1

[This is just a teaser slide, intended to be up there while I'm being introduced.]

1990 – 1st Austral(as)ian Conference in Information
Systems (ACIS), at Monash, chaired by Ross Jeffery

AUSTRALIAN CONFERENCE
on INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Interim ACIS Executive Committee
January 1992

Prof. Igor Hawryszkiewycz
University of Technology, Sydney

Prof. Ron Weber
University of Queensland

Dr Peter Weill
University of Melbourne

Roger Clarke
Australian National University

Prof. D. Ross Jeffery
University of N.S.W.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
Australasian_Conference_on_Information_Systems

2

I thought it was opportune to commence by reminding us all that ACIS is 25 years young.

Due to the familiar problem of formats becoming unreadable, I can't show you a document from 1990, but my archives do contain files from 1992.

You can see that we still have continuity. Ross and Ron are active Emeritus, Peter Weill is still in harness at MIT, and Igor and myself are on the program this year.

3

Talking of being in harness, I want to talk about this.

No, not the horse. The blinkers.

**Not Only Horses Wear Blinkers:
The Missing Perspectives in IS Research**

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Visiting Professor in Computer Science, ANU
and in Cyberspace Law & Policy, UNSW

**ACIS at UniSA
2 December 2015**

http://www.rogerclarke.com/SOS/ACIS15 {.html, .pdf}

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And I'm not talking about the horse wearing the blinkers.

I'm talking about you and me wearing them.

My contention is that, because we wear blinkers, published IS research exhibits tunnel vision.

In order to construct my argument, I need to first explain what I mean by the particular kind of 'perspectives' that I believe to be being filtered out by the single-minded commitment that pervades a great deal of our work.

Conventional Scientistic Research
Many Elements of Research Design

- Research Question(s)
- Unit of Study
- Population
- Sampling Frame
- Survey Design
- Data Collection Design
- Data Analysis Design
- ...

But no sign of 'Perspective'

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Let's take the case of mainstream 'scientistic' research.

When we design our research method, we consider many factors, like the ones listed here.

But neither our text-books nor our practices ever consider the 'perspective' that the research is to adopt.

Unit of Study

Organisational Dyad

Organisation

Work-Group

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To get to grips with the perspective notion, let's start with the 'unit of study'.

We think about the phenomena that are of interest to us.

Then we make a decision about the level of abstraction at which we're going to observe those phenomena.

For example, we might choose a part of an organisation, the whole of an organisation, or a collection of organisations.

Unit of Study

Organisational Dyad

Organisation

Work-Group

Lens

7
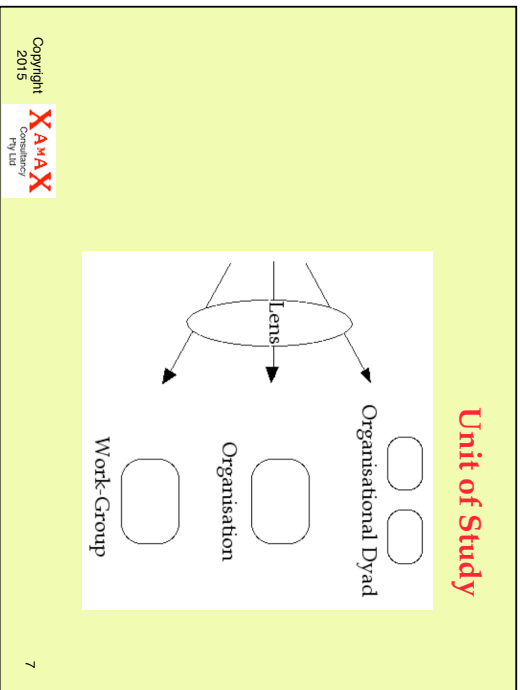
Then we choose a theoretical lens through which we're going to conduct our observation of those phenomena, at that level of abstraction.

