The Association for Information Systems (AIS) Special Interest Group for IT Project Management (SIGITProjMgmt) will globally promote and facilitate the creation, presentation and publication of research examining all facets of information technology project management, including pedagogical issues. SIGITProjMgmt will also strive to be the global leader in linking and integrating IT project management research and practice.

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SIG INFORMATION

We hope that you will consider participating in the activities of this group. When you apply or renew your AIS membership, select SIGITProjMgmt from the list of special interest groups when prompted. You can also add SIGITProjMgmt to your current membership at any time. The following websites provide additional information.

AIS website: http://home.aisnet.org and SIGITProjMgmt website:
http://www.sigitprojmgmt.org/
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

What a great year for SIGITProjMgmt! I want to thank all of those that participated in our SIG over the past year by approving our SIG bylaws, submitting research our AMCIS track, reviewing, and participating in other activities that are necessary to make this SIG successful.

In this issue of the newsletter, please note the various ways in which you can be involved in SIGITProjMgmt this coming year. We hope you will consider submitting your research to the pre-ICIS International Research Workshop on IT Project Management (IRWITPM) or to ECIS 2011 in Helsinki, Finland. This year will also mark our first officer election, and I hope you will participate in the election process. We are also working to start developing smaller sub-groups to focus on specific issues that are of interest to our members, such as an education committee. Finally, we hope to see you this year at IRWITPM in St. Louis.

This newsletter also highlights some of the research in project management with a summary of the best paper from the IT Project Management track at AMCIS 2010 as well as an article that discusses the use of simulation in an IT project management course. I hope you will consider submitting to a future newsletter to share your ideas with our community.

On behalf of the executive board of SIGITProjMgmt, we want to keep serving you by providing ways to share your research and be engaged in the community. If you have concerns, questions, or ideas, I hope you will share them with me or another SIG officer.

Stacie Petter, Ph.D., SIGITProjMgmt President
University of Nebraska at Omaha
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SUMMARY OF AMCIS 2010 TRACK ON IT PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Along with other major AIS SIGs, we were invited to sponsor a track on IT Project Management (ITProjMgmt) at AMCIS 2010 in Lima, Peru. This was an exciting opportunity to showcase research and share ideas among those that are interested in IT project management. Overall, there were twelve papers presented in the track and two posters. We had a great turn out for each of the sessions at AMCIS. We would like to give a special thanks to each one of the authors, reviewers, and session attendees for this success.

Michael Prifling's research titled "The Organizational Culture’s Influence on Risks in IT Projects – A Structuration Perspective" was nominated for best paper from our track. His research is summarized in the research opinions section of this newsletter.

NETWORKING NEWS

SIG information is posted on our website (http://www.sigitprojmgmt.org) as well as our IRWITPM website (http://sites.google.com/site/irwitpm/).

AIS has put together a listserv for all of the Special Interest Groups, including ours. To sign up for our mailing list please visit the following website: http://www.aisnet.org/AIS_Lists

Additionally, we have established a LinkedIn group for increased networking among our SIG members. Therefore, with your LinkedIn accounts you can now join the Group/Association titled: AIS SIG IT Project Management. We hope to see you there.
UPCOMING ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE MEMBERSHIP AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS CHAIR

The annual SIGITProjMgmt Workshop at ICIS is just around the corner. This year, three leadership posts are up for election: President, Treasurer and Communications Chair. We would strongly encourage you to consider applying for these positions. You are eligible to be an officer of SIGITProjMgmt so long as you have been a member for two consecutive years. That means if you were a member last year, and are going to join this year, you're eligible! The more help SIGITProjMgmt gets, the better SIGITProjMgmt can serve the needs of the ITPM community.

President: The President shall be the chief executive officer of the SIG. The President shall perform all duties that pertain to the office of the President and that may be assigned by the Executive Board. In furtherance of, but not in limitation of, the office, the President's primary duties shall be:

- Preside over all meetings of the members of the SIG.
- Call and chair all Executive Board meetings.
- Designate all committees and their chairpersons, with the concurrence of the Executive Board.
- Supervise all other officers of the SIG and see that their duties are properly performed.
- Accept and receive donations, gifts, devises, and bequests.
- Coordinate the SIG's activities and conduct any necessary business with external organizations.
- Ensure that all orders and resolutions of the Executive Board are put into effect.
- Submit at the annual general meeting an annual activity report of the operations of the SIG for the preceding year.
- The President will be elected on even-numbered years.

