

Workshop on Publishing in Information Systems

Wuhan International Conference on E-Business,

June 1st, 2008

Robert Davison

Dept of Information Systems

City University of Hong Kong

Welcome!

- Thank you to all of you for attending!
 - I look forward to your active engagement in the workshop
 - Please feel free to raise questions at any time

Motivation

- My own experience as author, editor and reviewer – of IS research in and about China
- I am the co-editor of a special issue of the *Information Systems Journal* on Information Systems in China
- My strong desire to encourage high-quality IS research by Chinese scholars like you
- A means of ensuring that you understand the procedures and standards associated with international IS research.

The International Journal Market

- There are over 100 journals that publish IS research!
 - Many focus on IS alone; some publish IS articles occasionally, but focus on other business disciplines
 - Some publish “mainstream” IS research, others occupy specific niches such as ‘decision making’ or ‘expert systems’
 - Each journal has its own mission, its own readership
 - You must write appropriately for each journal!

Some Mainstream Journals

- MIS Quarterly
- Information Systems Research
- Information Systems Journal
- Information & Management
- Information & Organization
- Information Technology & People
- European Journal on Information Systems
- Journal of Information Technology
- Journal of the AIS
- Communications of the AIS,

Niche Journals

- Decision Support Systems
- Group Decision & Negotiation
- Journal of Global Information Management
- Journal of Global IT Management
- Scandinavian Journal of Information Systems
- Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries
- Journal of Technology Management in China
- Journal of E-Commerce Research

Some Non-IS Journals that publish IS articles

- IEEE Trans. Engineering Management
- IEEE Trans. Professional Communication
- IEEE Software
- Expert Systems & Applications
- Communications of the ACM
- China Management Studies
- Academy of Management Journal / Review
- Academy of Management Executive
- Organization Science
- Management Science
- Journal of Business Ethics

Rigour and Relevance

- Should IS research be rigorous or relevant?
 - The last 15 years have seen fierce debate!
 - Which is more important?
- Rigour
 - Undertaking research according to strict standards and controls appropriate to the methodology employed.
- Relevance
 - Ensuring that the research is useful, consumable, readable, meaningful, value-adding for an identifiable audience.

Rigour and Relevance

- Actually, both are equally important and neither should outweigh the other.
- Research that has a high standard of rigour, yet is so artificial that it bears no relation to reality, may be of little use to readers.
- Research that is highly relevant, addressing complex problems, yet is so poorly conducted that we cannot have any confidence in the findings, is also of little use to readers.

For Example

- I am interested in the Decision Styles of Senior Executives
- This is not well reported in the research literature
- It seems that this is a difficult topic to study
- RQ: How do Senior Executives Make Decisions?

Method 1

- I can't find any executives. so I ask my undergraduate students to pretend to be executives and give them some sample 'executive' problems to solve.
- I make careful use of theory to frame the study and carefully control the way technology is used in decision support, finally using a survey to assess their decision styles.
 - But, can I **generalise** my findings to executives?
 - Can anyone really use the outcomes of this research?
 - Did we learn anything about **executive** decision styles?

Method 2

- I am lucky enough to get access to a MNC and its senior executives to study their decision styles. I quickly start to interview them and can identify many interesting aspects of their decision making environment that have never been reported in the literature previously. After completing the interviews, I write up the paper – but no journal will publish it.
 - Where is the theory? they ask.
 - How can you explain your results?
 - How did you develop your interview protocols?
 - Was this a case study, ethnography,...?
 - What additional factors that you failed to study might explain decision styles?

Solutions 1

- A careful review of the literature about decision making by senior executives.
- Methodological & Epistemological Considerations
 - Survey? Case Study? Ethnography?
- Survey:
 - A carefully developed instrument, based on a research model that reflects one or more theories with an appropriate set of theoretical constructs, using questions that directly relate to the decision making experiences of executives.
- Case Study
 - A carefully developed set of interview protocols, informed by a theory, that will enable me to extract relevant data about decision making

Solutions 2

- Ethnography
 - A carefully designed set of research protocols that will govern how I interact with senior executives, how I collect data, what additional sources I will use.
- Population
 - Real executives, not students.
- Analysis and interpretation of the findings by both researchers and executives, with reference to the prior literature.

