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Celebrating HICSS50: The Past, Present, and Future of HICSS

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Abstract:

The Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS) celebrated its 50th anniversary (HICSS-50) in January, 2017. To mark the occasion and to pay respect to the significant standing of this conference in the global IS community, the *Communications of the Association for Information Systems (CAIS)* organized a special section on “Celebrating HICSS50: The Past, Present, and Future of HICSS Conference”. In this editorial, we share the guest editors’ perspectives on HICSS and summarize the three papers in the special section.

* Special section editors’ names are ordered alphabetically.

1 Introduction

The Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS) celebrated its 50th anniversary (HICSS50) in January, 2017. To mark the occasion and to pay respect to the significant standing of this conference in the global IS community, the *Communications of the Association for Information Systems (CAIS)* organized a special section on “Celebrating HICSS50: The Past, Present, and Future of HICSS Conference”.

The overarching theme of this special section concurs with *CAIS*’s aim to communicate matters that the AIS community finds interesting and valuable. We publish papers that capture the past, present, and future of HICSS, reflect on the standing of HICSS in the global IS community, and learn lessons from the history of this event for IS scholarship. We hope this special section will serve as a mechanism to facilitate communication about the history, evolution, and impact of HICSS and help continue the debate regarding its future role in shaping our community’s conduct and dissemination of research in general.

2 Guest Editors’ Perspectives on HICSS

In this section, we present the guest editors’ perspectives on HICSS.

2.1 Alan R. Dennis, Indiana University

I started attending HICSS in 1989 and have missed only one conference in 30 years. I have had the privilege of presenting papers, organizing mini-tracks, overseeing the Internet track, and, most recently, helping to coordinate the doctoral consortium. In my experience, HICSS has four characteristics that combine to make it one of my favorite conferences.

HICSS has breadth: HICSS has grown from a small specialty conference into a 1,000-person conference that spans multiple disciplines. This breadth of idea enables attendees to see new ideas from other disciplines, not just information systems.

HICSS has depth: HICSS routinely offers 20 parallel sessions that cover many research topics in great detail, which means that it always contains a session with a paper related to one’s research.

HICSS is interesting: HICSS strives to foster new and innovative ideas. The HICSS community strongly prefers new ideas that start research conversations (even half-baked ones) rather than well-done papers on tried-and-true concepts. Authors have presented many award-winning papers first at HICSS.

HICSS has aloha: aloha is complex word that means love, peace, compassion, respect, affection, kindness, and positive energy—the breath of life. HICSS attendees will always provide feedback on authors’ ideas and always with aloha.

HICSS is the oldest information systems conference and one of the treasures of our discipline. If you are a regular attendee, then I will see you there in January. If you have not yet had the opportunity to attend, then come join us.

2.2 Joey George, Iowa State University

Over its 50+ year history, HICSS has continued to grow. More people attend every year, and the number of research topic areas continues to expand. Initially, topics that form the center of HICSS’s mini-tracks are narrow and attract a small audience. The topics are peripheral to the mainstream, and they have not yet attracted much attention. But over time, many of these topics grow and attract a larger audience as HICSS mini-track chairs and attendees nurture them. After a while, the sessions that feature these topics fill up, the conference adds additional sessions in subsequent years, and the topic crosses over from peripheral to mainstream. Health IT represents a good example: it has become one of the most important and widespread research topics in IS in the past five years but appeared at HICSS for well over a decade.

HICSS can manage how it introduces and nurtures interesting but not-yet-ready-for-primetime topics through its unique organization. HICSS has always been extremely decentralized. Track chairs are virtually autonomous, and they freely share that autonomy with mini-track chairs. In addition, the mini-track sessions occur in the same room for half a day or all day. People interested in the topic, many of who are also presenters in the sessions, tend to stay in that same room for the entire time. This practice builds community and fosters the emergence of new ideas and new collaborations. In many ways, it feels like attending a small conference that focuses on the research you do and the people you work with.

Sometimes, it is surprising to step outside your session room at break time and realize your intimate research workshop is really a small part of a much bigger, dynamic conference.