7

Perspective   **Unit of Study**

Organisation

Lens

Organisational Dyad

Organisation

Work-Group

8
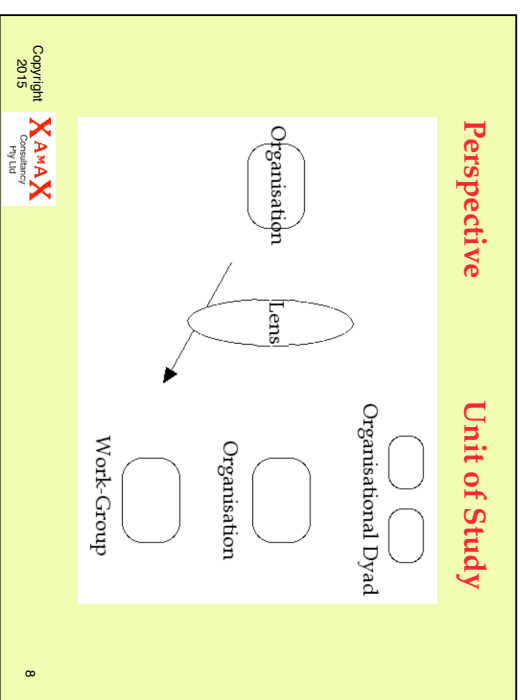
Then we conduct the observation.

But when we look through the lens, at the phenomena, where are we standing?

This diagram depicts a common category of research.

What we're looking at here is the dynamics of a work-group within a corporation or government agency.

And we do look at it from that organisation's own standpoint. That's what I mean by the perspective that a particular piece of research work adopts.

Ways in which we can recognise the perspective that a research project has adopted are by identifying:

• whose interests are reflected

• who is the intended beneficiary of the work, and

• to whom is the report addressed

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A Missing Element of Research Design 'Perspective'

The view from the standpoint
of a stakeholder
in the phenomena
that are under observation

Ambrogio Lorenzetti
Annunciation, 1344

9

So my proposition is that we need to define a notion of 'the perspective from which a particular piece of research is conducted'.

Here's a working definition, one that will not be the last word on the subject, but one that's useful as a basis for discussion.

It uses the mainstream idea of 'stakeholders'.

And we adopt the perspective of one of them.

Just as painters learnt to do in Siena and Florence, first with this painting in 1344 (look at the floor-tiles), and almost universally after Brunelleschi's demonstration to his peers in 1415.

Insights from Interpretivism

- Phenomena are subject to multiple interpretations
- Observation from a single perspective risks inappropriate inferences being drawn

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But haven't we been here before?

Didn't interpretivism embody this 'perspective' idea?

Well yes, it made the idea familiar and it's become respectable within the IS research community.

We recognise that there are multiple perspectives.

And we accept that, if phenomena are observed from only one of those perspectives, the inferences that are drawn from the observations may be inadequate.

Insights from Interpretivism

- Phenomena are subject to multiple interpretations
- Observation from a single perspective risks inappropriate inferences being drawn

S ya d va d a   (epistemological relativism)
The Parable of the Blind(folded) Men and the Elephant

11

But of course that insight goes back 2500 years, because it was summed up in a postulate that's intrinsic to Jain philosophy.

It's widely known through the parable of the elephant and the blind men.

Put simply, people who grab hold of bits of a complex phenomenon are likely to describe it very differently from one another.

An elephant is merely big.

A lot of IS research deals with considerably greater complexity than that exhibited by a pachyderm.

So we can get ourselves, and people who listen to us, into a much more complicated pickle than the people in the cartoon.

Insights from Interpretivism

- Phenomena are subject to multiple interpretations
- Observation from a single perspective risks inappropriate inferences being drawn

Implications of Interpretivism

- The researcher has a perspective
- The researcher's perspective influences research conception, questions, design, analysis, results
- If a researcher ignores the question of perspective, they blindfold themselves or wear blinkers

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So we need to apply these initial insights to our own circumstances:

Firstly, as a researcher, I have a perspective.

Secondly, that perspective influences the conduct, and outcomes, of the research that I conduct.

Thirdly, if I fail to consider what that perspective is, then I've willingly blindfolded myself.

Or, to stick with my original metaphor, I've worn blinkers, and thereby restricted my ability to understand the phenomena that I'm observing.

A Missing Element of Research Philosophy

- We discuss:
  - **Ontology** (knowledge about existence)
  - **Epistemology** (knowledge about knowledge)
  - **Methodology** (knowledge about process)
- We seldom discuss:
  - **Teleology** (knowledge about purpose, and hence whose perspectives the purpose reflects)

AIS eLibrary: 30,000 Entries
0 in Title, 3 in Abstract, 60 in body

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The missing element in our research design may be mirrored by a missing element in our underlying research philosophy.

