

▼ Introduction to Theoretical Approaches to IS Research Minitrack

Scott L. Schneberger
Appalachian State University
schnebergers@appstate.edu

Michael R. Wade
York University
mwade@schulich.yorku.ca

Theory is generally considered to be the bedrock of academic research. It is the foundation upon which scientific research is organized and built. In particular, IS research draws heavily on theory from a variety of disciplines—by our count, at least 70 theories have been widely used in IS research. (AISWorldNet “Theories Used in IS Research”, <http://www.istheory.yorku.ca>)

IS research has developed or appropriated theories to examine central disciplinary themes such as IS development, adoption, implementation, training, application, as well as strategic, social and political factors. Some theories have originated within the IS field, while others have been drawn from complementary disciplines such as psychology, sociology, management, economics, and mathematics.

Despite its ubiquity, there is a lot that we don’t know about theory. We believe many theories used in IS research are relatively unknown to, or not well understood by, IS researchers. For example, there are very few frameworks to organize theories used in IS research. There has not been extensive work on the categorization of the conceptual variables used in IS research, or work that establishes theoretical ties between IS research and research in other disciplines. We believe that it is possible to advance the IS field by studying the theories it has developed and uses.

This minitrack seeks to thoroughly examine, inform, and extend theoretical approaches used in IS research. We believe this minitrack will continue to fit well within the Organizational Systems and

Technology track, and complement the minitrack on Research Methods and Applications. We believe this minitrack targets an important niche in IS research, and can gain interest from IS researchers at all levels. There are few outlets for quality papers on conceptual or theoretical approaches, and we believe that eventually there will be strong interest in this minitrack from IS researchers.

The first paper, “A Meta-Theory for Understanding IS in Socio-Technical Systems,” makes the case for using adaptive structuration theory as a meta-theory for examining IS in socio-technical systems. The paper examines five theory developmental domains within IS and links AST as a meta-theory to other existing theories.

The second paper, “Beyond Cognitions: A Call for Greater Consideration of Emotion in Information Systems Decision Theories,” argues that leaving the concept of emotional behavior out of IS research theoretical models can significantly harm our understanding of IS phenomena, particularly in decision making. The paper argues that emotional behavior is distinct from cognitive behavior and therefore needs to be included in IS theory.

The third paper, “Information System Development: A Categorical Analysis of User Participation Approaches,” proposes a framework with four “socio-worldviews” from the four Hirschheim and Klein paradigms. The paper provides insight into user participation theories and application, and the social process for user participation approaches.