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## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** Zachary Wong is a Professor of Management Information Systems and an Area Coordinator for Information Systems, Operations Management and Finance in the School of Business and Economics at Sonoma State University. Currently, he serves on editorial boards for four academic journals.

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Due to a rapidly changing competitive landscape, many organisations must work beyond their own four walls in order to gain a competitive edge. These organisations rely on the digital information super-freeway to collaborate vertically and horizontally, internally and externally, via new computing and communication technologies, bringing together their core competencies and operating as one unified entity.

One primary advantage of an electronically integrated organisation lies in the fact that it reduces or eliminates traditional boundaries, greatly enhancing organisations' abilities to take actions and make decisions quickly. These organisations have functions that are increasingly interconnected within themselves and with their partners in a highly coordinated operation. In such an environment, one unit's or subunit's actions could affect many others. As such, within the context of an organisation and/or e-partnership, decisions cannot be made in isolation; decisions require consultation and inputs from all those that can influence or be influenced by them.

This special issue serves as a forum for those involved in the study and management of electronic knowledge sharing, collaboration, and decision-making to exchange ideas and examples of best practices. We were very delighted with the receipt of a large quantity of quality articles for publication consideration. We would like to sincerely thank all authors who submitted papers and the many anonymous reviewers who assisted with their evaluation. The *International Journal of Business and Systems Research*

continues to promote quality research in information systems and business research, and welcomes submission of articles in these areas for possible publication.

This special issue marks an end to the four-issues-per-year format. Starting in 2010, IJBSR will publish six issues annually. We congratulate Editor-in-Chief, Dr Jason Chen, editorial board members, and colleagues at Inderscience for all their diligent contributions in making this possible.

We are very pleased to introduce to you the seven papers included in this special issue.

Francisco Antunes (Institute of Computer and Systems Engineering of Coimbra, Portugal), João Paulo Costa's (Coimbra University, Portugal) and Paulo Maçãs' (Beira Interior University, Covilhã, Portugal) paper entitled: 'Ascertaining group decision auditing capabilities', presents the design of a case study to assess the ability of a software tool to perform group decision auditing (GDA). The study uses the divergent information management system as the analysis artefact that implements the divergent information model, and provides a brief description of both model and tool and their links to GDA. It also describes the subject group, the objectives, the defined metrics for performance and the procedures for conducting the study.

Mina Park, Milam Aiken and Kaushik Ghosh (all of The University of Mississippi, Oxford, USA) investigate several influences upon electronic meeting participation including peer pressure, the desire to persuade others, past history with electronic chat rooms, etc., in their paper, 'A study of factors affecting electronic meeting participation'. Three groups of different meeting participant sizes using electronic gallery writing showed that, surprisingly, there were differences among the groups in the participants' attitude toward the meeting process, preference for reading comments, and perceived ability to persuade others during a meeting. Those who liked expressing their thoughts tended to generate more relevant and overall comments. Students who typed comments for entertainment purposes generated more overall comments, but they were generally not relevant to the topic.

Milton Borsato, Henrique Rozenfeld, Cassia Maria Lie Ugaya, Carlos Cziulik (Federal University of Technology, Parana, Brazil) and Carla Cristina Amodio Estorilio (University of Sao Paulo) explain that a great difficulty regarding the management of information systems is the fact that much of the knowledge available inside organisations can be found only in a non-structured form. Consequently, one of the major problems faced by industry is the low degree of interoperability (capacity that a system presents of sharing and interchanging information and applications). Their paper, 'An ontology building approach for knowledge sharing in product lifecycle management,' offers a proposal for facilitating knowledge and information sharing, with the ultimate aim to ensure transparent interoperability between systems used for the interchange of information throughout the entire product lifecycle.

Anna Holm and John Parm Ulhøi (both of Aarhus University, Denmark) argue in their paper, 'A framework for conceptualizing virtual organising', that the literature on virtual organisations and the virtualisation of business activities are characterised by ambiguity and inconsistency. Their paper identifies a conceptualisation of organisational virtualisation and advocates a set of propositions on how to understand and study it. They suggest that, rather than perceiving organisational virtualisation as a means to a new organisational design or form, it should be seen as a strategic tool for the partial or complete transformation from location-based and time-dependent business activities to a time- and space-independent organisation. In closing, they present a cohesive framework

for virtually organised activities, ways to understand them and suggestions for its potential use.

Niina Nurmi (Helsinki University of Technology, Finland) puts forward a comparative multi-case study to identify the context-specific work stressors in seven geographically distributed virtual teams entitled: 'Work stressors related to geographic distance and electronic dependence in virtual teams'. Despite an increasing attention to virtual teams, there is limited understanding of how these challenges, presented as virtual team boundaries, contribute to team members' psychological reactions and stress. A qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with 67 virtual team members revealed the virtual-specific work stressors: work overload, low accessibility and coordination problems, caused by spatial and temporal distance. Her study contributes to the literature on virtual teams and stress proposing that globally and nationally distributed team members experience unique job demands that might make coping difficult, thereby causing distress.

Norhayati Zakaria (Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia) and Derrick Cogburn (Syracuse University, New York, USA), explore the cultural behavioural patterns of online intercultural communication in a globally distributed collaborative environment in their paper, 'An exploration of the cultural behavioural patterns of online intercultural communication during globally distributed collaboration'. Data for the study are drawn from a public e-mail archive of trans-national civil society participants in the first phase of the UN World Summit on the Information Society. Based on Edward Hall's cultural theory, the findings in this study suggest that distinctive patterns of cultural behaviours were evident in the strategies, approaches and communicative mannerisms of people participating in the distributed collaboration under analysis. Besides high- vs. low-context behaviours, evidence of an emerging behavioural pattern called 'switching' was also found, in which an individual's behaviours changed depending on purpose, situation and people.

Stephen Hayne and C.A.P. Smith (both of Colorado State University, Fort Collins, USA), explore the effects of implicit and explicit training on team outcomes and processes in their paper entitled: 'Effects of training on collaboration: chunk sharing and performance'. An experiment was conducted in which physically dispersed teams made resource allocation decisions while supported with a shared virtual work surface. Teams needed to recognise patterns and collaborate to allocate their resources appropriately. Two different pattern-training methods were used; one presented the patterns in discrete elements (implicit) and the other as complete chunks (explicit). Dependent measures included outcome quality, resource allocation time and resource allocation conflict. Teams trained implicitly had significantly higher performance when compared to teams trained to recognise patterns as explicit 'chunks'.

It has been a great pleasure in putting together these eight papers. We sincerely hope that you will enjoy reading them and perhaps be sparked by ideas for continued research in some of these topics.