I'm not educated or erudite enough to do this justice. We need to ask the likes of Ron Weber, Peter Seddon and Shirley Gregor about such things.

But it seems to me that we discuss several 'ologies' within the IS discipline, and yet we overlook one important one.

The notion of 'teleology' has to do with purpose. This relates to perspective, because it's the interests of the selected stakeholder that drive the design and conduct of the research.

Yet the AIS eLibrary contains only 2 articles that address 'teleology' – in a corpus of 30,000 papers.

Alternative Perspectives

Economic Dimension	Social Dimension	Environmental Dimension
World Economy	Humanity	The Planet
Supra-National Region (e.g. EU, NAFTA)		
Nation-State	A Society	The Troposphere
Regional Economy		
Sector / Value-Chain	A Community	The Biosphere
Strategic Partners		
Organisation	A Person	A Localised Ecology
Sub-Organisation		

http://www.rogerclarke.com/SOS/EPInIS.html#Tab1

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Enough philosophy.

In practical terms, what perspectives are relevant?

Here are some that a researcher might adopt.

I've organised them into three dimensions, according to the values that are of greatest significance when such perspectives are adopted.

The interests of a regional economy can be prioritised. Or research could be performed for a common-interest group such as the sight-hindered. Or the focus could be a local, frog-supporting swamp.

For many years, I've considered that the IS discipline is wedded to just one of these perspectives, within just one of these dimensions, to the substantial exclusion of all the other perspectives.

The Dominant Perspective in IS Research

Economic Dimension	Social Dimension	Environmental Dimension
World Economy	Humanity	The Planet
Supra-National Region (e.g. EU, NAFTA)		
Nation-State	A Society	The Troposphere
Regional Economy		
Sector / Value-Chain	A Community	The Biosphere
Strategic Partners		
The System-Sponsor	A Person	A Localised Ecology
Sub-Organisation		

http://www.rogerclarke.com/SOS/EPinIS.html#PD   15

My belief has been that most IS researchers, when they conceive, design, conduct and report research, have in mind the interests of a particular organisation or category of organisations.

I typify the mainstream perspective as being that of 'the System-Sponsor'.

And I assert that this perspective is so common in our work that it's dominant and simply 'goes without saying'.

And I think that's a big problem with our discipline.

The Dominant Perspective

- The System-Sponsor's interests are Objectives

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I look at it this way.

The System-Sponsor's interests dominate IS research.

So we recognise that organisation's interests as determining the Objectives.

The Dominant Perspective

- The System-Sponsor's interests are Objectives
- Entities with institutional or market power are recognised as Stakeholders. Their interests are Constraints

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Some other entities are sufficiently powerful that they demand attention.

We call them Stakeholders.

We try to reflect their interests in the design.

But they're Constraints on the System-Sponsor's freedom of action, rather than Objectives.

The Dominant Perspective

- The System-Sponsor's interests are Objectives
- Entities with institutional or market power are recognised as Stakeholders. Their interests are Constraints
- Entities without power are ignored. Their interests surface later, as 'Impediments' and 'Barriers to Adoption'

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Meanwhile, the less powerful stakeholders don't have a place at the table. They're left outside the room.

The very existence of the genre of 'barriers to adoption' research is a symptom of a great malaise in our discipline.

If we studied the whole system, and reflected the interests of all stakeholders, we would have factored all of the needs into the design in the first place.

There would of course be design errors, and there would be changed contexts, and changed perceptions of need. But there would be no 'impediments'.

We invented that whole genre. We invented it because IS practitioners wear blinkers, and IS researchers aid and abet practitioners, and have consequently followed them down the cul de sac.

Research about People, but for Organisations

- How can we use social media to influence people?
- How do we buy-off people's privacy concerns?
- Can lifetime eHealth Records be imposed on people?
- Will people submit to pervasive wellbeing monitoring?
- How can we best exploit the crowd?
- How can we de-anonymise the customer?
- Why are people concerned about location sharing?

Bled eConference 2014

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Okay, my contention that IS research is dominated by the system-sponsor's perspective is ad hoc, anecdotal, biassed, and maybe downright bigotted.

So, during the last couple of years, I've been doing some empirical research, to date admittedly of only modest quality.

I carefully examined all 40 of the papers at the Bled eConference last year. The preponderance of papers were indeed from the System-Sponsor's perspective.

The easy way to summarise a paper for this purpose is to present its (abbreviated) research question.

