Emerging Research Themes in Global Information Management

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Research in the field of global information management (GIM) is an area of information systems research that has grown tremendously in the 1990s. A large number of research studies have been published that have examined issues relating to the development, use and management of information systems in a global context. In an attempt to better understand the types of research that has been conducted, the research methodologies employed and the emerging research themes being addressed in the field, an in-depth study of the GIM literature was conducted. This chapter reports on one aspect of this wider study – emerging GIM research themes. The purpose of this chapter is to identify the themes distinct to GIM research that are emerging from the literature with the aim of highlighting potential areas of future research in the field.

INTRODUCTION

Global information management has received a great deal of research interest in the last ten years. As information technologies have improved and as organizations have adapted their operations to a global platform, research into how to use and manage these technologies on a global scale has increased in importance. Not only are established IS journals publishing an increasing amount in this area but there are now specific journals devoted to the major issues in the development, use and management of global information systems. Indeed, a ten-fold increase in
the number of papers published has occurred between 1990 and 1998 (Gallupe and Tan, 1999).

However, it was somewhat surprising to find that in a survey of the literature in this area that no systematic framework is guiding GIM research. It appears that current GIM research is being driven by temporal, “hot” issues in the field and not by an integrated and structured approach to knowledge accumulation. These “issues” studies are certainly important and help the field focus on the immediate challenges that practitioners face but in our view, this seems to be leading to research that may have little enduring value, that possibly duplicates itself, and that does not stretch the boundaries of what we know. What appears to be missing at this point is an overall research framework that will help guide future research into GIM and help organize and categorise research previously done. According to Palvia (1998), such a framework has yet to be developed.

In response to the call for a comprehensive GIM research framework, the authors conducted a detailed survey of published GIM research between from 1990 to 1998. A publication outlining a 3-dimensional framework and a “call-to-action” resulted (Gallupe & Tan, 1999). This research framework builds on an earlier general IS research framework of Ives, Hamilton & Davis (1980). In their survey, Ives et al. (1980) classified general IS research into 5 categories (Type I to V), which employed research methodologies ranging from case and field studies to secondary (i.e., non-) data collection strategies. We argue that to better understand the research that has been done in the GIM field, a 3rd dimension

Figure 1: Global Information Management Research Framework (Gallupe & Tan, 1999)
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