

Introduction to the Minitrack on Topics in Organizational Systems and Technology

R. Kelly Rainer

College of Business, Auburn University
Auburn, Alabama 36849-5241
rainer@business.auburn.edu

For many years, HICSS only accepted papers that fit into one of the predefined minitracks. This approach helped ensure that there was a core of papers and people at the conference who were interested in the same topics. HICSS became recognized for serving as an incubator for new areas of research. Groups of researchers could use HICSS to create critical masses to support the emergence and nurturing of new research areas.

The weakness of this model was that papers that did not fit into one of the existing minitracks were not accepted. To solve this problem, the Special Topics in Organizational Systems and Technology was created. It allows papers to be judged on their quality, not on whether they fit into a particular category.

This year, six papers were selected for inclusion in the minitrack. In the first paper, using organizational ecology as a starting point, Brian Pentland in "Towards an Ecology of Inter-Organizational Routines: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of Net-Enabled Organizations," outlines a framework for studying the ecology of inter-organizational routines. The goal here is to develop a framework for predicting the prevalence and impact of Internet-based technologies, such as ebXML, that are intended to facilitate the "Internet-enabled" firm.

Panos Louvieris and Paul Beynon-Davies in "A/B Dashboard: The Case for a Virtual Information Systems Development Environment to Support a RAD Project" argue that the dynamics of the digital economy fueled by the high rate of innovation in digital technologies demand that firms adopt an equally rapid and responsive information systems development model to keep pace. With reference to Rapid Applications Development (RAD), this case study considers the degree to which an iterative and participative information systems development process is amenable to being conducted virtually.

One vital aspect of mergers and acquisitions (M&A) is the integration of the two IT functions within the merging partners. Manjari Mehta and Rudy Hirschheim in "A Framework for Assessing IT Integration Decision-Making in Mergers and Acquisitions" offer a conceptual framework to understand why and when certain IT integration decisions are made during M&As. The

authors contend that three factors govern most of the IT decision-making during mergers: (1) the "aura" of Wall Street and the "promise" that the merging firms make to Wall Street analysts to achieve extraordinary cost savings within a restrictive time frame; (2) the acquirer's influence on the acquired firm, enforcing certain system choices on the acquired firm's employees; and (3) the goal to achieve business-IT strategic alignment.

Although integration is the primary benefit of enterprise systems, it also has disadvantages. The challenge is to understand and manage the negative aspects of integration. Les Singletary in "Applications Integration: Is It Always Desirable" offers the results from an investigation of application integration in enterprise systems.

Research on open source software has focused mainly on the motivations of open source programmers and the organization of open-source projects. Some researchers portray open source as an extension of the earlier open systems movement. While there has been some research on open-systems software adoption by corporate MIS organizations, the issue of open source adoption has received little attention. Jason Dedrick and Joel West in "An Exploratory Study into Open Source Platform Adoption" use a series of interviews with MIS managers to develop a theory of open source platform adoption. The authors contrast their results with prior academic and popular reports about the adoption of open source platforms, and offer propositions for future research.

The Internet and the World Wide Web are increasingly being used for survey distribution and administration in both academic and practitioner research. Scott McCoy in "Electronic versus Paper Surveys: An Analysis of Potential Psychometric Biases" reports on a study of the potential biasing effects of online versus paper surveys. The study provides an assessment of the psychometric differences between paper-and-pencil and online survey administration for the well-known Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) instrument. The results indicate that biasing effects can occur which significantly reduce the stability of an instrument across administration methods.