Special Issue on Informatics and Semiotics in Organisations

Kecheng Liu, University of Reading, UK

INTRODUCTION

This special section consists of three papers selected from the 2009 IFIP WG8.1 Conference on Informatics and Semiotics in Organisations (ICISO 2009). ICISO 2009 was devoted to the latest research in informatics and applications of organisational semiotics to address business problems. This was reflected in the main theme of this conference: “Information Systems in the Changing Era - Theory and Practice”. ICISO 2009 provided an opportunity for active researchers, practitioners, business and industrial professionals and academics from various domains of information systems and with diversified backgrounds to meet. This allowed them to share latest research achievements and practical experiences, and in particular to harness the greatest challenges in the changing era and think seriously into the future.

ICISO 2009 continued the effort of the international research community in the development of the emergent discipline in organisational semiotics and its applications. It focused not only on the theory building, but also on practical benefits gained so far through applications of methods and techniques derived from various approaches. ICISO 2009 attracted 222 papers from 19 countries and regions. 72 regular papers (33% of the total submissions) were accepted for publication at the conference. Having gone through additional reviews, three papers were selected from those in the conference proceedings for further extension and accepted for publication in this special section.

The paper “Actability Criteria for Design and Evaluation: Pragmatic Qualities of Information Systems” by Göran Goldkuhl is based on a keynote paper. It addresses the interplay between signs captured in information systems and actions in organisations. By introducing the theory of information systems actability, the role of information systems as instruments for technology mediated work communication has been clearly exemplified. In this work, the author proposes 18 actability criteria and further divides them into three groups. These criteria are useful in helping researchers to understand the importance of communication in information systems development.

The paper “Collective Construction of Meaning and System for an Inclusive Social
Network” by Vânia Neris and her colleagues demonstrates how organisational semiotics and participatory design benefit complex projects when multiple stakeholders are involved. Challenges in the design of inclusive social network systems in Brazilian context clear come from multi-perspectives; and the techniques from organisational semiotics have enhanced the quality of the systems design.

The paper “A Semiotic Analysis of a Model for Understanding User Behaviours in Ubiquitously Monitored Environments” by Keiichi Nakata and Stuart Moran proposes an approach for better understanding and explaining the behavioural impact of ubiquitous monitoring. The paper adopts the semiotic framework in the design of the intelligent pervasive spaces and guide researchers to avoid potentially undesirable side effects.

These three papers represent a typical spread of interests and relevant issues in the current research and practice in information systems. Informatics, the discipline dealing with effective management and utilisation of information resources in business and organisations, shows exciting development and benefits in this era of digital economy. To place informatics firmly on the theoretical foundation of semiotics and apply the methods and techniques in the organised contexts have already shown us tremendous value. This clearly calls for continued and concerted effort from all in the community of theoretical and applied informatics research.

Kecheng Liu
Guest Editor
IJISSC