Rigour & Relevance

- Most good journals seek
 - to balance rigour and relevance
 - to publish articles that are executed professionally and persuasively.
 - to publish articles that add value to an identifiable audience, ideally one that includes both researchers and practitioners.

Both, not Either/Or

Rigour & Relevance in the context of IS Research in China

- Research should be relevant to organisations and/or citizens in China
 - i.e. study them directly and produce findings that are relevant to them, as well as internationally
- Research should be conducted carefully, following principles appropriate to the methodology used

More generally...

- Who would want to read this article?
- Who cares?
- What would they learn?
- How can the study be improved?



- How can you **motivate** a study effectively?
- How can you **lure** readers to read and appreciate your work, to cite your work and to apply it?

IS in China: Topics 1

- Issues in managing hard (e.g., telecommunication networks) and soft (e.g., human resource, intellectual property protection) IS infrastructure
- Surveys of IS management trends and practices in Chinese enterprises
- Diffusion of IS standards or e-commerce/e-government initiatives
- IS management strategies in balancing the dual needs for global integration and local requirements
- Success or failure stories of IS development, implementation or adoption in Chinese enterprises

IS in China: Topics 2

- Cross-cultural studies contrasting China and other countries (but with significant implications for China)
- IT studies that unpack heterogeneous China, examining the disparity across economic regions & provinces
- The unexpected consequences of the tremendous growth and diffusion of IT
- State of global IT services offshoring in China and the related challenges or implementation experiences
- Success or failure stories of IT techno-preneurial ventures and the related challenges
- State of IT innovations/R&D incubation and the dynamic tension between local players and foreign multi-nationals

IS in China: Topics 3

- Power and politics in IS implementation, use, abuse, success, failure
- Case studies of specific organisations and the way they use IS
 - Alibaba, Lenovo, Sohu,
- Case studies or surveys of ethical issues associated with IS use in organisations
- How does IT transform society?
- Virtuality in Chinese organisations.
- The role of weblogs in Chinese society.

IS in China: Specific RQ 1

- How do Chinese organisations manage knowledge? How do they attempt to improve knowledge creation, retrieval, sharing, and application?
- The answer will involve both technical and behavioural/psychological components.

IS in China: Specific RQ 2

- How do CIOs in Chinese organisations manage information resources? What conflicts do they experience with other senior managers? What difficulties do they encounter as they try to encourage information sharing and use practices among employees? How do they deal with these conflicts and difficulties?
- Interviews, surveys, case research, action research, ethnography.

IS in China: Specific RQ 3

- What is the experience of large Chinese organisations that are setting up distributed operations? What is the role of IS? Is the organisation comfortable to be virtual? How do employees adapt their work styles with technology so as to fit the new virtual environment? How about distributed management?

IS in China: Specific RQ4

- How useful are DSS and EIS for **senior executives** in China?
- Do Western DSS/EIS models apply?
- How about senior executives of Western firms operating in China? Or Western-trained senior Chinese executives?
- To what extent does guanxi mitigate against the usefulness of DSS/EIS?
- Compare different parts of China for these issues.

Style

- The Construction of Articles
 - From Abstract through Design to Conclusions
- Stylistic Conventions in Writing
 - The Art of Being Concise, Precise and Persuasive
 - 8000 words is a good target
 - Spelling and Grammar
 - You want to create a good impression
 - Consistency
- Referencing
 - Completeness and Appropriateness
- Plagiarism – and how to avoid it.

Construction

- Most articles closely follow a template
 - Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review, Theoretical Framework and Research Design, Methodology, Results and Analysis, Discussion, Conclusions, References
 - Variations occur in Research Essays, Opinions, and non-Empirical Research
- There should be a logical flow of ideas and arguments throughout the article
- All material from other authors (or from yourself) should be cited appropriately.

Methodological Principles

- Refer to specific methodological principles guidelines that are appropriate
 - Case Studies – Yin;
 - Surveys – Benbasat/Moore;
 - Action Research – Davison et al.;
 - Ethnography – Myers;
 - Experiments – Straub et al.

