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Track: Enterprise Systems

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Description

Intranets are today a taken-for-granted infrastructure component in almost all organisations. When intranets first were introduced a little more than a decade ago, they were hailed as the ultimate solution to almost any organisational issue. The twentieth century literature on intranet management unanimously – and often uncritically – recommended intranets to be effectively managed, to not be allowed to evolve in ad hoc manners, and to be standardised and formalised via enforced procedures and routines. Otherwise it was argued that the intranet would collapse. Consequently, many (perhaps most?) intranets today are managed in a top-down fashion. Still, intranets appear to be heavily under-utilised and a quick web search reveals that there are plenty of texts on “why intranets fail.”

With this mini-track call, we would like to encourage a more critical approach to intranet studies, where the taken-for-granted views on intranets, intranet management, and intranet usage are scrutinised and questioned, and where the dissensus and conflicts among organisational actors and academic commentators are highlighted and discussed. We expect to see papers based on qualitative research methods such as in-depth case studies, but other approaches are most welcomed, as long as a critical perspective is applied.

Suggested Topics

Topics and themes that this mini-track would be interested in include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Intranet adoption and use: Academics and industry practitioners have reported mixed results on the uptake of intranets by end-users. It appears that a variety of factors influence the degree to which intranets are utilised. These factors include user characteristics, such as demographic and personality traits, as well as social/contextual factors of the environment in which intranets are situated. Research that explores and critically investigates the factors impacting adoption and use of intranets are welcomed.
- Intranets in comparison with the public web. Web technology is said to have been designed to enable a democratic and user-driven community whereas modern organisations often are hierarchical and management-driven. Research that explores if and how the technological spirit of the Web has been modified/developed/suppressed to fit the corporate world would make a useful contribution.
- Intranet management. No single actor owns the public web but most corporate intranets have explicit owners; often the IT department, sometimes the HR department. Research that has critically studied where ownership resides, how it has manifested itself, and what the consequences of too much or too little managerial control are invited.

- Intranet as a working tool. It has been claimed that intranets would make organisational processes more efficient and effective, supporting organizational members in their daily work. Research is sought that has critically analysed what tools and content are made available in today's intranets and who the users of these resources are. Research questions in this vein pertain to understanding user needs and critically investigating to what degree these needs have been met by the functionality afforded by organizational intranets.
- Intranets and social media. Following the emergence of social media applications such as Flickr, YouTube and Deli.cio.us on the public web, some organisations have started to implement similar applications on their own intranets. Research, from a critical perspective, on how such initiatives have turned out is welcomed. Youngsters brought up with online chat as an essential part of their communication repertoire will soon enter the business realm en masse. How will this affect organisations, their cultures and, most importantly, their intranets?