

Andrea Carugati  
Cecilia Rossignoli *Editors*

# Emerging Themes in Information Systems and Organization Studies



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Editors

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## Biography of the Editors

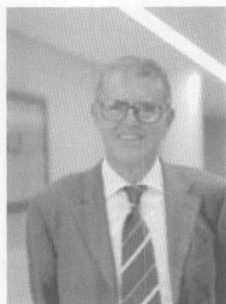


**Andrea Carugati** is an Associate Professor and Director for the Information Systems Research Group at Århus School of Business and Social Sciences, in Århus, Denmark. Andrea received a Ph.D. from the Technical University of Denmark in 2004. In his career he has held permanent positions in IESEG School of Management and visiting positions in various universities including MIT, Grenoble School of Management, LUISS University, LIUC University. Andrea's research focuses on the use of information technology in organizations and on IT driven organizational change. Andrea Carugati has published, among others, on the European Journal of Information Systems, Database for Advances in Information Systems, Electronic Markets, at the International Conference on Information Systems, EGOS, and at the European Conference on Information Systems.



**Cecilia Rossignoli** is an Associate Professor of Organization Science at the University of Verona (Italy). Previously she taught and researched Information Systems at the Catholic University of Milan, where she began as a researcher in 1995. She has been the Director of the Masters Program in Business Intelligence and Knowledge Management at the University of Verona since 2003. She is a member of AIS and also a member and cofounder of ItAIS (Italian Chapter of Association for Information Systems). She served in the Organizing Committee of the 17th ECIS 2009, "Information Systems in a Globalizing World: Challenges, Ethics and Practices", held in Verona in June, 2009. Her research interests cover the areas of IS and organizational change, the role of IS in inter-organizational information systems, electronic markets and the impact of Business Intelligence Systems in organizations. On this subject she has published more than 50 papers and books. Her latest works were published in the Journal of Electronic Commerce Research, the Journal of Information Systems and e-business Management and Electronic Markets.

## Biography of Marco De Marco



Marco De Marco is a Full Professor of Organization and Information Systems at the Università Cattolica in Milan. He also teaches the Business Organization course at the LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome. Before embarking upon his academic career he worked as a research engineer and product planning manager in the aerospace (Boeing) and computer (IBM, GE, and Honeywell) industries. He is the author of four books and numerous essays and articles; mainly on the development of information systems and the impacts of technology on organizations. Marco De Marco has worked as a consultant for a wide range of important public institutions, such as the Venice City Council, the Rome City Council, the Lombardy Regional Government, the Hospital Administration Authority, and the Ministry of Justice as well as the Italian parliament. He has also been a consultant to the major trades unions of Italian bank employees. He is a member of the editorial board of several academic journals, including the Journal of Information Systems, the Journal of Digital Accounting Research, Banking and Information Technology, Information Systems and e-Business Management. Marco De Marco was a founder in 2003 and former President of the Italian Association for Information Systems (ITAIS), the Italian Chapter of the Association for Information Systems. In 2008 and 2009, he was a Board committee member of the Association for Information Systems, representing Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. He is the editor-in-chief of the *Informativa e Organizzazioni* book series published by Franco Angeli. He has worked on several projects of European breadth and has served as ECIS conference officer, acting as conference chair at ECIS2009 in Verona. In the past, his main research interests have included information system development and performance measurement methodologies, while bank information systems and their specificities were a particular study and focus. More recently, he has investigated the impact on organizations of information systems and Information Technology generally, leading him to focus on the themes of ERP systems due to their strong influence on the organization of companies and Business Process Management, perceived as a fundamental aspect in optimizing the delivery of services. Marco has been a driving force in getting the Italian scientific community to integrate with the international community, a success attested to by the fact that both ECIS 2003 and ECIS 2009 were staged in Italy, where also ICIS 2013 will be held.

## Biography of the Contributors



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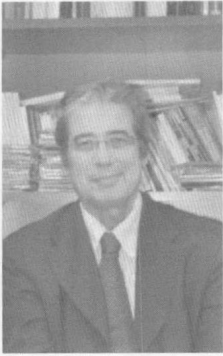
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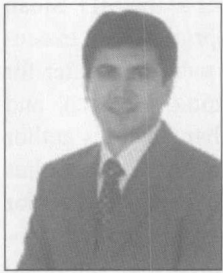
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**Yu Chen** is Professor at Information School of Renmin University of China since 1990. He got his master degree on Computer Science and Application at 1981. His main work is on Management Information System, both in teaching and research. He has published more than 10 textbooks and about 70 papers. He has worked as consultants for many important projects in China, and has been at several leading position in organizations like the Chinese National Representative in IFIP TC8, the Chinese Information Economics Society, and CNAIS.



