
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Professor Zahir Irani is the Head of the Business School at Brunel University (UK). He leads a multi-disciplinary group of International PhD students that research information systems evaluation and application integration. He has been recognised as the Hooker Distinguished Professor at McMaster University (Canada) as well as being a Visiting Professor at several Universities. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the established *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*. He has co-authored teaching text-books and written almost 200 internationally refereed papers and received ANBAR citations of research excellence. He has spoken at conferences and guest seminars world wide, and is internationally known for his scholarly work in the area of information systems evaluation and application integration. He is on the editorial board of several journals, as well as co-and-mini-track chair to international conferences. He publishes his scholarly work in leading journals that include: *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, Information and Management, Information Systems Journal, Journal of Management Information Systems* and *European Journal of Information Systems*.

Khalil Khoubati is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Information Technology, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan. He received a PhD on 'Evaluating enterprise application integration adoption in healthcare organisations' from Brunel University, UK. His current research focus is on the adoption of enterprise application integration in healthcare organisation and e-government applications. He is on the editorial board of several international journals such as *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*. He has published several research papers in internationally refereed journals such as *Journal of Management Information Systems* and *Journal of Computer and Information Systems*. He has presented several papers in international conferences such as HICSS, AMCIS, ECIS and EMCIS.

In this special issue of the *International Journal of Electronic Business* we are delighted to present eight papers that discuss a range of topics covering technology, tools and techniques. The papers in this issue are expected to significantly provide the better

understanding of how systems can be organised effectively to provide process information and information products within an organisational setting.

Miguel Ríos, in their paper 'Information technology evaluation practices in the SMEs: an empirical study in Andalucía' intends to find out how Andalusia SMEs carry out their information technology investment process.

Hussain Marri, Zahir Irani and Angappa Gunasekaran work together on 'A framework of justification criteria for advanced manufacturing technology implementation in Small and Medium Enterprises' suggests that one of the ways by which SMEs can achieve a competitive advantage in manufacturing is through the implementation of Advanced Manufacturing Technology (AMT). It has been claimed that SMEs frequently lack expertise, time, money, and support to upgrade their current manufacturing operations, introduce new technologies and methods, implement better quality control, and improve work force training. While AMT technologies have the potential to provide significant productivity and quality improvements, they also require relatively steep capital investment, including significant start-up and learning costs.

Vishanth Weerakkody and Steve Jones, 'E-government: a comparison of strategies in local authorities in the UK and Norway' examines the strategies adopted by the UK and Norway in the context of aligning central and local government plans for implementing e-government services. While technical, political and social issues are considered as key areas to be addressed in any e-government exploitation plan; this paper examines how different perspectives on e-government definition, strategy, awareness and related organisational change influence implementation. A comparative analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the two e-government initiatives using a SWOT analysis is presented. The paper concludes by outlining the main research findings and some areas for future research.

Shafqat Hameed, John Mellor, Atta Badii and Niyati Patel, in their paper, 'Factors mediating the routinisation of e-learning within a traditional university education environment' describes that blended learning approaches which balance the deployment of e-learning with other modalities of learning delivery such as instructor-mediated group learning etc offer the most flexible and scalable route to e-learning but that this requires the graceful integration of platforms for multimedia production, distribution and delivery through advanced interactive spaces that provoke learner engagement and promote learning autonomy and group learning facilitated by a cooperative-creative learning environment that remains open to personal exploration of constructivist-constructionist pathways to learning.

In the paper written by Tsipi Heart, Nava Pliskin and, Kathleen Foley Curley, they explain that much research has shown that alignment between business and IT strategies is a prerequisite to capturing IT value, but no previous study has suggested that contracting with an Application Service Provider can be an affordable means for achieving business and IT alignment. Two published models are used to discuss the dimensions of business and IT alignment and to demonstrate how such alignment can enable capturing IT value via a case study about HotelChain (HC), a hotel chain that has aligned its business and IT strategies by means of remote application services. The case also presents a somewhat innovative hybrid ASP-outsourcing solution, used by HC to mitigate risks.

Yin Tan and Linda Macaulay present a case study on the adoption and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) among SMEs within a locality of Greater Manchester, England. To encourage the local businesses in ICT and CIT

adoption, and for regional economic growth, a joint local government-university project was put in place. As a result, a purpose-built web portal for the local businesses was set up. It aims to bring all business services provided by the local Council into one convenient location and to provide a collaborative platform for the SMEs.

Souad Mohamed in their paper indicates that across all organisations, there is a dependency on key employees and there are insufficient succession planning and knowledge-capture activities. This causes time to be wasted and extra effort to be expended as successors either 're-invent the wheel' or compensate for knowledge that is forever lost from the organisation. It is important that organisations are aware of the different routes by which knowledge leaks from the origin and hence develop an effective strategic approach to protect knowledge and hence maintain barriers to entry.

Finally, the last paper performs a user study comparing four online databases (Emerald, Ebsco host, Science Direct and Google Scholar) with respect to certain variables developed for evaluating online databases. users were asked to solve a case study on management and using four different online databases. They were also asked to develop search strategies and evaluate the in terms of such criteria as: time for preparing search statement, interface, tools used during searches, breadth of coverage, depth of coverage, understandability of output, type of information sources, help properties, print, download and e-mail properties, and the time required for evaluating relevance. After evaluating online databases, the users rated online databases with respect to the utility, total performance and their satisfaction with the database.