

DIFFERENT IS RESEARCH COMMUNITIES: ARE THEY COMPETITORS, COMPLEMENTS, OR IGNORING EACH OTHER?

Chair: Claudia Loebbecke, University of Cologne

Panelists: David Feeny, University of Oxford
Matthias Jarke, Fraunhofer Institute for Applied Information Technology
Ajit Kambil, Accenture Institute for Strategic Change
Peter Weill, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Rosalie Zobel, DG-Information Society, European Commission

1. INTRODUCTION

Many previous IS conferences covered the topic of rigor versus relevance in the field of IS research. We will extend the often quoted debate and relate it to the importance of the research community in which a particular piece of research originates.

A first intuitive hypothesis, regularly supported by IS academics, states that IS research delivered by universities and university research centers tends to be more rigorous. The leading academic researchers in the field rarely quote research results from market research or consulting companies, at least not after completing the introduction of their texts. On the other hand, the majority of companies and the press are certainly more aware and often seem to rather rely on practitioners' results than on academically gained insights. Finally, it is often a hidden battle for private and public funding of IS research.

Why are private and public customers more attracted to what seems on the surface to be more expensive and less academically rigorous reports prepared by the practitioners' world? Does it really only boil down to rigor versus relevance, and does relevance truly exclude rigor?

The panel represents four major IS research communities, the first two stemming more from the academic world and the last two representing the practitioners' side.

1. University professors/academics working in their respective departments
2. University-bound research centers, in most cases financed by external money either from companies or, rarely, from public sources
3. Non-university related IS/computer science research institutes, mostly financed by a combination of public and private money (e.g., Fraunhofer Gesellschaft, Max-Planck Institute, Mitre Corporation, INRIA, RAL);
4. Consulting companies, using the research reports as a teaser for demonstrating excellence in the field and thus attracting consulting/auditing customers.

Further, the European Commission, the largest IS research funding body in Europe, will be represented.

At its core, the debate will focus on the differences in topic choice, project/study acquisition, research strategy, respondents and site access, and expected, measurable outcomes including the choice of dissemination channel of the four IS research communities.

During the course of the panel, the practitioners, Matthias Jarke and Ajit Kambil, will promote the non-academic research communities, each coming from his specific background and representing the view and experience of his research community. They will act as proponents of statements which should be rather provocative to an ICIS audience. The academics, David Feeny and Peter Weill, will describe their research communities and point out the strengths and limitations. No doubt that they will defend the potential and the weight of what they, their institutions, and many ICIS attendees tend to produce and publish. Rosalie Zobel will represent the other side of the table and offer insights regarding the selection criteria and topical priorities with regard to the different research communities from the point of view of one of the largest public funding bodies. Claudia Loebbecke will introduce and moderate the discussion.

2 SESSION STRUCTURE

The panel chair will briefly introduce the topic and the panelists, and then moderate the discussion for questions and answers. The panel will be run in two rounds of controversial statements from the each of the panelists taking a maximum of 4 minutes each.

After both rounds, Q&A sessions will follow to obtain additional views from the audience. We expect the audience to argue in favor of typical university research, but we are also confident that university independent panelists will stress their point of view how and why their research is at least as much needed and sought after as the typical academic material.

3 PANEL PARTICIPANTS

David Feeny (*representing research community 1, university professors working in their departments*) is Fellow of Templeton College, University of Oxford, and Director of the Oxford Institute of Information Management. His teaching and research interests center on the connections between strategy, organization, and information technology. His work has been published in both academic and practitioner oriented journals, including a number of articles in the *Sloan Management Review* on CIOs, IT sourcing, core IS capabilities, CEOs for the information age, and e-business opportunity. He is also a regular contributor to the University's executive education programs. David holds an MA from Oxford University and an MBA from Harvard Business School. He was Vice President of Templeton College from 1995 to 1999.

Peter Weill (*representing research community 2, university-bound research centers*) is the Director of Center for Information Systems Research, Sloan School of Management, at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. CISR's mission is to perform practice oriented, rigorous research on how enterprises get (or don't get) business value from IT. CISR's funding sources include corporate sponsorship, NSF and other government agencies, and executive education. Before joining MIT, Peter was the Foundation Chaired Professor of Management (Information Systems) and the Director of the Center for Management of Information Technology (CMIT) at the Melbourne Business School at the University of Melbourne. He has published widely including books, articles, and case studies, and he is coauthor of *Leveraging the New Infrastructure: How Market Leaders Capitalize on Information Technology* and *Place to Space: Migrating to E-Business Models*, both published by Harvard Business School Press.

Matthias Jarke (*representing research community 3, non-university related IS research institutes*) is Executive Director of the Fraunhofer FIT Institute of Applied Information Technology in Bonn, Germany, where about 110 researchers investigate issues in computer-supported cooperative work, knowledge brokering, and life science informatics. The mission of Fraunhofer Institutes is to do applied research and technology transfer to industry. Further, Matthias holds the chair of Information Systems at Aachen University of Technology (RWTH Aachen). He has published about 20 books and more than 150 refereed publications, and serves as Chief Editor of the journal *Information Systems*. Matthias is an elected reviewer of the German national science foundation DFG, vice president of the GI German Computer Society, and member of the scientific steering committee for the upcoming German research funding program IT-2006.

Ajit Kambil (*representing research community 4, consulting companies*) is a senior research fellow and associate partner at Accenture, where he leads diverse research initiatives in electronic commerce, innovation, and supply chains. Prior to joining the Accenture Institute for Strategic Change (Accenture's "think and action tank"), Ajit was on the faculty of New York University's Stern School of Business. He has published his diverse management and technical research in both academic and practitioner oriented journals such as *Harvard Business Review*, *Sloan Management Review*, *Management Science*, *Information Systems Research*, *The Journal of the American Society of Information Systems*, *Communications of the ACM*, and *IEEE Computer*. Harvard Business School Press published his book *Making Markets: How to Profit from Online Auctions and Exchanges* in May 2002.

Rosalie Zobel (*representing a major international IS funding body*) is Director of the Information Society Technologies Programme Key Action II—New Methods of Work and Electronic Commerce. With a Ph.D. in radiation physics from London University, she held positions at ICL, the CERN, the Atomic Energy Research Establishment (UK), and the Max-Planck Institute for *Plasmaphysik* (Germany), where she became operations manager of the first Cray Supercomputer center in continental Europe. From 1981 to 1987, she worked in leading positions for AT&T in the United States and Japan. She returned to Europe in 1988 as Deputy Head of Unit of the European Community's IS Research Program ESPRIT Business Systems unit. She launched the EC initiative in Open Microprocessor systems (OMI) and was the Head of the EC unit on business systems, multimedia and microprocessor applications as well as EU coordinator of the G7 Pilot Project, Global Marketplace for SMEs.

Claudia Loebbecke (*panel chair and moderator*) holds the chair for Media Management and is Director of the Media Science Center at the University of Cologne. She is the elected AIS Council Member for Region 2 for 2001-2003. With a Ph.D. in Business from the University of Cologne and an MBA from Indiana University, Bloomington, she previously held the KRAK Chair of Electronic Commerce at Copenhagen Business School and worked at Erasmus University, at McKinsey & Co, INSEAD, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and the University of New South Wales. Claudia is a member of the eFactors Network of Excellence (IST-2001-34868) funded by the European Commission. She spends her sabbatical from September 2002 to March 2003 with Soumitra Dutta at INSEAD and with Peter Weill at MIT. In 2003, she will serve as ICIS program cochair.