The first 6 examples are the mainstream.

The last example was atypical.

A Test of the Perspective Notion

Let's stop sending printed invoices through the post.
What will be the impacts on the organisation?

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Let's test out my proposition another way.

I've contrived this particular research question so as to serve the purpose.

This is the first of a series of research questions.

I believe that this one sits very comfortably within the IS discipline.

After all, IS practitioners build business cases all the time to enable organisations to take advantage of IT in order to reduce costs.

A Test of the Perspective Notion

Let's stop sending printed invoices through the post.

What will be the impacts on the organisation?

What will be the impacts on the value-chain?

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What about this one?

In B2B contexts, an organisation's suppliers and customers form a chain.

The chain is worth studying.

And we can observe the phenomena from the viewpoint of the chain as a whole.

So that's pretty clearly IS research as well.

A Test of the Perspective Notion

Let's stop sending printed invoices through the post.

What will be the impacts on the organisation?

What will be the impacts on the value-chain?

What will be the impacts on the recipients?

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Consultancy
Pty Ltd

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How about this variant?

It's subtly different, so we need to unpack it.

A Test of the Perspective Notion

Is the following a legitimate (M)IS research question?

Let's stop sending printed invoices through the post.

What will be the impacts on the organisation?

What will be the impacts on the value-chain?

What will be the impacts on economic actors?

What will be the impacts on individual people?

XAMAX
Consultancy
Pty Ltd

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The recipient may be a large business, or a small or micro-business, or a consumer.

If we focus on costs, or on service, we remain in the economic dimension.

But we also have to allow for people, on the social dimension. (Hence the pinko colouring).

As a consequence of the change, some people won't receive their invoices, and hence won't pay them.

And so maybe their electricity will be cut off.

Particularly for people who are heavily dependent on electricity, there may be significant implications.

Such as health, comfort and the embarrassment and confusion of dealing with remote and unhelpful corporations, and with debt collectors.

Person Perspectives

- **USERS**
  - **Organisation-Internal**
    Since admin computing began
  - **Partner-Internal Users**
    Since Inter-Org Sys began
  - **External Users**
    Since Extra-Org Sys began (ATMs, EFTPOS, ...)
- **Differently-Capable Users**

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I've represented the 'social' as a single dimension. But it's actually multi-facetted.

For starters, we've talked about 'users' for 50 years.

Early users had forms and printouts. Then came terminals, and later PCs. And, once systems became inter-organisational, users of one organisation's systems were sitting in partner organisations.

Then, as extra-organisational systems arrived, users came to be outside organisations altogether.

And it's important to recognise many segments of users, with different characteristics and capabilities.

And large-scale systems organisations don't always get to cherry-pick their targets. For some organisations, all user segments need to be accommodated.

Person Perspectives

- **USERS**
  - **Organisation-Internal**
    Since admin computing began
  - **Partner-Internal Users**
    Since Inter-Org Sys began
  - **External Users**
    Since Extra-Org Sys began (ATMs, EFTPOS, ...)
  - **Differently-Capable Users**
  - **'Prosumers'**
    (Proactive Producer-consumers' expect Professionalism)
    Since Toffler identified the category in 1970/80

25

And then there's the 'prosumer' notion.

Its origins date way back to 1970, but it's finally getting up to bite systems designers.

Organisations want to take advantage of people's labour to capture data, and they want to encourage people to donate personal data and content.

That's the heart of Web 2.0 and 'content syndication', because it enables more detailed profiling of consumers' behaviour and proclivities.

But to sustain the inbound flow of gifts, organisations need to fulfil prosumers' needs.

Person Perspectives

- **USERS**
  - **Organisation-Internal**
    Since admin computing began
  - **Partner-Internal Users**
    Since Inter-Org Sys began
  - **External Users**
    Since Extra-Org Sys began (ATMs, EFTPOS, ...)
  - **Differently-Capable Users**
  - **'Prosumers'**
    (Proactive Producer-consumers' expect Professionalism)
    Since Toffler identified the category in 1970/80
- **'USEES'**
  People who are affected by an information system

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Meanwhile, we continue to overlook another longstanding category.

The term 'usee' has been in existence for decades, and yet it's still completely outside the mainstream.

It refers to people who aren't users of a system, but who are affected by it.

Think about the data subjects in police intelligence files, and in tenant information and credit reporting systems.

