Preface

It is tempting to think that, in the year 2001, our technology is very sophisticated and accordingly, it is very tempting to believe that present-day computer technology is “very advanced” (begging the question of to what?). The fact is that we have only just begun to develop computer technology, and the recent implementation of the Internet brings us to a special threshold in that development. Development stages require very careful and thoughtful management. What we do now in this present development stage will be profoundly important for future generations. The management of the foundation for the 'evolution' of computer technology is a very special case because it will also become intimately connected with the management of mankind itself, not only in groups or collectively but also, eventually, as a species.

The Internet is a vast multi-disciplined array of information that potentially invades and affects the very essence of our lives. It is no thundering insight to say that we all have to manage our lives. But at the beginning of the twenty-first century–for those of us who consider information, knowledge, global third-dimensional communication and local and global business important–our lives are becoming inextricably bound into the Internet: we now need to manage our lives and our interests vis-à-vis the Internet. Accordingly, any collection of papers about ‘management issues’ arising out of the use of the Internet should be, given the prior basis, to some degree multi-disciplined in nature.

This book extends the existing discipline of information systems insofar as it has been put together as a collection of chapters with what is anticipated to be elements of the future discipline of information systems in mind. Most of the chapters have been contributed by academics from within the area of information systems, but importantly, in addition, there is one chapter on Internet data mining from two mathematicians, one chapter on on-line data from two psychologists and two chapters from academics working in the area of the philosophy of information technology. Another two chapters elucidate the theme of sustainability on the Internet.

As a collection of papers, this book is intended to be directed at all of the following categories interested in management issues relating to the use of the Internet: academics, students, managers, business people, the informed general public and future aspects of these foregoing groups. The Internet will either work for us or it will work against us. It makes sense then to consider a number of different perspectives on what the Internet may do to us, as well as what it will do for us.

The 19 chapters have been organized into five groups. In one sense all of the groups offer different perspectives on Internet management issues, and all chapters within the various groups carry, thematically, a global message. The authors of the chapters collectively come from England, USA, Germany, Australia and New Zealand. Some of the chapters are somewhat technical and a few of the chapters may be difficult conceptually, but all of the
chapters, it is hoped, will have satisfied, by their own perspective, the aim of the book. This provides a number of advantages for the reader.

To begin with, the initial group, Section 1, “e-Commerce, e-Business and Web Page Design Issues,” covers the bulk of assumptions and implications of the latest information available to us on culturally informed Web interfaces, the power of the mobile Internet, issues relating to the user and e-Commerce in terms of interface design, the implications for global e-Commerce and issues relating to international user interfaces. All contributors to Section 1 are information systems academics.

Section 2 is a blend of contributions from management systems, communication and journalism, marketing, management and information systems and management science and information. The underlying theme of Section 2 is strategic Internet management issues. Its authors cover issues as diverse as electronic business strategic orientation; human factors and e-Commerce, virtual absenteeism and systems thinking and the Internet.

Section 3 considers more deeply the underlying assumptions of our interaction with the Internet and how we manage that interaction from the perspective of “Internet Management, Sustainability and Philosophical Issues.” Its opening chapter considers the Internet in relation to sustainable development and ecosystems and is written by three management information systems academics at the cutting edge of this topic. The second chapter deepens the theme elucidated in the previous chapter with “The Internet and Intercultural Communication and the Idea of Sustainability.” The remaining three chapters in Section 3 are all single authored. Two of these chapters treat the philosophical nature of ‘lived experience’ in one chapter and “Heidegger on the essence of information technology” in relation to the Internet in the other chapter. The third considers the critical nature of change inherent in the topic of “The Internet: An End to Classical Decision Modeling.” Perhaps the most difficult chapter in the book, especially for those not schooled in philosophical writings, is the ‘Heidegger and essence’ topic, but it is worth the effort for those who genuinely seek an answer to some of the most pertinent questions in this epoch on our real relationship to the Internet. It also serves as an academic grounding for previous chapters in this section.

Section 4 opens up the topic of Internet online data. The first chapter, by two mathematicians both very familiar with computer science, covers Internet data mining, and the second chapter, from two psychologists, examines the implications of their combined current research topic in relation to questionnaires on the Internet. Both of these chapters explore important topics that should appeal across all of the above-mentioned book readership groupings.

Section 5 covers the area of on-line health (one chapter) and on-line banking (two chapters). Consider that e-Commerce has spread to the health and banking fields, and already the Internet has had a significant impact on both industries, with Internet health and banking sites growing at an exponential rate. Clearly health and banking are, and will continue to be, lucrative e-Businesses. For example in e-health, currently there are over 20,000 health sites on the Internet offering information, expert advice and even drug prescriptions. While the majority of sites provide health information in the form of fact sheets, frequently asked questions, expert opinions, bulletin boards and chat rooms, there is a growing trend toward provision for full online consultations. As an emerging field, e-health offers many exciting
prospects, to both the health professionals as well as to the health consumer.

We are moving into an era where information and its higher co-relative knowledge, are no longer sufficient for nurturing—in terms of learning—an effective life, let alone an academic life. Information and knowledge have given way to, or perhaps more precisely, are beginning to embrace, ‘connectedness.’ In this respect, it is instructive to note that the Internet is a concrete example of connectedness. If information on the Internet comes to be treated as an artefact, then the danger is that knowledge, and self-knowledge in particular, may be construed in the same way (available and in no need of deeper thought). Good management, especially management that needs to manage the process of change, critically relies on thought that itself recognises the connections between things, not only for their own sake, but also for the clarity which is afforded of the whole implicated ‘picture.’ Effective communication is an effective understanding of the notion and power inherent in ‘connectedness.’ It is becoming increasingly evident that information and knowledge are given clarity via their thematic underpinning among many disciplines. Just under one-third of this book draws upon interdisciplinary subject matter to create a mix that is thematically appropriate for a study of management issues on the Internet, especially management issues that are conditioned by a global perspective.

The clear advantage for the reader of this book is the reward offered by a diversity of topics within the theme of management issues from a global perspective. All chapters were subject to at least four blind reviews with the exception of one specialist chapter. I feel confident that the range of topics presented in this book is sufficient for the reader.

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