 46 panelists, the nine panels covered a range of topics that drew more than 216 participants. Panelists primarily included scholars in information systems and related disciplines. Several panelists came from industry, and one panelist was an undergraduate student. The topics covered (with number of panels in parentheses) include: IT security auditing (1), pedagogy (2), digital infrastructure and society (3), and academic programs in analytics and information systems (3). We briefly summarize each panel in Sections 2.1 to 2.4.

2.1 IT Security Auditing

One panel covered IT security auditing.

Panel title: "The Role of Accounting and Professional Association in IT Security Auditing"

Moderator: Thomas F. Stafford (Louisiana Tech, Stafford@LaTech.edu)

The panel focused on the process of becoming certified in IT security auditing. Although professionals in accounting and information systems mainly seek certification, educators in these disciplines often also find it valuable. The panel also discussed cybersecurity management practices in organizations, especially at the board level, and the impact of blockchain technology. The panel also shared the experience of running an interdisciplinary cybersecurity research and executive education program funded by industry sponsors. Through discussion, the panel offered ideas on how to respond to the demand for cybersecurity and security auditing through research and education programs.

2.2 Pedagogy

Two panels covered information systems pedagogy topics: one focused on engaging undergraduate students in a technology-oriented course and another one focused on online education in different contexts.

Panel title: "Inroads to Engaging iGeneration Students in Innovative IS Education: Lessons Learned in the Trenches"

Moderator: Timothy R. Hill (San Jose State University, timothy.hill@sjsu.edu)

Based on a study of how current-generation students (the iGeneration) learn (Rosen, 2010), Hill and Nance (2016) developed a storytelling-based approach to improve student engagement in a technology-

oriented introductory information systems course. A fictitious student posts blogs about their internship experience at Salesforce throughout the semester. Students respond to the posts and help each other in a team environment. Learning modules help students to follow the storyline, and projects that involve the development of mobile apps and Web apps are related to what the fictitious intern has to address at work. Their data showed the effectiveness of the approach. Comprising several instructors and a student from three institutions that have implemented this approach, panelists shared the experience at their respective institution. Bringing student's perspective into panel discussion enhanced the dynamics of the panel: instructors are generally eager to learn the effects of any teaching intervention on students from students' perspective.

Panel title: "Online Education: A Topic at the Heart of MIS"

Moderator: Carlos Ferran (Governors State University, cferran@govst.edu)

Taking a knowledge management view, the panel considered online learning as technology-mediated knowledge transfer between instructor and learners and among learners. The panelists shared their first-hand experience in offering online courses that drew students from geographically dispersed areas (including from different countries), hybrid courses, and online PhD programs. They recommended practices for leveraging limited faculty and financial resources without lowering the quality of online education. The panel also called for more research on online education. Although the panelists focused on management information systems (MIS) programs, their experience can be applied to online and hybrid programs in other disciplines.

2.3 Digital Infrastructure and Society

Three panels covered a broad range of topics on digital infrastructure and its interaction with society: the first panel focused on several aspects of Internet of things (IoT); the second panel explored the interplay among industry, people, and government in an increasingly digital world; and the third panel discussed collaboration between the digital humanities community and the information systems community.

Panel title: "The Internet of Things (IoT): Platforms, Analytics, Security, Business Model, and Human Interaction"

Moderator: J. P. Shim (Georgia State University, jpshim@gsu.edu)

The title summarizes the IoT-related topics that this panel explored. After the moderator broadly described the IoT landscape, each panelist delved into one particular topic area to identify the trends, challenges, and opportunities. The panel discussed issues in both practice and research. The panel also offered insights on incorporating IoT into education programs.

Panel title: "How Would You Like Your Digital Future Served: Huxley-Orwell-Kafka Dystopian Style of Digitally Responsible?"

Moderator: Jean-Henry Morin (University of Geneva—CUI, Jean-Henry.Morin@unige.ch)

The panel argued that the notion of critical infrastructure (CI) must be broadened to include all forms of digital systems (e.g., IoT and cloud computing). Given various potential security and privacy risks that digital critical infrastructure exposes, one needs to consider ways to ensure that individuals and organizations use technologies responsibly. The panel framed the discussion by introducing a framework that considers three stakeholders in this increasingly digital society: industry, people, and policymakers. After discussing each stakeholder's characteristics and interests, the panel explored ways of avoiding pitfalls that may lead the society to a digital dystopia. This panel and the IoT panel complemented each other: this panel offered a systematic approach to digital infrastructure, whereas the IoT panel took a deep dive of selected areas of a family of technologies and their applications.