Precise & Concise

- Most journals have a word limit of around 8000 words
- Most reviewers don't like authors who are vague, dense, or overly complicated in their style
- Try to write clearly and precisely
 - Don't use bullet points (except for lists)
 - Don't write 6-line sentences (or 6 page paragraphs)
 - Try to avoid unnecessary jargon
 - Always ask a friend/colleague to read your work and to offer constructive feedback! They will see things that you can never see – because you know your own work too well.

Persuasion

- You need to persuade reviewers (and editors) that your article is worth publishing
 - Many journals **reject** up to **85%** of submissions
 - Articles should offer something new, something interesting, and something unintuitive
 - Articles should advance our knowledge
 - They should also position their contribution in the context of prior work

Consistency

- Use the same font, the same version of English, the same formatting style for headers and titles
- Make sure that references are consistently presented
 - And that all references are complete
- Make it easier for the reviewer (and reader) to read your work
- Linguistic perfection is not essential, but an article must be readable, spell checked and grammatically correct.

Referencing

- Most journals want to increase their citation count
 - And so most journals like to see their own papers cited
- If you want to publish your article in, e.g., DSS, then make sure that you cite some DSS articles in your literature review.
- Don't over or under reference.
 - 15 references suggests that you have missed quite a lot
 - 105 references suggests that you are not very selective in what you choose to include
 - Each reference should be relevant
 - Recent (post 2004) references indicate that you know the **contemporary** literature

Referencing Styles

- Styles vary from journal to journal
 - Consistency is more important
 - Look at a recent copy of the journal and follow the style
- Ensure that you include all relevant details
 - Author names, date, title, publication name, volume, issue, pages
 - Author names, date, book title, book publisher
 - Author names, date, conference paper title, conference name, location of conference, pages.

For Example

1. Davison, R.M., Vreede, G.J. de and Briggs, R.O. (2005) On Peer Review Standards for the Information Systems Literature, *Communications of the AIS*, **16**, 49, 967-980.
2. Davison, R.M. (2003). “Discussants and the Quality of Interaction at Conferences”. *Communications of the AIS* 11 (7), 128-136.
3. M.G. Martinsons and R.I. Westwood, “Management Information Systems in the Chinese Business Culture: An Explanatory Theory”, *Information & Management*, vol. 32, no. 4, pp. 215-228, 1997.

Plagiarism

(from Kock and Davison, 2003)

- Taking someone else's work as your own
- Not providing appropriate citation information to indicate authorship correctly.
- Plagiarism is a serious academic offence
- An author who plagiarises is likely to find
 - that his/her article is automatically rejected
 - irrespective of the quality of the work done
 - that he/she is blacklisted from that journal (and other journals) in the future
- Plagiarism is **very easy** to detect

Reviewing & Reviewers

- Learning how reviewers think and work,
 - including evaluation criteria
 - and rejection criteria
- Understanding the importance of the review process
 - including why we review articles
 - and who does the reviewing
- Developing competence in responding to reviews

Reviewing & Reviewers

(from Davison et al., 2005)

- Whatever you write, it will be reviewed by your peers
- They will judge it, comment on it, and ultimately make a recommendation
 - To accept as is (rare)
 - To ask for revisions: major or minor (common)
 - To reject without further consideration (common)

Understanding Reviewers

- Helps you, as an author, predict their likely behaviour
- Helps you meet their likely expectations
- Increases the chance that your paper will be accepted, not rejected.
- Please read the paper associated with these slides!

Why Review?

- So as to improve the quality of published work, via constructive feedback.
- So as to reduce the chance that poor quality research is published
- To reduce the workload of editors a bit
- And incidentally to reduce potential bias
 - Many people share the task of assessing paper quality

Who Reviews?

- People who are experts in the field
 - Topic
 - Methodology
 - Specialist areas
- Usually 2-3 reviewers on each paper
- More or less senior/experienced
- Professors or PhD students

Blindness

- Most journals adopt a “double blind” review process
 - The authors do not know who the reviewers are
 - The reviewers do not know who the authors are
 - But the editor knows the identity of both
- This does not guarantee the quality of the final review, but the reciprocal anonymity protects the privacy of both parties.
- The editor must select reviewers carefully, and then check that they have been fair in their assessment.
- Occasionally, poor quality reviews are discarded.

