Preface

The strategic use of information technology for global organizations represents a major component of their business plan. The strategic role involves using information technology to develop products, services, and capabilities to support strategic advantage in a global marketplace. Indeed, this role may support consideration of new business ventures with an international perspective.

Information technology supports current operations. Businesses employ intranets to improve information sharing and collaboration. Customer relationship management systems are used to maintain important contact with individuals or organizations that desire to acquire products and services. The Internet may be employed to communicate with customers, suppliers, and business partners. Web sites may be used to provide generic information, while e-mail may be the vehicle to support entity specific interaction.

Information technology facilitates business innovation. Cross-functional enterprise databases provide access to data to support innovative decision-making. Specific market niches may be identified in order to exploit global market penetration. The Internet may be used to optimize customer interaction. Online customer support may be provided via interactive Web sites. Innovative products and services may be developed. The Internet may be employed for online transaction processing for sales of products and provision of services.

In today's business environment, organizations must employ information technology strategically. Companies need employees with knowledge of and access to the technology. They also need customers and other business partners with access to the technology and the attitude that use of the technology is beneficial to all parties involved. Information technology should also be employed to link people, assets, and ideas. It is important that organizations be as agile as possible in order to respond to their ever-changing environment. Companies need to quickly respond to customers' needs in rapidly changing global markets. Information technology provides the information processing capability to treat masses of customers as individuals.

In order to sustain any competitive advantage gained through the application of information technology, companies must continually seek improvement. They must employ environmental scanning techniques to determine what technology is available. They must be willing to adopt new information technology. They need to know what

the competition is planning or doing. The following chapters address some of these important issues. This volume continues the custom established for this series of publications by presenting chapters that take either a global or regional perspective.

GLOBAL THEMES

The chapters in this section are related to investigations that adopt as their starting point a global or international perspective. In Chapter I, Lehmann employs four case vignettes to expand upon the architecture and design principles of international information systems. Pauleen, in Chapter II, reports on lessons learned about the operation of distributed teams functioning across multiple cultural boundaries. In Chapter III, Mason investigates whether knowledge management systems are able to respond to culturally diverse users. Evaristo, in Chapter IV, continues the theme of distributed projects in proposing a cross-cultural distributed project management model. In Chapter V, Lim employs the cultural dimension of power distance to explore how users work with software agents. Huang, Yen, Lin, and Huang, in Chapter VI, propose a conceptual framework for the design of future Internet-based education systems for virtual universities. In Chapter VII, Ganesh, Madanmohan, Jose, and Seshadri discuss strategies for firms involved in B2B marketplaces. Chow, in Chapter VIII, investigates success factors for the use of extranets in the supply chain. Finally, in Chapter IX, Koh, Lee, Yen, and Havelka document how the skill requirements of information systems professionals change throughout their careers.

REGIONAL THEMES

The chapters in this section include investigations that initially involve one or a few countries, which present conclusions that may be applied globally. In Chapter X, Peterson and Kim investigate the perceptions of risk, related to project failure, held by information systems designers in the United States, Japan, and Korea. Karlsbjerg, Damsgaard, and Scheepers, in Chapter XI, present a taxonomy of intranet implementation strategies based upon the experience of firms in Denmark and South Africa. In Chapter XII, Singh, Zhao, and Hu investigate Web site localization by comparing the domestic and Chinese Web sites of companies based in the United States. Kaarst-Brown and Wang, in Chapter XIII, report how small investment firms competed globally while based in the Turks and Caicos Islands. In Chapter XIV, Brown, Stander, Hoppe, Mugera, and Newman compare how the national environment of Singapore and South Africa affects the adoption of Internet banking. Li and Chang, in Chapter XV, employ a multinational China-based company to propose a framework for e-business strategy. In Chapter XVI, Poók and Pence report on the information infrastructures of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia in relation to their joining the European Union. Chen and Ching, in Chapter XVII, survey Taiwan financial service companies' use of customer relationship management systems to gain competitive advantage. Finally, in Chapter XVIII, Liu, Marchewka, and Ku propose a privacy-trust-behavioral model of intention regarding electronic commerce Web sites of companies based in the United States and Taiwan.