

Research Methods and Approaches Introduction to the minitrack

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Research methods and approaches in organizational systems research are important when the challenge is to implement information technology effectively to support organizational systems. An understanding of organizational systems may be achieved through the use of research methods that 1) use theories to describe organizational systems, 2) provide sets of tools to enable real world problems to be addressed, and 3) enable the researcher to interact with the organizational systems that they study. At the same time it is also important to be able to isolate those key factors that affect the success of organizational systems. This mini-track presents nine unique papers that are ripe with seeds of animated discussion and debate.

The first paper entitled "Researching Teams With Multiple Boundaries", by Espinosa, Cummings, Wilson and Pearce provides insightful account of field research of software teams, product development teams and banking teams carried out in three global firms operating in the technology, telecommunications and financial services sectors. This paper raises salient methodological issues that researchers are faced with when investigating geographically dispersed teams often mediated by Information Technology. In particular, it highlights boundaries that require appropriate methodological consideration.

Researchers are often faced with ethical dilemmas in the conduct of Information Systems research. The second paper by Robert Davison entitled "Ethics and Research Methods" weaves together two philosophical perspectives, Teleology and Deontology, to inform an insightful analysis of IS research. This paper builds upon a sensitive issue that is very relevant to IS researchers.

The increasing use of Grounded Theory in IS research has sparked an impassioned discussion in the third paper by Anthony Bryant entitled "*Grounding Systems Research: Re-establishing Grounded Theory*". With its colorful use of the English language and bold argumentation, this paper is sure to spark animated discussion.

The fourth paper entitled "Randomizing Survey Question Order Vs Grouping Questions by Construct: An Empirical Test of the Impact On Apparent Reliabilities and Links to Related Constructs" by Dale Goodhue and Eleanor Loiacono provides very specific and detailed findings to well known problem.

Issues relating to the IS researcher in organisations are addressed in the fifth paper entitled "Adventures in the Field: Conducting an Interpretive Case Study of Strategic Management Consultants". Valerie Spittler provides a very, lucid and candid account of how she conducted her field research. This paper is particularly noteworthy because not only does it discuss issues affecting the researcher in the field but also ethical considerations.

Rosio Alvarez considers the "communication problem" between the analyst and client in the sixth paper entitled "Discourse Analysis of Requirements and knowledge Elicitation Interviews". In addressing a very real problem in a real organisation, the findings of this research point to the role of storytelling in analyst-client communication.

In the seventh paper entitled "Kevin Bacon, Degrees-of-Separation, and MIS Research", Paul Beckman measures the extent to which there is collaboration in the MIS research community. An interesting picture is painted along with issues relating to this method.

In their paper entitled "A Dialectical Methodology for Decision Support Systems Design", Wafa Elgarah, James Courtney and John Haynes extend the multi-perspective decision-making paradigm to "wicked" situations where there is high stakeholder conflict. This eighth paper provides insight into the factors affecting decision making by politicians, civil servants and government departments.

The final paper by Shera Kurina and Robert B. Johnston entitled "A Review of Approaches to EC-enabled IOS Adoption Studies" provides a rich overview of what is known about the adoption of Inter-organizational systems that are enabled by electronic commerce. Following an analysis of IOS studies that follow the factor approach vs. those that follow the processual approach, this paper vouches for a processual approach.

The papers in this minitrack shed new light on well-known and not so well-known research methods and approaches. The papers are well grounded in theory and ripe with data collection and analysis issues, lessons learned and guidelines. Taken together these papers, in their own ways, can help us do better IS research. We commend the papers to you as they promise to stimulate animated discussion at the conference and inspire future research efforts.