The reason the term 'usee' is outside the mainstream is because the categories of people it refers to are too.

They're outside the system – non-stakeholders – capable of being ignored.

Passive
Human Resources
Consumer as Prey

Active
Actors

Engaged
Participants

**Alternative
Organisational
Perceptions
of People**

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IS practitioners can choose among several ways of looking at people; and IS researchers follow them.

The current fashion is to use the word 'actor'.

But actors don't do whatever they want to do. Spielberg is right in behind Tom Hanks, dictating his behaviour. Hanks obeys, which is why Hanks keeps getting plum roles in Spielberg films.

The notion of 'actor' is manipulative. It's much closer than we prefer to admit to old 'Theory X' precepts of humans as resources, and consumers as prey.

We've had the notion of 'participative design' for almost as long as IS has existed, but it keeps getting suppressed or lost, because we deny even users, let alone usees, a place at the table.

A Test of the Perspective Notion

Is the following a legitimate (M)IS research question?

Let's stop sending printed invoices through the post.

What will be the impacts on the organisation?

What will be the impacts on the value-chain?

What will be the impacts on economic actors?

What will be the impacts on individual people?

What will be the impacts on forests?

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I've spent a bit of time on perspectives within the social dimension, because I do see the substantial ignoring of it as being one of the worst features of the IS discipline over the last several decades.

We've let US Business School thinking dominate not just the MIS sub-set of the discipline, but the IS discipline as a whole.

But we've also done pretty badly in dealing with the environmental dimension.

Extending the earlier test, we could also ask what the effect of no longer printing invoices might be, on forests.

Would that be regarded as a legitimate IS topic? Or do we think that's up to someone else to consider?

The Environmental Dimension

- *If we stop sending printed invoices through the post, what will be the impact on* **Forests?**

- What are the key factors to be considered when evaluating the **Sustainability Profiles** of alternative designs for information systems?

- How can eCommerce theory be most effectively applied to **Carbon Trading?**
  (Expected Citation-Count – 20; Actual – 1)

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Impact on forests is one example of a perspective on the Environmental Dimension.

There are also various possible topics in the Sustainability area.

And the third one here is real, not imagined.

I published a research paper on the topic in 2009.

Among over a dozen mature papers I've published in that particular venue (the Bled eConference), the average number of citations they've got is about 20.

But that paper has excited the least interest of any refereed paper I've ever published, with just a single citation.

Dominance of the Economic Dimension
A Pilot Study of Venues in 2014

Venue	Sample	Size	Economic Dimension	Social Dimension	Envmtal Dimension
ISR	48	100%	48	0	0
AMCIS	43	10%	40	3	0
EJIS	43	100%	41	2	0
Bled	45	100%	43	2	0
AJIS	38	100%	36	2	0
ACIS	36	20%	35	1	0
Total	253		243	10	0
			96%	4%	0%

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After I looked at the Bled Proceedings for 2014, I decided to extend my assessment to other venues.

I compared the papers in the 2014 Volumes of three IS journals with a similarly-sized sample of papers from three IS conferences.

I hesitate to make any substantial external validity claims at this stage; but as I take the work further, I suspect I may be able to make some strong statements.

The dominance of the Economic Dimension is turning out to be even greater than I'd imagined it to be.

And, among the over 300 papers I've assessed so far, I've yet to find a single one on the Environmental Dimension. There are 'green IT' topics, but the primary values evident in them are economic.

The previous slide looked at the Dimensions.

This table summarises the data from the same pilot study, but this time relating to the Perspectives from which the phenomena were observed.

Other Parties in the second-last column included social media users, the aged, and rural households.

A few articles reflected two perspectives, in most cases the System-Sponsor and some other party.

But the dominance of the System-Sponsor's perspective is clear to see.

So the provisional data supports the proposition.

Dominance of System-Sponsor Perspective
A Pilot Study of Venues in 2014

| Venue | Sample Size | | Perspective | |
		System Sponsor	Other Party	Multi-Perspective
ISR	48 100%	47	1	0
AMCIS	43 10%	39	4	0
EJIS	43 100%	39	2	2
Bled	45 100%	41	3	1
AJIS	38 100%	37	1	0
ACIS	36 20%	31	2	3
Total	253	234	13	6
		92%	5%	2%

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I was granted early access to the ACIS 2015 crop.

