Eleven Years of the Knowledge Management Track at HICSS: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an overview and history of the knowledge management (KM) research community at the Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS). This community began as a mini-track in HICSS-27 and has since evolved into full track status with the name Knowledge, Innovation, and Entrepreneurial Systems for HICSS-50. The purpose of this paper is to acquaint KM researchers with a rich history of high quality KM research that has evolved through a series of name changes.

KEYWORDS

HICSS, Knowledge Management, Knowledge-based Systems, Organizational Learning, Organizational Memory

INTRODUCTION

Joline Morrison and Lorne Olfman began a mini-track on Organizational Memory (OM) at HICSS-27 to “provide a forum for information systems and other related researchers and practitioners to share ideas and theories about organizational memory and organizational memory systems” (Morrison & Olfman, 2000). Like so many mini-tracks at the Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS), the OM mini-track brought together like minded researchers to share their ideas and their research in a thoughtful and collaborative venue in order to generate, nurture and advance academic research. It is unlikely either Morrison or Olfman envisioned a full-fledged research track growing out of their early efforts to foster and promote a community devoted to conducting research on the use of information systems to support organizational memory and organizational learning. This manuscript chronicles the development of today’s Knowledge Innovation and Entrepreneurship research track from its early days as a mini-track focusing on organizational memory. Our article is part of a larger project to celebrate the 50th anniversary of HICSS and illustrate the contributions and impact this research track has made on the broader community. We begin with a brief history followed by some descriptive statistics. We conclude by highlighting key papers and contributions that grew out of KM-themed HICSS proceedings.
KIES TRACK ROOTS

The Road from a Mini-Track to a Full Research Track

The Knowledge, Innovation and Entrepreneurial Systems (KIES) research track can be traced back to HICSS-27 in 1994 when Jolene Morrison and Lorne Olfman conducted a mini-track on organizational memory. This mini-track continued to evolve and grow over the succeeding years. The mini-track was renamed Organizational Memory (OM) and Knowledge Management (KM) in 1998 for HICSS-32. The name was further revised one year later to Knowledge Management, Organizational Memory, and Organizational Learning (KM, OM & OL) for HICSS-33. The name changes reflect the changing nature of the submissions along with the evolution of the community’s research interests. This evolution is documented by Jennex, et al. (2005) and found that the focus of research changed from organizational memory and organizational learning to knowledge management between 1998 and 2004, probably due to the release and popularity of “Working Knowledge” by Davenport and Prusak in 1998. While there were roughly equal numbers of papers in KM, OM, and OL in 1998, by 2004 there were 3 times as many papers focused on KM than on either OM or OL (Jennex, et al., 2005). Additionally, Jennex and Olfman (2002) had identified the relationship between KM, OM, and OL where KM is what the organization does with respect to identifying and using knowledge: OM is what the information systems group does to support KM by creating and maintaining the infrastructure and repositories necessary for the organization to use knowledge; and OL is the result in the organization from the use of knowledge. The relationships are circular in that KM is the initiating activity that identifies the knowledge needs that guide the information systems group in creating the necessary infrastructure and repositories for knowledge use, i.e. organizational memories that results in the organization using knowledge with the resulting organizational learning resulting in feedback to the KM activity for adjusting knowledge needs. These relationships formed the basis for the name changes as they reflected the research trinity (KM, OM, OL)


The mini-track experienced steady growth from its inception. The first three years yielded less than ten submissions per year. The mini-track welcomed 15 submissions per year between the HICSS-30 in 1997 and HICSS-33 in 1999. HICSS-34 had 26 submissions followed by 22 submissions in 2001 for HICSS-35. Suffice it to say that the first decade or so of the mini-track’s existence represented a small, but highly engaged, community of practice who congregated at HICSS conferences to discuss and explore the application of ideas that had been articulated by authors such as Huber, Davenport, Nonaka and Teguchi (KM), Senge (OL), and Stein, Zwass, Walsh and Ungson (OM). In 2002, 47 manuscripts were submitted to the KM/OM/OL mini-track – almost double the previous high years. It is not clear why the dramatic growth in interest occurred except that change tends to bring new energy to a project. Perhaps the change in leadership helped expand the network of scholars. Whatever the reason, 2002 proved to be a tipping point for submissions. At HICSS-37 in 2003, the increased interest in the mini-track led to the creation of the Knowledge Management, Organizational Memory, and Organizational Learning “Cluster” which featured four mini-tracks. The newly formed cluster received a total of 65 submissions. In 2004, 83 submissions were submitted across six mini-tracks. In 2005, the cluster was promoted to full track status as the Knowledge Management Systems track for HICSS-39.

The analysis in this paper looks at the submissions for the track history however we will note here how the name and scope of the track has continued to evolve; In 2012 ‘Management’ was dropped to reflect a broader research community as Knowledge Systems. A broader constituency was again reflected in the title in 2015 when the track became the Knowledge and Innovation Systems Track for HICSS-49. In 2016, the track expanded once again to include work being conducted in Entrepreneurship. The current HICSS-50 track title, Knowledge, Innovation, and Entrepreneurial
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