Panel 9 The Efficacy of Information Systems Journals

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PANEL 9

THE EFFICACY OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS JOURNALS

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Panelists: Izak Benbasat, University of British Columbia, Canada
Bob Galliers, University of Warwick, United Kingdom
Hans Oppelland, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands
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1. INTRODUCTION

Are the academic journals in the IS field doing what they are intended to do? This is a simple question with complicated answers. It is even likely that disagreement would arise over the historically well-understood terms used to frame the question. For example, in this age of web pages, e-zines, listservs, and digital publications, what is a journal? There are those who hold that if it isn’t in print and on the shelves of a library then it isn’t an academic journal. Others hold that it is the review process that qualifies a journal, regardless of the technology used to distribute the resulting publication. Still others have held that the World Wide Web can be used to create a global collective of self-published working papers where quality and value can be determined apart from traditional “biased” refereed review processes and the journals those processes have engendered. There is also no shortage of views differing from the ones just described.

Extending the question, are print journals, because of their long lead times, a meaningful outlet for disseminating research results when a publisher could potentially publicize research results immediately on the Web rather than wait months or even years for the work to be seen in print? In the IS field, where technologies, issues, business opportunities, and strategic paradigms are changing every 18 months, how valuable is research that is two to three years old by the time of its publication? Are the long lead times necessary to ensure the quality of published research? It is frequently mentioned that articles published in our top journals are the touchstones of our discipline and that, as such, they must undergo a rigorous review and rewrite process that is inherently time-consuming.

For two decades, we grappled with the question of which academic fields held primacy in IS education and research. Does the recent announcement by Northwestern University’s Kellogg Graduate School of Management that its Tribune Professorship of Electronic Commerce and Technology was being awarded to a Marketing professor because, after a two-year search, no subject-matter qualified IS professors could be found,¹ mean that the traditional IS journals just don’t “get it”² when it comes to new IS opportunities and technologies? If we do “get it,” are IS journals showing research leadership in e-commerce, telecommunications, enterprise resource planning, and the host of other new technologies that are revolutionizing the foundations of economic activity, or are we simply watching the market? We need to reach a point where IS scholars and IS scholars can have a conversation about the role of IS journals in the dissemination of research results.

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²Ibid, paraphrasing a quote from Dr. Mohanbir Sawhney, the Tribune Professor of Electronic Commerce and Technology.
activity? Or are we losing primacy to disciplines that are quicker to react to and embrace change? Or are these topics simply not of interest to IS scholars?

At international conferences, it is not uncommon to hear scholars complain that the main journals in the IS field are focused on niches to the exclusion of non-American ways of viewing the IS phenomena. There also may be a lack of business (i.e., profit-making) and/or technical orientation in the research that would better distinguish IS journals from Sociology, Psychology, and other social science research outlets (as well as from Computer Science).

2. DISCUSSION FORMAT

The concerns articulated above, along with many others yet unspoken, collectively can be summarized by asking, “Are the IS journals serving the profession well?"

The moderator, Raymond Papp, will open with a five minute neutral assessment of the role traditionally played by IS journals. Each of the panelists will then have 10 minutes to address the topic from their own perspective. Any remaining time will be dedicated to a moderated open discussion, with the panelists and the audience invited to address one or more of the panelists.

Raymond Papp is an assistant professor in the Department of Management Information Systems at Central Connecticut State University. Before pursuing his Ph.D., Dr. Papp worked as a computer programmer, senior analyst, and management consultant. His research interests include strategic impacts of information technology, Internet-based learning, strategic alignment, and emerging information technologies. His publications have appeared in several academic and practitioner journals, and he has presented research at professional and executive conferences.

3. PANELISTS

Izak Benbasat is the CANFOR Professor of Management Information Systems at the Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. He was Associate Dean, Faculty Development, from 1996 to 1999. Dr. Benbasat recently published an MIS Quarterly article related to this panel topic (Izak Benbasat and Robert W. Zmud, “Empirical Research in Information Systems: The Practice of Relevance,” MIS Quarterly (23:1), March 1999, pp. 3-16). Dr. Benbasat is the editor-in-chief of Information Systems Research. He currently serves on the editorial boards of Information Systems Journal, Journal of Management Information Systems, and Accounting, Management & Information Technologies. He was the Editor of the Information Systems and Decision Support Systems Department of Management Science, and a Senior Editor of MIS Quarterly.

Robert Galliers has been a visiting faculty member at INSEAD and is Professor of Information Management at Warwick Business School, University of Warwick. Dr. Galliers has been actively involved with this topic and he has authored many articles on the subject of Information Systems research generally. His book Information Systems Research: Issues, Methods and Practical Guidelines, (Blackwell Scientific, Oxford, 1992) has been adopted by many doctoral programs worldwide. Among many other honors, Dr. Galliers was the Anbar Golden Page Award Winner in 1999 as editor of the Journal of Strategic Information Systems, the Information Systems journal judged to have the “best research implications.” Dr Galliers also serves on the editorial boards of a number of leading journals including European Journal of Information Systems and Information Systems Journal. He is the 1999 President of the Association for Information Systems (AIS).

Hans Oppelland is a professor on the Faculty of Economics at Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam. Dr. Oppelland has served as chairman of IFIP WG 8.2 (Organization & Information Systems) of the International Federation for Information Processing. He was co-chairman of the Program Committee for the 1990 International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) in Copenhagen, Denmark, and General Chair the Sixteenth International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) in 1995 in Amsterdam., and served as chair of the Executive Committee for ICIS in 1996. From 1992 to 1994, he was an Associate Editor for MIS Quarterly.
**Panels**

**Joseph Williams** is a Senior Internet Architect at Sun Microsystems. Formerly on the CIS faculty at Colorado State University, Dr. Williams has long been involved in telecommunications and e-commerce research. He currently serves on the editorial board of *IT Professional* and has been a guest editor for several journals.