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INTER-ORGANISATIONAL SYSTEMS: Redefining the Research Agenda

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RESEARCH PANEL

INTER-ORGANISATIONAL SYSTEMS: REDEFINING THE RESEARCH AGENDA

Panelists:

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Issues:

Inter-organisational Systems (IOS) have been the subject of comprehensive study for over two decades resulting in a significant contribution to a cumulative research tradition. In recent years, however, the topic has become increasingly diverse and fragmented. Current IOS research explores both a diverse range of technologies and business models, including business-to-business (B2B) systems, e-business models, XML, web services and electronic marketplaces. This proliferation of research while necessary and welcome now threatens the very cumulative tradition from which it emerged. It could be argued that these disparate research agendas are all a subset of a cumulative IOS research agenda that has become fragmented based on function or technology. This raises the question of how can IOS continue to build a strong cumulative tradition, which on the one hand explores diversity, while on the other adheres to fundamental principles.

The proposed panel debate will provide audience members with

1. an understanding of current IOS research and an examination of the issues surrounding next-generation IOS such as B2B e-business models and XML web services
2. detailed arguments for and against the assertion that these next-generation IOS represent something new in IOS research
3. participation in the attempt to resolute the conflict in order to create a re-defined research agenda for IOS

Presentations:

In introducing the panel debate, **William Golden** will argue that IOS is one of the few areas in the IS field to have built a cumulative research tradition by tracing the roots of the discipline from theories of inter-organisational cooperation through studies of IOS technologies and applications. He highlights the fragmentation of the field in the 1990's and the divergence of research perspectives and industrial applications. He

proposes that it is now timely to re-examine IOS but that the IOS research agenda needs to be re-defined based on a resolution of core principles.

Patrick Finnegan and **Jeremy Hayes** will discuss recent research on B2B e-business models and the use of emerging technology to build IOS that support non-traditional value configurations and reciprocal inter-organisational relationships. They illustrate how e-business models demand the use of IOS to support inter-organisational connectivity between entities not readily classified according to Porter's value chain concept. They propose that relationships between these entities are commonly more complex reciprocal relationships as the notion of 'a linear sequence of activities' is outdated for certain types of business networks. They argue that such inter-organisational configurations demand more 'plug and play' IOS (enabled using new technologies such as Web Services, ebXML, .net etc), and conclude that business model configurations should be central to redefining the IOS research agenda.

Martin Hughes and **Alea Fairchild** will rebut the argument put forward by Finnegan and Hayes, and build on the electronic markets and hierarchies hypothesis based on sequential value-chain to value-chain interaction, to argue that the IOS research agenda should focus on understanding the contextual set of dyadic interactions between the nature of the underlying relationship, the nature of the exchange and the enabling IOS infrastructure in order to fully understand the risk consequences of IOS. They argue that while new business models are emerging they are still fundamentally understandable through the nature of the set of interactions. They further argue that it is necessary to keep a central focus on the impact of the IT artefact within the inter-organisational configuration if a cumulative tradition is to be maintained.

About the Panelists:

Alea M. Fairchild is Assistant Professor in Management and Computer Science at Vesalius College, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and Senior Researcher, Department of Information Management, Tilburg University. Her areas of interest are transaction cost economics, value networks and innovation management. She received her PhD in Applied Economics from Limburgs Universitair Centrum, Diepenbeek, Belgium. Her latest book, 'Technological Aspects of Virtual Organisations,' was published by Kluwer in August 2004.

Patrick Finnegan is a Senior Lecturer in Management Information Systems at University College Cork, Ireland. He received a Ph.D. from the University of Warwick for his research on inter-organisational systems planning. His research interests include IOS, IS strategy, and electronic business. His research on IOS has been published in international journals and at international conferences.

William Golden is a senior lecturer in Management Information Systems at the National University of Ireland, Galway. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Warwick. His research interests include inter-organisational systems and electronic commerce. His research on inter-organisational systems has been published in international conferences and journals.

Jeremy Hayes is a lecturer in Business Information Systems at University College Cork. His research interests are in the area of electronic business models, inter-organisational systems, and business agility. He has published his research findings at international conferences and journals.

Martin Hughes is a lecturer in Information Systems at the National University of Ireland Galway, Ireland. He is currently pursuing research on inter-organisational systems at the University of Bath as a Government of Ireland Senior Research Scholar. His research interests include inter-organisational systems, IS risk management and electronic commerce in SMEs. He has published his research findings at international conferences and journals.