

Preface

For the IS discipline to balance focus and diversity, how can it best deal with the proliferation of research topics and terminologies? How can we as IS researchers keep the discipline from degenerating into a Babel tower of research? In his discussion on the role of scientific paradigms, Kuhn places particular emphasis on textbooks as tools of academic communication. He argues that education in paradigmatic fields is characterized by the dominance of textbooks which summarize and often streamline the past developments in the field. Textbooks help scientists within the field to develop a common vocabulary, which enhances the efficiency of scientific communication. In Kuhn's words, "Textbooks themselves aim to communicate the vocabulary and syntax of a contemporary scientific language" (Kuhn 1996, p. 136).

Unfortunately, little of the academic education of future IS scholars is textbook based. While many high quality textbooks exist at the undergraduate and Master's levels, these textbooks are only partially useful for building background knowledge for future IS scholars. At these levels, IS education focuses on providing students with ready-to-apply skills (often technical in nature). Consequently, most of the existing textbooks aim at presenting existing practical methods and approaches for managing IT, rather than building the theoretical background required by future IS researchers. As a result, much of doctoral education is based on the reading of original research publications in research journals. While highly valuable from the perspective of exposing students to the best exemplars of IS scholarship, this is hardly the most efficient way for providing a broad overview of IS scholarship, or for building a holistic understanding of the IS research.

With this publication, we hope to make the first step in establishing a textbook tradition in doctoral IS education. In this book we provide a high level overview of the key research topics in IS. Emerging and current IS scholars can use it as a tool for quickly acquainting themselves with the different topics of IS research. In each of the areas, we simply summarize the directions of research efforts, rather than providing interpretations or explanations of such efforts. For each topic we direct the readers to some of the important related research publications.

The chapters included in this book are organized as follows. In [Chap. 1](#) we provide an introduction to the IS discipline and certain debates that played an instrumental role in its development. [Chapter 2](#) presents the intellectual structure of the body of IS research in terms of the five main research areas. [Chapter 2](#) also

discusses topics that concern IS discipline in general, including IS discipline debates, theories and methods in IS, and instrument development in IS research. [Chapters 3](#) through [7](#) provide an overview of research topics in the key IS research areas, including *IT artifact and IS development*, *IT and organizations*, *IT and individuals*, *IT and markets*, and *IT for teamwork and collaboration*. Finally, [Chap. 8](#) summarizes the structure of academic research in IS and offers concluding remarks. The details of a bibliometric study used to identify the key research topics in IS presented in this book are provided in the Appendix.

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