In this edition of the *Journal of Strategic Information Systems* we continue to illustrate the broad range of strategic issues associated with the application of information technology (IT) in modern organisations. The contributions range over such topics as process change, telebanking, evaluation of information systems, IT infrastructure and the development of managerial skills in IT organisations. And once again, we illustrate the international dimension to research in strategic information systems with our authors coming from institutions in Finland, the UK, Australia, Singapore and Denmark.

Volume 8(2) of *JSIS* begins with a paper by Jukka Kallio and colleagues from the Helsinki School of Economics, Finland. Entitled “Drivers and tracers of business process changes”, this paper illustrates the diversity in so-called Business Process Reengineering projects. Based on an analysis of over 30 such projects, it became clear to the authors that many such projects were in fact focused on streamlining current processes while only a small minority resulted in the kind of radical change called for by those who first introduced us to the idea (Davenport & Short, 1990; Hammer, 1990). As a result of their research, the authors present a model which illustrates efficacious ways of implementing the different types of BPR project they identified in the course of their work. The framework is intended to be of assistance to managers in deciding on alternative strategies for BPR-type projects.

This paper is followed by one by Manuela Faia Correia and colleagues from Warwick Business School, England. It presents case study research into a telebanking information system in a state-owned bank located on the European continent. The case demonstrates how, in this particular context, the system supports the operators’ routine work practices but fails to do so when work flow is disrupted. Further, the case demonstrates how stability can be regained via a variety of back up mechanisms which are enacted and improvised in the telework setting (cf. the kind of ‘tinkering’ and ‘bricolage’ called for by Ciborra, 1994). Theoretical implications for information systems development and design bring the paper to a close.

Our third paper in this edition of *JSIS* arises from that which won the Best Paper Award at the 17th International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) in December 1996 (Broadbent et al., 1996). Written by Marianne Broadbent (Gartner Group Pacific, based in Melbourne, Australia), Peter Weill (Melbourne Business School) and Boon Siong Neo (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore), the paper touches on a range of key strategic issues for information systems such as planning, investment and alignment with business strategy. The major focus of the paper is, however, on infrastructural issues. The authors note that while infrastructure capability is increasingly recognised as being critical for competitiveness, the concept is still evolving and little empirical research on IT
infrastructure capability across firms has been reported in the literature. They therefore develop and introduce a concept of IT infrastructure capability and then, via case research, go on to examine the patterns of IT infrastructure capability in 26 firms with diverse strategic contexts. Both quantitative and qualitative data are collected (cf. Gable, 1994). Conclusions are drawn as regards the conditions in which greater IT infrastructure capability is likely to be found and implications are drawn for both business and IT managers, particularly with regards to linking business strategy and the IT infrastructure formation process.

Following this paper is one authored by Barbara Farbey (University College, London, England), Frank Land (London School of Economics) and David Targett (Imperial College, London). Their topic is the thorny issue of value for money of IT investments. Entitled “Moving IS evaluation forward: learning themes and research issues”, their paper draws together evidence from three major research projects conducted over the past ten years or so, concerned with aspects of IS evaluations. As a result, five “learning themes”, which have important implications for both theory and practice, are identified.

This edition of JSIS is brought to a close by a case study concerned with the development of managerial skills in IT organisations. Authored by Lars Mathiassen of Aalborg University and colleagues from Copenhagen Business School, Denmark, this case study tells the story of the way in which the CEO of a Danish financial institution set about establishing an in-house training programme aimed at developing appropriate managerial skills and attitudes amongst his IS staff – this as a result of increasing difficulties in recruiting managers with the requisite skills in dealing with the challenges of meeting user needs in a rapidly changing business and technological environment. The paper provides us with an intriguing insight into the views of a range of people involved in the programme, enabling an evaluation from different stakeholder perspectives. Based on these analyses, normative propositions are made about action learning as a strategic thrust for developing managerial skills in IT organisations.

Back in 1991, I proposed an inclusive model setting out the major components of IS strategy. This was based on the work of Michael Earl (Earl, 1989) who had identified three components of an IS/IT strategy, namely: an information systems strategy, an information technology strategy and an information management strategy. I renamed the first and last components ‘information strategy’ (as it relates to what information is required to both support and question the business strategy) and ‘information services strategy’ (as it relates to the manner in which the IS function is organised). To this I added an implementation/change management strategy, and on-going evaluation, review and learning – the point being that the strategy process should take account of implementation issues ab initio and also that it should be a continuous one which would take account of surprising outcomes, emergent issues and the changing organisational environment.

It is interesting to note that the five contributions to this issue of JSIS cover aspects of each of the main components of my model, viz.:

- Information Services Strategy: Mathiassen, et al.

1 For more information on this topic, see Farbey, et al., 1999.
In the next edition of JSIS (which, by the way, includes a Viewpoint paper by Sirkka Jarvenpaa and Emerson Tiller of the University of Texas, Austin, USA on the topic of ecommerce policy), I shall endeavour to incorporate in my next editorial aspects of electronic commerce/networking strategy and knowledge management strategy into this earlier model as a basis for a call for papers which aim to integrate these new technologies into an inclusive framework for information systems strategy. I do so, given my concern that there is a tendency to consider them as relatively isolated phenomena in the literature currently.

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References