Treasurer: The Treasurer shall be responsible for fiscal matters concerning the SIG, and shall perform all duties that pertain to the office of Treasurer and that may be assigned by the President and the Executive Board. In furtherance of, but not in limitation of, the office, the Treasurer’s primary duties shall be to:

- Maintain the financial records of the SIG and produce an annual financial report.
- Review all applications for membership and maintain a membership roster.
- Submit an annual Financial Report to the AIS Treasurer.

Communications Chair: The Communications Chair shall be responsible for communicating with the SIG members about activities and other information related to the SIG. In furtherance of, but in limitation of, the office, the Communications Chair’s duties shall be to:

- Send calls for papers, proposals, and participation to SIG members.
- Notify SIG members and members of the Executive Board of all meetings and reports.
- Develop a quarterly newsletter for SIG members.
- Update the SIG website as needed.

If you are interested in running for one of these posts, send your name, a photograph of yourself (optional), e-mail address, and a one paragraph stating why you think you will be a good candidate to the chair of the election committee, Cecil Chua (aeh.chua@auckland.ac.nz). We’ll put the information up on the web on a candidates’ web page. Nominations close 30 days before our elections on Dec. 11, 2010 on Nov. 11, 2010.
When initiating our research project, we were aware of the shortcomings IT project management faces: high failure rates of projects, recognized both in practice and academia. We had the opportunity to do case study research at a large cooperative bank in Europe, and we realized that research on that particular area of business organization – mainly driven by the concept of mutuality – is very limited. With this knowledge, and our interest in IT project risk management, it turned out quickly that we wanted to investigate how IT projects are managed in this organizational environment. We chose an interpretive approach for our case study. In total, we interviewed 26 people from business and IT departments of this bank, most of them project managers and employees working for the organization of projects in the company. The main topics of interest in this case emerged soon: the specific techniques of project management, the way the project portfolio is organized, and the organizational culture affecting project management in general at this bank.

The results of our analysis show that the contextual factors, i.e., the organizational environment of the company, the ‘embeddedness’ into a specific ‘spirit’ of business conduct, its institutionalized rules, values, and personal norms, all influence the way of managing (IT) projects. Also, the manner how the project organization as a whole is constituted is driven by environmental conditions of the company – to a much larger extent than the literature would have suggested previously. So far, social-psychological factors, such as escalation of commitment (to a possibly failing course of action), sunk costs effects, completion effects etc. have been found to influence project manager behavior. It has been assessed how these psychological mechanisms have the potential to influence the management of IT projects, on an individual level. However, organizational culture with its institutionalized conventions, and project environments with their possible consequences for project management have not been analyzed so far.

In our case, the organizational culture of the company can be portrayed as soft and consensus oriented, as the notion of ‘cooperation’ would suggest in a cooperative company. Accordance of project stakeholders to the project goals was sought by project managers at every step in the process, and trying to get everybody ‘on board’ in terms of agreeing to project requirements (and tasks to achieve them) was essential to successfully succeed in any given IT project. This, however, also meant accepting possible delays due to additional, possibly unexpected efforts to reach consensus among participants. The main risk, according to our interviewees, was the non-availability of human resources as project staff, since most of the employees working for IT projects were actually working and organized along line functions within the company. Therefore, these project members had to be assigned for projects by their line superiors – getting their accordance towards the project was essential for project managers. In a strongly consensus oriented culture, this can mean ‘regular’ time shifts in IT projects, and project managers in our case needed to adapt their management behavior to meet these demands.

The portfolio of IT projects at the bank was also organized in line with the company’s consensus oriented culture. There was a tendency to start more IT projects than the limited number of resources dedicated to work for projects could handle. This situation, however, often resulted in a shortage of project staff, especially regarding key IT resources, such as JAVA programmers, who worked for several projects.

On the other hand, once an IT project was initiated, it regularly became a success in terms of meeting user’s demands and satisfying all project stakeholder’s expectations – even though the project was (slightly) late or (slightly) over budget. What really counted for the organization was the value created in
terms of process or product enhancements that resulted out of the project. Due to the lengthy decision making at the beginning of each project, trying to reach consensus among all stakeholders concerning project scope and requirements, high risk endeavors did not even get started, because for such kinds of projects, consensus could have never established. Therefore, sunk costs de facto did not occur, saving money by not having the need to abandon failing projects.

Our case illustrates how management of IT projects is highly influenced by the environmental forces, in which the project is embedded – in our case, within a cooperative banking environment, that is strongly characterized by a heavy will to reach consensus before and during a project. Also, the project organization as a whole, including project managers’ behavior, the methods of organizing a company’s project portfolio, and the way how project success is defined – here, in a balanced view of efficiency oriented project success criteria and outcome oriented terms of project effectiveness – is in one way or another a matter of cultural, contextual structures.

