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Chapter I

Exemplary Works on Information Systems Research

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ABSTRACT

With the quantity and quality of available works in information systems (IS) research, it would seem advantageous to possess a concise list of exemplary works on IS research in order to enable instructors of IS research courses to better prepare students to publish in IS venues. To that end, this study seeks to identify and rank a collection of works that is widely viewed as among the best in the field on the subject of research in IS. The study examined more than 460 such candidate works and was subsequently refined to a list of 58 exemplary studies. This list was formatted into an online survey and administered to the IS academic community. The resulting list of ranked articles provides an excellent supplement to a course on IS research, providing examples of quality in research methodology.

INTRODUCTION

The field of IS research is replete with outstanding works focused on specific areas of research. With calls for research and presentations of analyses in areas of group support systems (Benbasat & Lim, 1993), keyword classification schemes (Barki, Rivard, & Talbot, 1993), information technology planning (Boynton & Zmud, 1987), co-citations (Culnan, 1987), and other valued areas, the numbers of available sources of research information are staggering. It has become a monumental effort to identify and prioritize key works in order to include them in fields of study and specific courses. Given the specific content criteria and limited timeframe of the typical graduate course, it is virtually impossible to cover the breadth and depth of materials available. We have thus determined that there is a need for research to identify and rank exemplary works on IS research. The resulting list should provide individuals instructing graduate and undergraduate courses on research in IS with a specific collection of articles suitable for adoption whole or in part as a reading list or as a reference for research support.

PREVIOUS WORKS

We have found no study previously conducted and published that has attempted to do what this study has done. Many manuscripts have ranked IS journals using combinations of citation analysis, expert opinion, and quality of research published (i.e., Gillenson & Stutz, 1991; Hardgrave & Walstrom, 1997; Holsapple, Johnson, Manakyan, & Tanner, 1994; Mylonopoulos & Theoharakis, 2001; Walstrom, Hardgrave, & Wilson, 1995; Whitman, Hendrickson, & Townsend, 1999). In fact, the practice is so popular, there is an entire section of the IS World portal dedicated to the subject: Journal Rankings (see <http://www.bus.ucf.edu/csaunders/newjournal.htm>).

Recent citation analyses have also attempted to include underrepresented media, such as electronic publishing outlets, when analyzing research productivity in computer science (Goodrum, McCain, Lawrence, & Giles, 2001). Previous articles have also examined research productivity by author and institution in IS (Athey & Plotnicki, 2000) and in real estate (Dombrow & Turnbull, 2002). Other research has examined publishing patterns based on graduate school attended (McCormick & Rice, 2001), as well as evaluating the economic value of an IS paper publication to the author (Gill, 2001). However, no other study exists that seeks to specifically identify and rank the top quality articles available in the IS research arena.

Other studies have examined the development of fields within IS research, including Ives, Hamilton, and Davis (1980), Ives and Olson (1984), Jarvenpaa, Dickson, and DeSanctis (1988), Culnan (1987), and Culnan and Swanson (1986), to name a few. Several of these used co-citation analysis to quantify the value of journal articles (i.e., Culnan, 1987), then aggregated these values by research stream. However, the general thrust of this body of research was to examine where the new areas of study were in the discipline rather than identify best practice works.

Even outside of IS, only a very few works specifically address exemplary articles related to a particular topic or discipline. In accounting, Brown (1996) used citation analysis to determine influential accounting articles, individuals, graduate institutions, and faculties, while Leigh, Pullins, and Comer (2001) identified the top 10 sales articles of the 20th century using a combination of survey and citation analysis methodologies.

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