2.3 K. D. Joshi, Washington State University

As I reflect on my involvement at HICSS for the past two decades, I realize that one can celebrate HICSS-50 in many different ways. I choose to celebrate its *structures* (i.e., the pre-conference workshops and symposiums, coffee breaks, mini-track and track chairs' meetings, authors and mini-track chairs' meetings, evening receptions, insistence on short presentations and long discussions) that collectively and deliberately seed and grow communities of scholars who share a common interest, particularly in nascent research streams. In the mid-1990s, I saw and experienced firsthand how these structures supported a community of knowledge management scholars whose work struggled to gain legitimacy and credibility in the AIS community. Jennex, Dittes, Smolnik, Croasdell, and King (2018) document this community's birth and growth well in their special section paper. I hope this special section inspires emerging AIS scholars to continue the HICSS tradition of planting, nurturing, and growing fresh research streams that they are passionate about yet reluctant to pursue because the discipline has yet to adequately recognize and institutionalize them. Preserving HICSS generative structures require that the next generation of IS scholars are more audacious and more open to pushing the boundaries of what constitutes IS research. If they do, HICSS future will be brighter than its past.

2.4 Jan Recker, University of Cologne

When I was approached with the question whether *Communications of the Association for Information Systems* would be interested in running a special section in honor of the 50th installment of HICSS, my reply was an immediate and empathetic “yes, of course”—an unusual answer to give, really. HICSS has not been an AIS-affiliated conference. Personally, I have not actually been part of that long and proud history—I only ever attended one event in 2016.

Yet, I firmly believe I have made the right call. HICSS is an important, longstanding member of the global information systems community. Its place as a forum for groundbreaking ideas, “different” methods and approaches, unusual ideas, and multidisciplinary has always been a stalwart of that event. The community HICSS attracts has steadily grown and everything that goes with HICSS (e.g., the intense paper discussions, the debates in panel sessions, the location, and even the gala dinner traditions) has firmly been planted deep in our community's culture. I recall many situations when I came across and read thought-provoking and refreshingly original papers first presented at HICSS. Often, I later found that these papers made their ways into the top journals in our discipline and in the top journals in our neighboring disciplines. I do believe that, in a world of globalized practices, routines, and structures, we need events and forums that break with the norm and offer different perspectives and interactions and that maintain their local routines, structures, and culture. HICSS with its unique balance of a firm location and structure yet emergent, fluid program and focus will continue to help our discipline improve, innovate, and progress, so it is time to step back and celebrate and thanks HICSS for everything it has contributed to global IS scholarship.

2.5 Jason Thatcher, University of Alabama

HICSS holds a unique place in the information systems discipline: it occurs in the same location every year. While ICIS rotates across continents, HICSS showcases the islands of Hawaii year in, year out on a predictable schedule. Each year, participants know that they can count on Hawaii serving as a platform for sharing ideas, consistently reasonable peer review processes, and best-in-practice workshops for acquiring new research and teaching skills.

This “predictably beautiful location” for a “high-quality conversation” has helped HICSS become a touchstone for innovation in our discipline. Many participants, wanting to visit Hawaii, attend once only to find ways to return again to share ideas and advance their work. HICSS fosters groundbreaking, multi-year projects, vibrant panel sessions, and cutting-edge research, and it features presentations by a cross-section of scholars from every continent and all ranks in the discipline. Consequently, HICSS serves as an important channel for ideas jumping across disciplines and spreading throughout the global academic community. In any given year, you will find scholars from disciplines such as computer science, informatics, engineering, and information systems engaging in conversations that impact how we study emerging topics such as social media or blockchain and enduring themes such as disaster management

and e-government. Moreover, you will find members from many professional associations, such as the Association for Information Systems, INFORMS, IEEE, and AoIR to name a few.

For more than 50 years, HICSS has served as a forum for scholarship, interdisciplinarity, and cross-association relationships. And as an inclusive, forward-looking platform for ideas, we can all plan on it continuing to play this special role in our academic community for years to come.