Future research might benefit from placing more emphasis on the institutional and organizational context in which IT projects are carried out in order to increase our understanding how projects are managed and finding new ways how to lower the rate of failing IT projects.

References


UPCOMING EVENTS

5th Annual International Research Workshop on IT Project Management

We are holding our 5th international Research Workshop on IT Project Management (IRWITPM) (in coordination with ICIS 2010) on December 11th, 2010 in St. Louis, Missouri. Completed research, research-in-progress, and panels may be submitted to the workshop. Selected completed research papers will be fast-tracked for possible publication in the Scandinavian Journal of Information Systems.

The deadline for submissions is September 15, 2010 and should be submitted via email to UNOIRWITPM@unomaha.edu.

Questions about the workshop or submissions can be directed to Workshop Program Chair, Dr. Stacie Petter (spetter@unomaha.edu) or the Workshop Proceedings Chair, Dr. Alanah Mitchell (mitchellaj@appstate.edu).

For more information about this workshop, visit our IRWITPM website (http://sites.google.com/site/irwitpm/) or the SIG website (http://www.sigitprojmgmt.org).

ECIS 2011 Track on IT Project Management

SIGITProjMgmt will be sponsoring a track on IT Project Management (ITProjMgmt) at ECIS 2011 in Helsinki, Finland.

You can find more details about the conference and the track at the ECIS website: http://www.ecis2011.fi/. The deadline for paper submissions is December 1, 2010.

If you have any questions, please email:

Stacie Petter, University of Nebraska at Omaha, spetter@unomaha.edu
One of the early works on how knowledge is acquired and accumulated, and how obsoleteness and forgetfulness affect the accumulated knowledge was done by Richmond and Peterson (1992). As shown in Figure 1, they argued that knowledge is accumulated through assimilation, and its value is reduced through forgetfulness and obsoleteness. But more importantly, Richmond and Peterson argued that the process of learning through assimilation is only part of the big picture; a learner's knowledge is augmented through rebuilding knowledge, rebuilding knowledge capacity, and through sharing knowledge capacity (lower half of Figure 1).

The learning process based on assimilation is the main, sometimes sole, learning process in traditional teaching schools (Zambon et al 2000). The 'flow of knowledge', as shown in the figure, is from the teacher to the students' knowledge repository (i.e. their brain). It is hoped that these repositories keep accumulating knowledge and the knowledge can be recalled when required or requested. Unfortunately this is usually not the case; some of the accumulated knowledge loses its value over time (a certain way of solving a problem might not remain the best practice indefinitely), and the knowledge bank is constantly depleting due to forgetfulness. In order to keep this stock of knowledge refreshed and up to date, teachers (and students) must utilise the remaining learning methods in addition to the assimilation. In some disciplines such as mathematics and engineering the current body of knowledge already includes a well-developed set of relationships (Richmond and Peterson 2000). Therefore, in those disciplines, knowledge is re-created and captured by students through developing problem-solving methodologies by way of assimilation and knowledge rebuild. Furthermore, students with pre-existing creativity and ingenuity can extend their knowledge bank by rebuilding and extending their knowledge capacity and sharing their new knowledge capacity with others.

In less procedural disciplines, such as management, the effect of assimilation on learning is reduced, as there are less number of universally applicable set of relationships and methodologies. In these disciplines, each problem presents unique challenges and hence commands unique solutions. Therefore it is pivotal that teaching and learning in those disciplines comprise all the learning methods
at the teacher’s disposal, i.e. all the learning methods depicted in Figure 1.

A typical project management course usually employs the assimilation process (as shown in Figure 1) in teaching the principals of Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBoK) or other similar frameworks, hoping students perform well in their professional career after graduation. As teachers with extensive industry experience, the authors realized early on in their career that there is a lot more to successful project management than prescriptive frameworks. Team and relation management play a significant role in success of project. This is what is sometime referred to as Professional Competence in Project Management. The authors set out to seek innovative methods to enhance professional competence of project management students. In a controlled environment we tested the effect of using simulation technologies on teaching and learning outcomes in a project management course at graduate level, and this article is a report of how this was implemented and evaluated.

The School of Business IT & Logistics within RMIT University offers a course in project management called “IT Project Management”. The course is part of a graduate degree in Information Technology (Masters of Business in Information Technology) and it is accredited by the Australian Computer Society.

The twelve-week course is based on the Project Management Institute (PMI) PMBoK framework, with additional attention being paid to governance and ethics; areas in which PMBoK is weak. Typical course enrolments are between 160 and 200 students per year. Most students have no previous training or experience in project management, although there are some with significant experience.