Attributes of Good Reviewers

- Competent
- Reasonable in their requests
- Unbiased/unprejudiced and open minded
- Ethical in their behaviour
 - Especially re: conflicts of interest
- Not too critical, nor too lenient
- Persuasive in their arguments/comments
- Diligent and timely

Attributes of Good Reviews

- The paper should be summarised
 - To show that the reviewer understood the paper
- The strengths of the paper should be identified
- All advice for improving the paper should be actionable
 - If there are weaknesses, precisely what should the author do about them?
 - Which references should the author read?
 - The reviewer should avoid polemic or his/her own agenda.
 - It is the author's paper, not the reviewer's paper.

Evaluation Criteria for Papers

- Is the topic important and interesting? Will anyone benefit from reading this paper?
- Does the paper make an original contribution to knowledge?
- Is the topic suitable for the journal?
- Is the paper sufficiently detailed for reviewers to assess its quality?
 - If there are major omissions, then reviewers may request additional information, or may reject the paper altogether.

Evaluation Criteria for Papers

- Ethics
 - Did the researcher act ethically?
 - Did the researcher act to protect the interests of data subjects (individuals or organisations)?
- Research methods
 - Are the research methods used appropriate given the nature of the research problem?
 - Are the data collection and analysis methods appropriate?

Evaluation Criteria for Papers

- Are the references correct, and up to date?
- Is the presentation clear, concise and grammatically correct?
- Are the concepts and arguments well organised, structured and defensible?
- Are the findings/contributions appropriately positioned with respect to the existing literature in this area?

Rejection Criteria

- The article is uninteresting and no one would want to read it
- The problem researched is trivial, irrelevant, or not a problem at all
- The article is so poorly constructed that a completely new start is required
 - Or the arguments are so weakly/subjectively developed as to be meaningless
- There are serious ethical concerns about the way the research was conducted
 - E.g. plagiarism, use of deception, illegal/unethical practices, failure to protect research subjects' privacy

Reviewing

- Each article that you submit is reviewed by 2-3 others.
- So, what is your responsibility, as a reviewer?
- Reviewers are human, with limited time and energy.
 - So try to make their life a little easier.
 - Submit your best work! Don't assume that the reviewers will fix all the problems for you.
 - Get someone else to read your work before submission!

How to Respond to Reviewers?

- Make sure that you address everything that they ask for
 - Even if you choose to dispute their view
- Provide a detailed presentation of your changes in a two-column format
 - Left column – Reviewer Comments
 - Right column – Author revisions
 - Revision notes may be 10-15 pages long!

References 1

- Benbasat, I.G., Goldstein, D.K. and Mead, M. (1987) The Case Research Strategy in Studies of Information Systems, *Management Information Systems Quarterly*, 11, 3, 369-386.
- Davison, R.M., Martinsons, M.G. and Kock, N. (2004) Principles of Canonical Action Research, *Information Systems Journal*, 14, 1, 65-86.
- Davison, R.M., Vreede, G.J. de and Briggs, R.O. (2005) On Peer Review Standards for the Information Systems Literature, *Communications of the AIS*, 16, 49, 967-980.
- Gefen, D. and Straub, D.W. (2005) A Practical Guide to Factorial Validity Using PLS-Graph: Tutorial and Annotated Example, *Communications of the AIS*, 16, 5, 91-109.
- Gefen, D., Straub, D.W. and Boudreau, M.-C. (2000) Structural Equation Modelling and Regression: Guidelines for Research Practice, *Communications of the AIS*, 4, 7, 1-77.

References 2

- Kock, N.F. and Davison, R.M. (2003) Dealing with Plagiarism in the IS Research Community: A Look at Factors that Drive Plagiarism and Ways to Address Them, *Management Information Systems Quarterly*, 27, 4, 511-532.
- Myers, M.D. (1996) Qualitative Research in IS, <http://www.qual.auckland.ac.nz/>
- Myers, M.D. (1999) Investigating Information Systems with Ethnographic Research, *Communications of the AIS*, 2, 23.
- Straub, D.W. (1989) Validating Instruments in MIS Research, *Management Information Systems Quarterly*, 13, 2, 147-169.
- Straub, D.W., Boudreau, M.-C., and Gefen, D. (2004) Validation Guidelines for IS Positivist Research, *Communications of the AIS*, 13, 24, 380-427.
- Yin, R.K. (1984) *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, Sage Publications: Beverly Hills, Calif.