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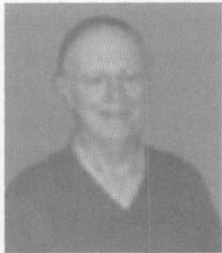


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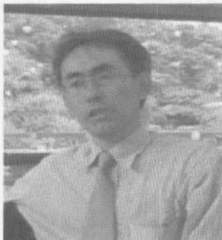
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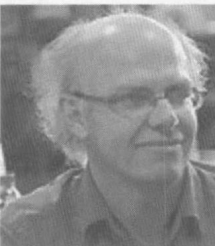
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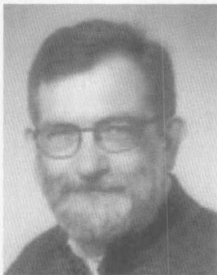
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## Foreword

Many disciplines are born within the boundaries of other disciplines, or in strict connection with them, and even after developing a specific identity, they maintain important areas of overlapping. For example, medicine and chemistry are sister disciplines. They may study the very same object, such as a chemical compound, but with two different goals: chemistry studies the characteristics of a compound, and how to synthesize it; medicine studies the effects of this compound on the human organism. The study of the interactions between a drug and the human body may also be studied by psychology, or by evolutionary biology, or by other different disciplines. But this does not mean, of course, that medicine as a discipline has a shared identity with chemistry or with other sister disciplines. In other words, the identity of a discipline, and of a research community, is not defined by the inviolability of its boundaries, nor by monopolizing the objects of its study; rather the identity of a discipline results from the specificity of its purposes, and from the effectiveness of the research relationships established with all the other related disciplines.

The Information Systems (IS) research community is very young: it has not yet accumulated the disciplinary tradition of historical epistemic communities such as medicine, or chemistry. As a consequence, the identity of IS research is not consolidated yet, and the purpose, methods, and objects of study are still open for debate. In a first phase, the major threat to IS identity was that Computer Science had a clearer status and longer tradition. As a consequence, these two disciplines were sometimes considered as mother and daughter, instead of sisters: Computer Science was perceived as a "mother discipline" while IS was considered as its soft branch. Early IS researchers felt that this situation was very limiting in the same way as medicine would react if it were considered a mere branch of chemistry.

Major efforts were made, then, to differentiate IS research from Computer Science. Since the IS research community wanted to focus on ICT-aided "management of information" within organizations it appeared natural to seek reference theories not in mathematics and logic but in organizational theory and behaviour. Many IS groups around the world actively searched for a stronger link with organizational studies. This process was of great importance to contribute to build the current IS identity, because it strengthened the outsiders' perception of a specific purpose for the IS research activities, and (maybe even more importantly) started to legitimate IS research in the business and management academic communities.

Marco De Marco is among those in Europe who played a pivotal role in this affirmation process. When, in the 80's, the business academic community still equated IS studies with computer science, Marco started dedicating himself to supporting the affirmation and growth of the Italian IS research community.



A pioneer in European Union projects, Marco established links with other IS research communities which were rising throughout Europe, and encouraged other Italian IS academics to join these emerging networks.

Many other national communities, like the Italian one, were in fact struggling to have their work and role recognized in the broader academic community. The build-up of an international network of relationships was an essential step to legitimate the topics and methods of the emerging IS research and create an IS identity around the world.

Of the possible roads to take, Marco and a few others, choose to build a particular and privileged relationship between the IS community and organization study community. IS researchers wanted to study a key aspect of organizational life, namely the management of information. As a consequence, IS research outcomes could find a significant disciplinary space engaging in a friendly confrontation between the IS and the organization studies communities.

In the first years, until well into the 90's, the activation of such a disciplinary link was hard. Organization researchers, having a more established community, tended to consider IS studies as alien and technical, and integration took several years. Nevertheless, with a persistent and intense commitment, the IS community increased its dimension and its activities, and today we can observe a good level of cooperation and collaboration between IS and organizational academics. The most visible example is EGOS, the European Group of Organization Studies, where IS academics participate along with academics from all the other management disciplines. On the other side, in order to define and strengthen the IS community, acceptance of IS studies within organizational research may be, although very important, insufficient. Since Web 2.0 services are becoming the most used service on the internet, IS researchers have started focusing on the management of knowledge also outside the classic boundaries of organizations: in fact, ICTs have become a key element not only in organizations, but also in informal networks, within families, among citizens, in the whole society. As we write these lines, the very purpose of IS studies is going through a period of exciting, challenging evolution. IS research has the chance to capitalize on our theories and understandings of technology uses and its impacts act as an innovating factor beyond the context of organization and contribute to social studies at large.

As a consequence of this evolution, an opportunity to further extend the network of sister disciplines is emerging for IS. In addition to computer science on the one side, and to organizational studies on the other side, the complex, interdisciplinary nature of Information Systems requires establishing links also with human sciences, such as sociology and psychology and with design-oriented disciplines, such as engineering. The power and the material characteristics of the IT artefact embedded in social practices enable the emergence of sociomaterial assemblages whose study and understanding will be the key to understand the evolution of organizations and society at large for the time to come.

Some people consider this "multi-disciplinary growth" as a dangerous drift towards identity loss. But multi-disciplinary evolution may result in great opportunities if the IS community will be strong enough and mature to keep focused while