There are some good examples of System-Sponsor perspectives.

And I need to make quite clear that I'm not for a moment suggesting we shouldn't be doing such research! It's mainstream, and it should be.

My concern is with its dominance.

ACIS'15

SS   Can recommendation agents <u>drive</u> impulsive purchase behaviour?
       What is an appropriate framework for using social media to <u>monitor</u> crowd sentiment?

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ACIS'15

SS Can recommendation agents drive impulsive purchase behaviour?
What is an appropriate framework for using social media to monitor crowd sentiment?

U   How do social media affordances affect the shared perception of place?

M   Can pathology reporting be improved through business intelligence report design techniques?

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But there are also some good examples of Perspectives other than that of the System-Sponsor.

The U instance is for Users of social media, rather than for the service-provider, or for the organisations that seek to exploit the data or the users.

There are also examples of M for Multi-Perspective research.

The design is seldom sophisticated, but this instance expressly treated quality as reflecting the needs of both the health care organisation and the patient.

ACIS'15

SS Can recommendation agents drive impulsive purchase behaviour?
What is an appropriate framework for using social media to monitor crowd sentiment?

U   How do social media affordances affect the shared perception of place?

M   Can pathology reporting be improved through business intelligence report design techniques?

Soc What is the correlation between uses of ICT and health outcomes in Africa? (Social Dimension)
Does broadband connectivity maintain bonding and bridging for households in rural communities? (Social)

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And some papers adopt a perspective that is distinctly on the social rather than the economic dimension.

Preliminary results have suggested that the ACIS community is at least as well attuned to alternative perspectives and dimensions as any of the other primary IS venues, and may even be a couple of percentage-points better.

But don't gloat. The difference between 14% and 10% may not be statistically significant.

Opportunities Arising
from the Recognition of Perspective

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I originally feared that my conclusions from this analysis were going to be overwhelmingly gloomy.

But they're not.

One reason is that some IS research is undertaken from perspectives other than that of the System-Sponsor. And some of it is on the Social Dimension.

Another reason I'm positive is that the analysis leads to some opportunities for the discipline, and for you, the future of the IS discipline.

A Test of the Perspective Notion

Is the following a legitimate IS research question?

Let's stop sending printed invoices through the post.

...

*How can an organisation appreciate
and manage the impacts on all parties?*

*What is 'a feasible and good' design process
to reflect the perspectives of all stakeholders?*

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Let's go one more step with the test I've been using.

Rather than limiting ourselves to descriptive, explanatory and predictive statements, we could combine a multi-perspective approach with normative mode, and actually do something useful.

Both action research and design research are 'constructive', because they adopt normative mode, and they aim to deliver an outcome.

Action research is by its nature multi-perspective.

Design research can be as well, provided that it is conceived, conducted and reported with multiple stakeholders in mind, and with their perspectives reflected.

'Big Picture' Issues

- Pornography as a Driver of Net Traffic
  Videotex ... Web ... P2P ... Netflix ...
  (2 in Abstracts among 30,000 entries in AISeL)
- Role of IS and ICT in the GFC
- Sexting (0 in Abstracts in AISeL)

- IS for Appropriate Resource-Usage
- Target Acquisition by
  Airborne Robots
  (1 in Abstracts in AISeL)
- •
- ...

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And researchers who master the techniques involved in adopting multiple perspectives can tackle some 'big picture' issues that we as a discipline have seldom addressed in the past.

The last two are my own examples.

But the inspiration, and the first three topics, came from Frank Land, who was there at the desk when computers were first applied to administrative tasks, in the UK in 1952, and who established the IS discipline at LSE and at the London Business School.

He argues that we need to be ambitious, and ask some questions that are bigger than those that individual corporations want answered. The AIS eLibrary shows that we've failed to tackle those topics.

I think we should be thinking about airborne drones.

