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## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** Ann Latham is an Associate Dean in the School of Technology at the University of Wolverhampton. She has been an academic at the University for over 25 years, and prior to this had experience working in IT in commercial organisations, designing and developing computer systems. She has extensive experience in the field of Information Systems Management and has carried out considerable research into the needs of the IT industry. She has published many journal articles and conference papers, and has spoken at several international conferences. She is a board member of the UK Academy for Information Systems and a council member of the Institute for the Management of Information Systems.

Pat Costello is Head of Regional Partnership Development and Head of IS and Security Research in the School of Technology at the University of Wolverhampton where she has worked for 15 years. From 2004 to 2011, her role involved working as ICT Cluster Innovation Manager at Advantage West Midlands (AWM) advising on policy regarding the innovation and R&D capabilities in the region's Universities available for technology transfer to industry. Prior to joining higher education, she worked in SMEs in a range of roles, including network manager and IT manager implementing technology solutions to support new business models. Having done extensive research in IT Adoption and technology transfer in SMEs she has published many papers on this subject and spoken at numerous international conferences.

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In recent years there has been an increase in the adoption of ICT in organisations, and this has greatly transformed the manner in which companies conduct business. ICT plays a crucial role in the present knowledge based economy, having a remarkable potential to contribute to sustained competitive advantage for the business. The importance of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) cannot be overlooked in the economic development of any country since they play a critical role in every country's economic development. For SMEs to survive and remain competitive there is a need to adopt and use Technology effectively, in order to attain some level of competitive advantage.

This is the first of two special issues of the journal which will discuss Technology Adoption, and we hope will serve to help stimulate and encourage research into the challenges and issues of this in SMEs. The papers in this issue have been selected for their special insights in regard to broader issues of ICT Adoption which can affect all SMEs.

The first paper 'A roadmap for microenterprise growth through Information Technology' by Mehruz Kamal investigates the adoption of IT in two micro-enterprises in Omaha, Nebraska, USA. The study uses an inductive interpretative case study to understand how micro-enterprises may adopt IT to grow their business and facilitate development. The paper's core contribution is in the methodology used, and the provision of guidelines for practitioners to help formulate effective strategies to address IT adoption and usage to assist micro-enterprises to grow.

The second paper 'At the heart or on the periphery: the role of Information Communications Technology (ICT) in small firms' by Briga Hynes investigates how small Irish firms use ICT. A survey of 48 owner-managers in the manufacturing sector in the Limerick area of Ireland, followed by 15 face-to-face interviews, obtained qualitative information on the behaviour and rationale for decisions made in terms of ICT implementation. Insufficient knowledge and skills were identified as a major reason for the low level of integrated usage of ICT, together with a lack of appreciation of the contribution it can make to the business.

We continue the theme in our third paper 'Exploring small firm IS adoption behaviour: from buddy to technology?' by Maria Woerndl and Philip Powell. This paper examines 16 SMEs across three regions in two countries, Wales, South West England and Southern Bavaria in Germany. The SMEs were selected for their information richness and accessibility, the research exploring how these SMEs came to adopt new information technologies. An exploratory case study approach was used, again using owners and managers as the focal point, with 42 semi-structured interviews being carried out. The study suggested that individuals at the SMEs predominantly used their existing professional and personal network contacts (buddies) when adopting new technology applications and services.

The fourth paper 'Issues of ICT adoption amongst SMEs in Nigeria' by Idisemi Apulu, Ann Latham and Robert Moreton takes an alternative viewpoint and considers issues behind the non-adoption of ICT amongst SMEs in Lagos, Nigeria. A self-administered survey of owner/managers of SMEs in Lagos, was the research method chosen, and 66 responses were received. The non-adopters of ICT were given the opportunity to express their reasons for non-adoption. The research reveals that the cost for ICT implementation was not a key reason, many SMEs indicating that lack of electricity and lack of skills were the major factors behind their non-adoption.

ICT adoption in Nigeria is again the focus of the fifth paper 'Challenges of adopting ICT solutions in a Nigerian healthcare SME' by Hilary Berger and Noah O. Adedeji. This paper describes an exploratory case study in a private hospital close to Nigeria's capital city. An interpretative multi-method research approach was adopted, with both quantitative and qualitative methods of empirical data collection being utilised. Although ICT solutions were implemented, there was some resistance where staff circumvented the new procedures by reverting back to manual processes. After identifying the key factors that negatively affected the successful uptake of the ICT solutions implemented, this paper determined 'why' such non-engagement continues to occur.

The final paper 'Explaining contextual factors affecting e-commerce adoption progression in selected SMEs: evidence from Botswana' by Alice P. Shemi and Chris Procter provides an interpretive account of how SMEs progress to adopt and use e-commerce. Six SMEs in Botswana were chosen for the multiple in-depth case studies. The findings show that contextual factors peculiar to each organisation provide explanations on how SMEs progress in e-commerce adoption, and that generally

organisational factors impact more than environmental or technological factors. The paper concludes by recommending to managers that they need to be fully aware of both the local and global markets that they operate in, whilst clearly understanding the internal resources and opportunities available.

In summary, this special issue has provided a snap-shot of some of the research currently being carried out into ICT adoption in SMEs. SMEs play a vital role in the economy of many countries, and it is generally acknowledged that ICT can play a vital role in the growth and sustainability of such companies. As such, we hope that this special issue will encourage continued research in this important area.