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Panel 15 Pointers in Doing Writing Up Case Research

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PANEL 15

POINTERS IN DOING WRITING UP CASE RESEARCH

Chair: **Leslie Willcocks**, Oxford University

Panelists: **Line Dubé**, Université du Québec à Montréal
           Guy Paré, École des Hautes Études Commerciales
           Dan Robey, Georgia State University

Case research has been enjoying increasing acceptance in the information systems discipline for at least a decade, but misconceptions about it are evident in rejected case research submissions to journals and conferences. Some researchers, for instance, apparently consider the following to be synonymous with a case study: a journalistic report of facts, with no theory; a qualitative study, with no discussion of its research methodology or validity; a set of interviews; and any study that is simply qualitative or involves a single site. Another problem is that, not uncommonly, even a case research paper that includes a detailed research methodology section will, in subsequent sections of the paper, present the case study without regard to the methodology section, where these subsequent sections make no reference to and can even stand independently of the methodology section. In short, accompanying the growth in popularity of case research is the growth in misconceptions about how to do and write up case research.

The purpose of this panel is to provide pointers in how to do and write up case research in the information systems discipline. Dan Robey will offer remarks about the situation of a researcher who is initiating a case study and could choose either a positivist or interpretive approach for it. Robey will offer pointers about how to choose one or the other approach for a given study and how, in a continuation of the same research stream, the researcher could profitably change his or her stripes from study to study.

Representing a positivist perspective, Guy Paré will address the key decisions that a researcher must make in order to build incrementally more powerful IS theories from case study research. The issues that Paré will examine include the *a priori* specification of constructs and/or consideration of theory, the selection of cases, the overlap of data analysis with data collection, and the adoption of data analysis techniques and tools, to name a few.

Line Dubé will look at specific characteristics of interpretive case research and the impacts of these characteristics on the design of a study and the write up of a paper. She will cover the specific assumptions of interpretive case research, the philosophical traditions that interpretive case researchers can adopt, the role of conceptual guidance in an interpretive case study, and the importance of detailed descriptions of both the circumstances of the data collection and the data analysis technique(s) used.

Each panelist will have twenty minutes. The remaining half hour of the panel will be opened up to audience questions and participation.