Preface

This volume contains the papers presented at the Information Systems Foundations Workshop, 27-28 September, 2006. The workshop was the fourth in a series, begun in 1999 by Kit Dampney at Macquarie University and continued biennially from 2002 at The Australian National University (ANU), focusing on the theoretical foundations of the discipline of information systems. The workshop immediately followed the annual Australian Council of Professors and Heads of Information Systems (ACPHIS) workshop also held at the ANU.

The theme of the 2006 Workshop was 'Theory, Representation and Reality' and it once again allowed researchers and practitioners in the field of information systems to come together to discuss some of the fundamental issues relating to our discipline.

Information systems is still a quite young field of study that, perhaps uniquely, is a peculiar juxtaposition of the technological, in the form of computing and communication technology artifacts, and the non-technological, in the form of the humans and organisations that design, implement and use systems built with that technology. This has and still does present a problem for information systems theorists because typically theories in technologically oriented disciplines differ significantly from the more human oriented disciplines in their view of the world as well as how best to investigate it and intervene in it. Theory development and testing in information systems therefore presents a significant and continuing challenge since it must reconcile and integrate these differences at both the philosophical and practical levels in order to provide a secure foundation for the discipline. Moreover, it may and has been argued that what theoretical foundations exist in information systems are still weak, diffuse, poorly integrated and consist largely of imports from other fields of study with little that the field can really call its own. Accordingly, the primary aim of the Information Systems Foundations workshops is to provide those with an interest in the foundation of their discipline with an opportunity to discuss, debate and hopefully improve those foundations.

Typically the workshop gives authors an opportunity to present papers and get feedback on ideas that might be regarded as too new or risky for publication in conventional outlets. There have been some good outcomes from this approach, with revised papers going on to find a wider audience in mainstream journals. As the workshop is relatively small, and there is only one stream of papers, all paper presentations are typically attended by all participants, which leads to ongoing and vigorous discussion. We had some discussion at the 2006 workshop as to whether a small specialised workshop such as this should continue. The general consensus was positive, as participants felt that it was filling a niche not met by other conferences.

The papers presented here were accepted after a double-blind review process and we thank our program committee and reviewers for their assistance.

We also acknowledge and thank the sponsors of the workshop: The National Centre for Information Systems Research (NCISR) and the School of Accounting and Business Information Systems at the ANU.

Dr Lee Boldeman of the Australian Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts also provided, as the keynote speaker on the second day of the workshop, a thought provoking overview of the contribution made by Information Technology to productivity and his own views on related economic theory. All in all, therefore, the Workshop provided a stimulating and productive as well as an enjoyable couple of days for both the authors and attendees, and we hope that the papers that form this volume will provide similar stimulation, provoke similar productive outcomes, and perhaps provide some enjoyable reading as well, for a wider audience than those who were able to attend the Workshop itself.

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