

Mini Track: 'ERP/EAI (ERP/II) System Issues and Answers'

Mini Track Chairs:

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The lack of application integration is widely considered as a barrier for the automation of business processes. During the last decade, organisations have turned to the adoption of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solutions to overcome this issue. ERP applications are integrated suites that are becoming mature technologies in many organizations. Accordingly, a body of literature has started to emerge focused on using ERP systems to consolidate and refine business processes within an organization (intra-company business processes).

Although ERP solutions support and improve business processes, they have limitations when they collaborate with other information systems. Normative literature shows that intra-organizational integration is achieved in cases where ERP systems have replaced most custom built applications. However, the integration of business processes and systems is complicated and difficult in those cases where ERP solutions co-exist along side other disparate intra-organizational applications. This issue is further complicated when automating inter-organizational business processes and value chains or after a merger or acquisition.

In recent years a new generation of software called Enterprise Application Integration (EAI) (or more fashionably called ERP II) has emerged to address the problem of technology-integration. EAI is based on a diversity of technologies such as message brokers and adapters to lead flexible and manageable integrated intra and inter-organizational IT infrastructures. ERP vendors have recognized the importance of EAI technology, with these vendors seeking to address these issues through proprietary solutions. Other vendors like SAP have developed their own EAI solution or collaborated with EAI vendors to provide one to the marketplace. A more active involvement by the academic research community is set to allow for the establishment of a more open and standardized EAI environment.

The idea for organizing a mini-track on ERP and EAI originated from a lack of forum to debate the issues associated with enterprises and the integration problems. The ERP/ERP/II minitrack is within the track 'Organisational Systems and Technology' for the second

year running and grew out of the ERP mini-track. The submitted papers were subjected to a rigorous review by academics and practitioners from Europe, Australia and the US working in the fields of ERP and EAI. The accepted papers reflect a variety of issues and perspectives in this emerging space.

The paper entitled 'Revisiting ERP Systems: Benefit realization' by Hawking, Stein and Foster explores the barriers and benefits in ERP implementations as firms moved in second wave value propositions. Findings from this research indicate that IT cost and personnel reduction are among the main benefits where change management and personnel related issues remain primary barriers.

Wagner and Antonucci investigate the area of public and private sector ERP implementations. They studied the ERP implementations in the State of Pennsylvania and found that much of the private sector implementation methodology is similar to public sector implementations. They also found that the best practices are similar with some organisational differences.

The issues of ERP lifecycle implementation management and support are discussed by Chang. This work attempts to empirically identify and explicate the issues and the concerns for individuals substantially involved with the SAP financial system within the government agencies. A repeatable methodology is also developed to fulfill the research aim.

Sundaram and Shafieri work on Multi-Enterprise Collaborative ERP and decision support systems. In doing so, they review the normative literature and propose a framework that brings together ERP and DSS and explains the mechanisms to integrate ERP and DSS at enterprise and cross-enterprise level.

The role of Enterprise Application Integration in extending Information Systems lifecycles is presented by Themistocleous, Irani and Kuljis. These issues are investigated through the use of a case study of a local government in London. The findings indicate an EAI adoption reduces the operating costs as well the redundancy of data and functionality in the studied organisation.