



Chapter XII

Global Information Management Research: Current Status and Future Directions

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ABSTRACT

A growing body of knowledge is being accumulated in the area of global information management (GIM). Research in this area has grown significantly in the 1990s. 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. However, much of this research has been limited to isolated survey studies or case studies into particular aspects of GIM. This has resulted in a rather disjointed and ad hoc development of this literature that now needs some structure to further its development. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a framework for research into GIM. It hopes to set a future direction for research in this area by challenging IS researchers to consider studying a number of potentially

productive subareas of GIM that the framework has identified as being unstudied or understudied. This research framework builds on the general IS framework of Ives, Hamilton, and Davis (1980) and surveys the GIM published literature between 1990 and 2000. The application of this literature to the Ives, Hamilton, and Davis framework indicates where much GIM research has been conducted and where further research needs to be done.

INTRODUCTION

Research in the field of global information management (GIM) is an area of information systems research that has grown tremendously in the 1990s (Palvia, 1998a). 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 general, most of these studies have either been key issues studies¹ (where the researcher(s) surveys IS practitioners to determine what they feel are the key issues in this area) or they have been anecdotal studies that have described a particular development of an information system (Dutta & Doz, 1995; Neumann & Zviran, 1997; Shore, 1996). A survey of the literature in this area indicates 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 a structured approach to knowledge accumulation. 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 is needed is a general framework for research into GIM that aids in categorizing research that has already been done and that helps to identify where important research is still to be done. This framework is intended to help guide GIM research and challenge GIM researchers to look at their field from a broad perspective. It will help set future directions for GIM research by identifying those areas that have been understudied and beginning to find ways to examine those areas that have not been studied at all.

Research frameworks have been used in a number of fields to guide research in those areas (Shaw, Gardner, & Thomas, 1997; Snow & Thomas, 1994; Thomas & Dewitt, 1996). This is particularly true of information systems. The information systems field has used research frameworks for the past 20 to 30 years in order to identify where research was being done and where research was not being done (Dickson, Senn, & Chervany, 1977; Gorry & Scott Morton, 1971; Ives et al., 1980; Mason & Mitroff, 1973; Nolan & Wetherbe, 1981). Indeed, one of the main benefits of these frameworks has been to identify the “gaps” in the knowledge that has been accumulating in that field. A good research framework provides an overall perspective for the researcher that may point to potentially important and productive research areas that have been understudied.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a research framework that will help identify the “gaps” in GIM research. It is appropriate at this time to propose such a framework because enough GIM research has now been conducted and published that areas of research strength and weakness can be identified. We survey and analyze all the relevant published studies in journals that focus on the management of global information resources and apply them to the framework. The chapter proceeds as follows. First, GIM is defined and a review of previous GIM frameworks is described, indicating the

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