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## Editorial

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### Albert H. Huang

Eberhardt School of Business,  
University of the Pacific,  
Stockton, CA 95211, USA  
E-mail: Ahuang@pacific.edu

### Benjamin Yen

Faculty of Business and Economics,  
The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong  
E-mail: Benyen@business.hku.hk

### John C. Windsor

**Biographical notes:** Albert Huang is an Associate Professor at University of the Pacific. He received his PhD in Business Computer Information Systems from the University of North Texas. Before joining the University of the Pacific, he was an Assistant Professor of MIS at the University of Hawaii, Hilo. His areas of research include systems assessment, user interface, computer-mediated communication, and other IT issues. He has published many papers in the journal of *Communications of the ACM*, *Information and Management*, *Communications of AIS*, and many others.

Benjamin Yen is an Associate Professor of Information Systems at the School of Business, The University of Hong Kong. He received his MS (Computer Science), and Mphil and PhD (Operation Research) degrees from Columbia University, USA. His research interests include Supply Chain Management, Web Information Retrieval, e-Procurement, Enterprise Resource Planning, and Scheduling Applications. He has published papers in many major information systems and operation research journals.

E-commerce systems are information systems that facilitate the entire process of an e-business transaction. They can be classified into several categories based on their functions, including: e-catalogs, transaction processing systems, customer services systems, e-procurement systems, and others. The various functional aspects of e-commerce systems are essential to the success of e-commerce. It is critical to develop systems that are not only functional, but also effective and efficient from both customer and technical perspectives. The purpose of this special issue is to provide a forum for addressing assessment issues related to the various aspects of e-commerce systems. This special issue of *IJEB* includes five research papers that contribute many ideas and insights. Each of the papers addresses at least one important aspect of e-commerce systems assessment.

*I. Assessment of trustworthiness.* In the traditional marketplace, consumers are used to put their trust on merchants with a significant physical presence, such as big retail buildings and large inventories. For e-commerce businesses, such characteristics are deemed as signs of inefficiency. Online merchants typically strive for lower overheads with zero inventories. Without the traditional indicators of trustworthiness, consumers might feel uncomfortable placing orders online. They need other indicators to make them believe that it is safe to conduct transactions with someone they have never met and probably will never meet in the future. In their paper 'What makes web sites trustworthy? A two-phase empirical study', professors Rattanawicha and Esichaikul address this important issue. They use a two-phase study to develop nine categories of factors and evaluate their importance to consumers.

*II. Assessment of disability access.* When computers were mainly text-based, visually impaired users could use screen readers to obtain information displayed on the monitor. Recently, increasing use of graphics and animations on Web sites makes screen readers obsolete. The information available on the Web for visually impaired persons is limited. In their paper 'An evaluation of Fortune 500 company home pages for disability-access', Gutierrez and Windsor tackle this important but often neglected issue. Their research assesses the home pages of the Fortune 500 companies for compliance with the two key laws pertaining to disability-access: the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

*III. Assessment of security.* With the growing threat of cyber terrorist attack, spam, and hackers, security is no doubt the most important IT issue in the minds of many executives. For supply chain management systems, a single security breach could affect multiple companies on the chain. Companies without a secure system are in fact putting its suppliers and customers in danger. In their paper 'Integrated e-Enterprise security design and implementation: a case study of e-service in supply chain management', Professors Shih and Wen provide an example of such evaluation. In addition to an Editorial: assessment of e-commerce systems assessment of security problems and concerns, their paper also presents an integrated e-enterprise security methodology that has guided the studied company to meet its security needs.

*IV. Assessment of e-service system design.* E-service systems are designed so that consumers are active participants, instead of passive service recipients. Consumers of e-service often perform key steps such as data entry in the service process. Consequently, consumer involvement becomes an important issue in e-service systems design. In the paper 'Consumer and co-producer roles in e-service: analysing efficiency and effectiveness of e-service designs', Professors Xue, Heim, and Harker propose a two-stage approach to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of e-services. They put emphasis on meeting customers' needs as both consumers and active participants in the service process.

*V. Assessment of e-business model.* Like traditional businesses, a viable business model is the key for the survival of any e-business. The last paper in this special issue is 'An e-business design and evaluation framework based on entrepreneurial, technical and operational considerations'. In this paper, professors Joyce and Winch integrate the emergent knowledge of e-business models and traditional strategy theory to form a framework for the evaluation and assessment of e-business models.

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