Foreword

The discipline of Information Systems has long struggled with its identity. Many in the discipline argue that for information systems to be gauged as a discipline then it needs its own set of theories. Such theories seem not to be easily developed and information systems academics continue to search for theories that assist in defining the discipline’s scope. In the meantime academics in the discipline, and their research students, need theoretical bases for their research. Without theory, research studies lack the depth and breadth of intellectual rigour and value that they can and should espouse. If research students of information systems topics are not aware of theory or do not use appropriate theory in their research then their efforts are likely to fall on fallow ground, particularly from dissertation examination and publication perspectives. I cannot remember the number of times that I have reviewed research papers for journals and conferences and asked the question “but where is the theory, what theory does this research address or consider?”

Collections of articles that provide exemplars of the use of theory are particularly valuable for research students. This book is one attempt to provide a significant coverage of theory in a form that shows how various theories can be applied in the context of inter-organisational information systems and business management. Often a multitude of theories are well known to research students but their application in the students’ own research domain is less well established or understood. As such this book is a welcome addition to the literature and it could form a valuable resource to research students and indeed their research advisors.

The contributors to this book are respected academics from many countries throughout the world including from most continents: Asia, Australia, Europe, North America and South America. In developing the material the editors have been careful to consider articles relevant to the information systems discipline so that relevance to the potential audience, most notably research students (PhD, Masters and Honours) and research practitioners, is sharp.

I commend the book to you and hope that it not only guides you in your consideration of existing theories for your research but also makes you think about discovery or development of new theories and in particular theories that the information systems discipline might one day call its own.

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Mark Toleman is Professor and Head of the School of Information Systems, and Chair, Academic Board at the University of Southern Queensland. Professor Toleman has a MSc in mathematics from James Cook University and a PhD in computer science from the University of Queensland. He has published over 130 peer reviewed articles in areas ranging from information systems development methodologies to human-computer interaction to agricultural science. His current research interests include community support information systems, IT service management, IT governance, and systems development methodologies. Professor Toleman is currently President of the Australian Council of Professors and Heads of Information Systems.