'Big Picture' Issues

- Pornography as a Driver of Net Traffic
  Videotex ... Web ... P2P ... Netflix ...
  (2 in Abstracts among 30,000 entries in AISeL)
- Role of IS and ICT in the GFC
- Sexting (0 in Abstracts in AISeL)

- IS for Appropriate Resource-Usage
- Target Acquisition by
  Airborne Robots
  (1 in Abstracts in AISeL)
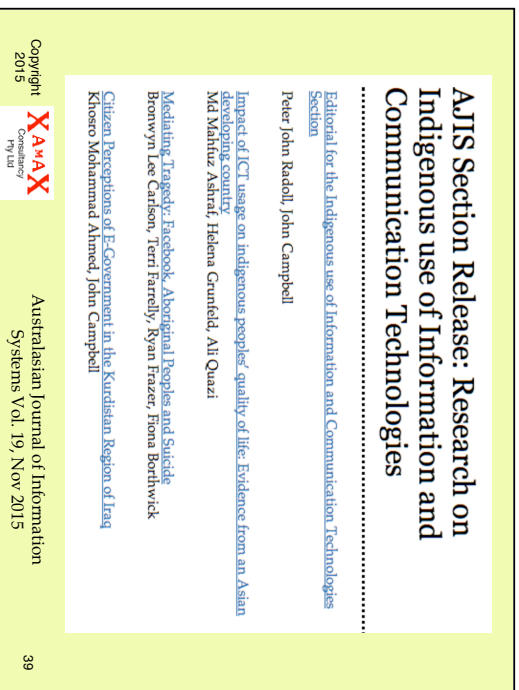- •
- ...

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And airborne is what Frank was on his 84th birthday not long ago.

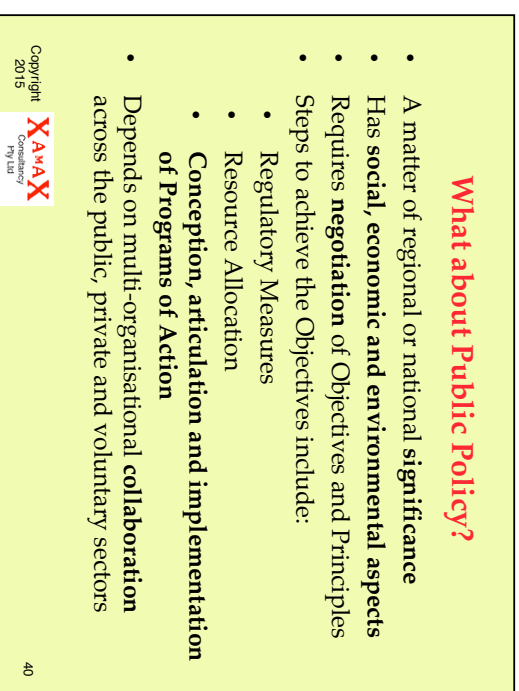The rest of us need to be like Frank, and choose our challenges boldly and ambitiously.

But we shouldn't wait until we're 84 to do it!

AJIS Section Release: Research on Indigenous use of Information and Communication Technologies

Peter John Radoll, John Campbell

Editorial for the Indigenous use of Information and Communication Technologies Section

Impact of ICT usage on indigenous peoples' quality of life: Evidence from an Asian developing country
Md Mahfuz Ashraf, Helena Grunfeld, Ali Quazi

Mediating Tragedy: Facebook, Aboriginal Peoples and Suicide
Bronwyn Lee Carlson, Terri Farrelly, Ryan Frazer, Fiona Borthwick

Citizen Perceptions of E-Government in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq
Khosro Mohammad Ahmed, John Campbell

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As they say on TV, "In Breaking News just to hand ... ".

AJIS announced the release of a Special Section last Friday, just as I was finalising this slide-set.

Next time you're thinking about doing some research on yet another refinement to the Technology Acceptance Model, have a think about 'big picture issues' like the contributions IT can make to quality of life in communities under pressure.

Hands up all those people who are studying what IS can do for people in remote communities, and in internment camps.

What about Public Policy?

- A matter of regional or national **significance**
- Has **social, economic and environmental aspects**
- Requires **negotiation** of Objectives and Principles
- Steps to achieve the Objectives include:
  - Regulatory Measures
  - Resource Allocation
  - **Conception, articulation and implementation of Programs of Action**
- Depends on multi-organisational **collaboration** across the public, private and voluntary sectors

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We've been flinching away from Public Policy issues for far too long.

Sure they're challenging.

By recognising the importance of perspective, we'll be able to stop running away from our responsibilities.

Why should it be up to other disciplines to tackle the big, interesting and important questions??

If it involves information, and systems that handle information, then surely it's within our scope.