Panel title: "Digital Humanities and Information Systems: Strengthening a Tradition of Innovation"

Moderator: Jan H. Kroeze (University of South Africa, kroezejh@unisa.ac.za)

The panel introduced the digital humanities discipline to the information systems community. Digital humanities, an intrinsically interdisciplinary discipline, involves two aspects: 1) using technology and modern computing to enhance traditional research methods and 2) investigating impacts of digitization on humanities. After analyzing the information systems curriculum, the panel identified synergy between digital humanities and information systems. With examples of ongoing collaboration between the two communities, the panel discussed benefits and opportunities for collaboration.

2.4 Academic Programs in Data Science, Analytics, and Information Systems

Three panels covered different aspects of academic programs in data science, analytics, and information systems: the first panel focused on developing a better understanding of degree programs in data science/analytics, the second panel shared experiences of collaboration between a master's program in business analytics and industry partners, and the third panel focused on the requirements and approaches of getting various U.S. Government agencies to grant information systems programs a STEM designation.

Panel title: "What is a Data Science/Analytics Degree?"

Moderator: Jeffrey S. Saltz (Syracuse University, jsaltz@syr.edu)

The number of schools that offer degree programs in data science and analytics continues to grow. Such programs operate either in one academic department or through the collaboration of multiple departments such as mathematics, computer science, information systems, and software engineering. Not surprisingly, different universities interpret such degree programs differently; accordingly, their course offerings are not uniform (Jafar, Babb, Abduldat, 2016). Recognizing the ongoing trend and the need for better understanding of data science programs, the panel organized discussions revolving around three issues: 1) whether different types of degree programs with different focuses should exist, 2) whether a foundational core that every program must adequately teach exists, 3) and whether programs should teach data science course(s) for the broader student population. Experience and opinions shared at the panel provided insights about different viable approaches as a result of balancing between demands and resources.

Panel title: "Industry Partnership for Business Analytics Programs: Role of Advisory Board Members"

Moderator: Luvai Motiwalla (University of Massachusetts Lowell, luvai_motiwalla@uml.edu)

Industry is an important stakeholder in business analytics education. When launching a master's in business analytics program, UMass Lowell formed an Industry Advisory Board (IAB) to obtain industry input on curriculum and assistance in identifying opportunities for course and capstone projects. The panel comprised five IAB members who shared their experience and views of how they contribute to the degree program. Representing different industries and with different backgrounds, IAB members provided feedback to curriculum and helped with identifying opportunities for capstone projects. They agreed that such industry-university collaboration is meaningful and mutually beneficial.

Panel title: "Getting Information Systems Programs Classified as STEM"

Moderator: Mark Srite (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, msrite@uwm.edu)

Many stakeholders have made calls to improve science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. There are U.S. policies in place to incentivize investment in STEM disciplines in all levels of education. For example, STEM programs can receive benefits not available to non-STEM programs. The panel comprised AIS President Jason Thatcher and members from universities who had recently garnered STEM designation for their MS and PhD programs. Panelists shared their experience and explained how they obtained STEM designation by the authorities in the US. They also introduced initiatives of the AIS STEM Task Force.

3 Organizing Panels Track

As co-chairs of the panels track of AMCIS'17, we learned from the organizers of the previous year about commonly adopted practices. Conference and program co-chairs of AMCIS'17 also provided guidance along the way. We found this knowledge valuable, so we share it along with our experience and observations.

3.1 Solicitation and Selection of Proposals

A call for proposals (CFP) for the panels track usually goes out after the deadline for research contributions such as completed research and emergent research forum contributions to stagger the "marketing campaigns" of different programs and tracks of the conference so that they do not overwhelm mailing lists. In our case, we sent the CFP out to the AISWorld mailing list and published it on the conference website a week after the deadline for research contributions. We set the panel deadline to be

four weeks after we initially published the CFP (i.e., early April). We received submissions through email instead of the conference's submission system. We reviewed contributions and based our decisions on merit and fit with conference theme. We notified contributors with our decision on panel proposals on 21 April—approximately two-and-a-half weeks following the submission deadline. Authors had to submit their camera-ready descriptions of accepted panels before the end of April.