An important part of this course involves students’ immersion in a simulated project management exercise. A number of simulation exercises, based mainly on the execution phase of the Project Management Life Cycle were developed. In addition, the execution phase included events given to the students in near real time, and there was an increased emphasis on stakeholder management and communication. In addition, electronic tools were used to develop and distribute animations of events that affect the execution of the project.

Each week student groups met with their key stakeholders (role-played) in a simulated Project Steering Committee (Project Board) meeting. During the meeting, the syndicate presented reports on progress of the project, the status of the project compared to the planned baseline and a forecast for the following week. Each student group was expected to provide information appropriate to the project terms and conditions.

Presentation of events to students in near real-time created some sense of realism, as in real life, events do not have to be communicated – they just happen. Without this method of communication, the experience would have been blunt. Events happen during business hours through the week leading up to the weekly workshop role-play. This method of presentation requires members of the groups to keep in touch with each other as they react to the events. It also emphasises to the students that surprises in project management inevitably occur at inconvenient times.

Another way of adding realism was to use an appropriate method of communicating the event to students. Some events were notified by e-mail, others by voice-mail and yet others via text messaging (SMS).

Our animated sequences were created using Character Builder software by Media Semantic (Media Semantic 2010). Character Builder facilitates the building of animated scenarios with avatars and
simulated or recorded voices.

Figure 2 is an animated TV news broadcast. Receiving this “late-breaking” news clip, the project managers found out about floods that had closed Brisbane airport at a critical stage of a system implementation for a client in Brisbane.

In another animation (Figure 3), the project manager visited the doctor after feeling unwell. The consequence was that the PM was unable to visit the interstate client for a week.

Beyond conveying information in a more realistic fashion, a certain amount of tacit information can also be conveyed through animations by the way of gesture and tone of voice. Additionally, some information can be implied or left unsaid, encouraging the students to read between the lines or make inferences.

Through introducing simulation exercises, the authors have gone beyond mere assimilation of knowledge; the exercises provide an environment for the students to rebuild and share knowledge. The use of eSimulations and near real-time communication of events have augmented this environment so that students can immerse in the exercises, so much so that rebuilding and sharing knowledge capacity have become an implicit and tacit part of the experience.

Evaluation of the educational outcome of eSimulations has been carried out and repeated for different cohort of students, in order to minimise any bias a particular cohort might have on the educational experience. The evaluation overwhelmingly supports the idea that eSimulations have provided a holistic environment for the students, in which they can be immersed in the experience and develop their knowledge beyond what typical assimilation affords.

References


EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

At the IRWITPM 2009, we had an excellent panel on teaching PM in undergraduate programs. In some discussion held afterward, there was interest in creating a working group to create a space on our website to provide curriculum aides for those of us tasked with teaching project management. The discussion immediately suggested such things as syllabi, textbook reviews, cases, software, simulations etc. that could be posted.

The SIG leadership has enthusiastically supported this idea, so we are now requesting volunteers to be part of a committee to pull this together. The function of the committee will be to decide what the content of the website should be, collect the content and make it available to be posted on our website. We are looking for a number of individuals from different universities to be a part of this committee, ideally from all over the globe and representing graduate as well as undergraduate programs. Mike Cuellar, Secretary of the SIG will be an ex-officio member of the working group.

If you wish to volunteer, please send your email to Mike at mcuellar@nccu.edu. If you are interested in being chair of the committee, please also note this in your email. Given sufficient interest, we will have our initial meeting at IRWITPM in St. Louis in December or if we get a large response, we'll meet electronically before them.
CALL FOR NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

SIG ITProjMgmt members are all invited to offer items to the upcoming issue of the AIS SIGITPMgmt newsletter (Volume 2, Issue 2), to be published in February 2010. If you are interested, please send your submissions to Alanah Mitchell, mitchellaj@appstate.edu, by January 2010. Possible topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Short essay/opinion/research study (800 – 1700 words).
2. IT Project Management book review (800 – 1700 words).
3. Teaching Project Management (up to 1700 words), teaching ideas, cases, syllabi, etc.
4. Industry voice (800 – 1700 words), PM related essays from industry professionals.
5. Brief introduction of Project Management research tools (up to 300 words).
6. Brief introduction of interesting IT Project Management journals and/or special issues, including citation information, brief description, table of content (for special issues), etc.
7. CFP for IT Project Management related journals or conferences.

To view previous newsletters, please visit http://ais.affiniscape.com/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=801

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We would like to extend a thank you to the sponsors this year, including:

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