Features of Public Policy Research

- **The Driver is** desire to address **a Problem** of an economic, social and / or environmental nature
- **The Purpose is** to devise possible **Solutions,** evaluate them, articulate them, implement them
- The mode is **Normative,** not merely descriptive, explanatory or predictive
- The mind-set is **Instrumentalist,** not Pure (pursue knowledge) or Applied (of a tool)
- **Quality** is essential, whereas Rigour is desirable

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Public policy research does require breadth of expertise, and the skills involved are somewhat different from the mainstream in contemporary IS research.

And certainly not everyone in the discipline should switch their focus entirely to such questions.

On the other hand, there are organisations out there that need the help of people in the IS discipline to address questions that straddle the Economic, the Social and the Environmental.

Opportunities Arising from the Recognition of Perspective

- Comparative-Perspective Research leading to better insights for System Sponsors
- Multi-Perspective Research
- Better Constructivist Research e.g. Participative Design Science
- Phronetic Research, to complement Episteme (Science) and Techne (e.g. Design Science)
- Instrumentalist rather than Applied Research
- Research in support of Public Policy

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But public policy research might be a bridge too far for some people in the IS discipline, so I've put it last.

Other opportunities don't require us to be quite so bold.

We can compare the expectations of managers and of staff-members, and of designers and of users, by conducting research from both perspectives at once.

We can do design research that doesn't just tell the system-sponsor what he wants to hear. We can do that by embedding participative notions in the process.

We can drive our research topics based on problems perceived by the various stakeholders, not on the basis of the tools at our disposal.

And such approaches can significantly improve the value of our research results.

Implications for Individual Researchers

(1) **Discover** perspective
as an important element of research
conception, design, conduct and reporting

(2) **Deliberate** on the alternative perspectives
that are relevant to the context

(3) **Determine** the perspective(s) to be adopted

(4) **Declare** the perspective(s) adopted

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The absence of 'perspective' from our list of research design parameters has undermined the value of our work.

We can do better.

As individuals, we need to recognise the nature of perspective and its influence on research work.

We can then evaluate the options, and actively choose our perspective.

Often it will be that of the system-sponsor; but that will be an active choice, made with an appreciation of the consequences of that choice.

It's then important that we make clear to our readers what our perspective has been, and what strengths and weaknesses that aspect of the research design gives rise to.

What {MIS? WI? IS/IM?} Needs to Do

- Acknowledge the existence of perspectives other than that of the client / system sponsor
- Acknowledge in particular the perspectives of users, prosumers and usees
- Recognise them not merely as 'actors'
- Embrace participative analysis and design
- Embody explicit recognition of human diversity, i.e. a rich set of segmentation models
- Include individuals' representatives and advocates within 'business / people processes'
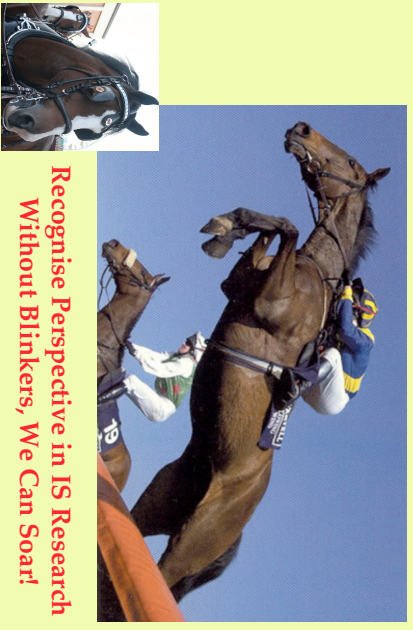
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Will this be an easy change?

Probably not. There's a lot of momentum within the discipline as it stands, and age brings conservatism.

The gatekeepers include editors and program chairs, reviewers, staff selection committees, promotions and review committees, and research funding committees and their assessors.

If you're one of those already, or as you become one of those, you need to respect colleagues who adopt alternative perspectives, and engage with them, not treat them as outcasts or second-rate citizens.

You need to tolerate and encourage diversity in the perspectives adopted by other IS researchers, so that we can build from our base, not ossify in place.

To return to the opening metaphor ...

We've blinkered ourselves for too long.

Recognise Perspective in IS Research.

Without blinkers, we can soar.

Recognise Perspective in IS Research
Without Blinkers, We Can Soar!

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Not Only Horses Wear Blinkers:
The Missing Perspectives in IS Research

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http://www.rogerclarke.com/SOS/ACIS15 {html, .pdf}

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