3 Special Section Papers

The special section includes three papers that we briefly summarize below. The three papers presented in this special issue do not represent the entirety of HICSS history but provide a snapshot of its presence.

The first paper, “Knowledge, Innovation, and Entrepreneurial Systems at HICSS” by Murray E. Jennex, Sven Dittes, Stefan Smolnik, David Croasdell, and David King, offers a longitudinal view of the knowledge, innovation, and entrepreneurial systems (KIES) track’s growth. This paper illustrates how a research community leveraged HICSS to develop a rich history of high-quality scholastic inquiry in the knowledge system, knowledge management, innovation systems, entrepreneurial systems, organizational memory, and organizational learning research areas.

The second paper, “Learning From the History of Business Intelligence and Analytics Research at HICSS: A Semantic Text-mining Approach” by Olivera Marjanovic and Barbara Dinter, presents the 28-year history of HICSS’ longest-running minitrack on BI and BA to identify its main research themes and reflect on their evolution over time. These insights provide research grounding for the current thinking about big data and offers a practical method of combining a semantic text-mining tool (Leximancer) and collaborative sensemaking.

The third paper, “The Trajectory of IT in Healthcare at HICSS: A Literature Review, Analysis, and Future Directions” by Bahae Samham, Tara Crampton, and Regina Ruane, reviews and analyze HICSS health information technology (HIT) papers from 2008 to 2017 and provides future directions for research in the area.

All three papers represent excellent exemplars for the scholarship, structure, and outcomes of research that has been associated with HICSS over past decades. We thank everyone involved with HICSS for their contributions to scholarship and look forward to the next 50 years.

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About the Authors

Alan R. Dennis is Professor of Information Systems and holds the John T. Chambers Chair of Internet Systems in the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University. He was named a Fellow of the Association for Information Systems in 2012. He has written more than 150 research papers, and has won numerous awards for his theoretical and applied research. His research focuses on three main themes: team collaboration; fake news on social media; and information security. He is the co-Editor-in-Chief of *AIS Transactions on Replication Research*. He also has written four books (two on data communications and networking, and two on systems analysis and design). He is President Elect of the Association for Information Systems.

Joey F. George is Professor of Information Systems and the John D. DeVries Endowed Chair in Business in the College of Business at Iowa State University. His research interests focus on deceptive computer-mediated communication, computer-based monitoring, and group support systems. He was the Editor-in-Chief of *Communications of the Association for Information Systems* from 2006-2009, Senior Editor for *MIS Quarterly* in 2005, and Senior Editor for *Information Systems Research* from 2009-2013. He is a past president of the Association for Information Systems (AIS), and, in 2008, he was selected as a Fellow of AIS. In 2014, AIS recognized his work with the LEO lifetime achievement award.

K. D. Joshi is the Philip L. Kays Distinguished Professor of Information Systems and Chair of the Department of Management, Information Systems and Entrepreneurship at Washington State University. She received her Master of Science in Engineering from the University of Michigan and received her Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration (Decision Sciences and Information Systems) from the University of Kentucky. Her research interests focus on IT Workforce Issues, Broadening Participation in STEM, Knowledge Management, Crowdsourcing, IT-Enabled Innovation, Value Sensitive Designs, and Health IT. Her published research is cited over 5,100 times (an h-index of 24) according to Google Scholar and her research has been featured in numerous media outlets such as PBS NewsHour, Salon.com, Vancouver Business Journal, London School of Economic Business Review, Puget Sound Business Journal, & Military.Com. She has been a Principal Investigator or Co-Principal Investigator on grants totaling over US\$5M from the National Science Foundation (NSF). Her research has appeared in journals such as *MIS Quarterly*, *Information Systems Research*, *Journal of the AIS*, *Decision Support Systems*, *IEEE Transactions of Engineering Management*, and *Communications of the ACM*.

Jan Recker is Chaired Professor of Information Systems and Systems Development at the University of Cologne and Adjunct Professor at Queensland University of Technology. He is presently Editor-in-Chief of the *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*. His research focuses on systems analysis and design, digital innovation & entrepreneurship, and information systems for environmental sustainability.

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