We provided a proposal template on the conference website so that the proposals had the same format as other contributions. We needed to provide such a template because the conference proceedings include accepted conference proposals.

3.2 Panel Preparation, Presentation, and Participation

One needs to ensure that panel presentation rooms have the correct setup. We arrived early and worked with the crew to correct several issues that errors in the work order caused. The final setup comprised tables and chairs to accommodate up to six panelists and three wireless microphones for them to share. We set up a standing microphone for the audience to ask questions. Despite the relatively large size of the room (~100 people capacity), we found that the panels did not need a standing microphone. The audience was highly engaged with spontaneous questions, and one could hear comments from anywhere in the room.

Panel moderators did an excellent job in delivering the panels. When certain panelists could not physically attend the conference, moderators found alternative ways to deliver their panels. Two panels substituted panelists with similar or complimentary expertise, which worked out very well. One panel involved two panelists who joined in remotely via Skype. It worked but with some interruption of sporadic network connections. The moderator promoted interaction by encouraging questions from the audience to remote and on-site panelists. It proved challenging to have remote participants.

Moderators and AIS conference staff estimated attendance. One panelist used the AISWorld mailing list to announce his panel on the day he presented the panel, which seemed a good way to publicize panels. The number of participants ranged from 12 to 47 with a mean of 24—good participation given that the panels occurred along with up to 17 other sessions at the conference.

3.3 Suggestions

Based on our experience of organizing the panels track at AMCIS'17, we offer the following suggestions for future organizers and contributors to consider.

- Publicize the panels track after the deadline for research contributions has passed. This staggered “marketing” helps to avoid overwhelming potential contributors so that they can focus on contributing their research papers to the conference. For AMCIS, publicizing the track in this way means that researchers have March and April to focus on panels, which offers good timing for Central and North American institutions. Contributors will learn the result of their proposal and be able to complete the final version of the proposal before the end of the (Northern Hemisphere) spring term.
- In the process of creating the final conference program, check with contributors to see if they still can present their panels as planned. Given that, on average, each panel has five panelists (including the moderator), making sure that all plan to attend the conference can be logistically challenging.
- When certain panelists cannot attend, finding substitutes is an effective solution. However, one should avoid virtual panels (in which some panelists join remotely) based on our experience.
- We did not know that the *Communications of the AIS* has a tradition of publishing panel reports until submissions for panel proposals had closed. However, we managed to communicate this information to accepted contributors. In the future, the CFP could include this information to encourage more submissions.
- Multiple contributors potentially propose similar panels in terms of topic. Although this situation did not arise this year, it is prudent to develop a protocol for resolving significant overlap. Possible options include: 1) suggesting proposers to shift their focus and 2) encouraging proposers to join forces.

- Logistically, we suggest that the organizers arrive at the conference rooms early to ensure the rooms have the proper setup. If the conference site does not provide a presentation computer, one should notify moderators ahead of time to bring their own and remind them about necessary adaptors to connect to the projector.

This list is certainly not exhaustive. AIS staff and panel organizers of previous years are great resources for additional assistance.

Acknowledgments

We thank the moderators and panelists for organizing and presenting their panels. Conference and program co-chairs provided guidance in the entire process. We also acknowledge the contributions of all panel participants for making the panels engaging and intellectually stimulating. We also greatly appreciate the information on panel participation that the AIS provided.

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Appendix A: Panels Presented at AMCIS'17

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About the Authors

Hongwei Zhu is an Associate Professor of Management Information Systems at the Manning School of Business, University of Massachusetts Lowell. Funded by National Science Foundation, MIT, and other organizations, his research focuses on data quality and analytics, with applications in finance and accounting. His work has appeared in MIT Sloan Management Review, Journal of Management Information Systems, Decision Support Systems, and transactions and journals of ACM and IEEE. He is an associate editor of the ACM Journal of Data and Information Quality. He holds a Ph.D. from MIT.

Vance Wilson is an Associate Teaching Professor in the Foisie Business School at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. His research focuses on organizational aspects of human-computer interaction with special emphasis on computer-mediated communication, online persuasion, and e-health.

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