AJIS EDITORIAL

The Information Systems discipline is still relatively new and, unlike many more traditional areas of study, concerns aspects of the world that exhibit rapid and continuous change. There is continuing debate with respect to the identity of the discipline, its relationships with other disciplines and its research paradigms.

The papers in this special issue focus on an area that has perhaps received less critical attention that it warrants - the question of the fundamental knowledge that underlies the Information Systems discipline. The aim of the issue is to examine some of the theoretical foundations of Information Systems and the implications of candidate bodies of theory for practice.

Authors were encouraged to prepare papers that were stimulating, speculative and would encourage debate. In asking questions about the theoretical foundations of our discipline we are asking questions about its essence - the form and content of the knowledge we contribute to the world. It is in attempting to answer these primary questions that we have the potential to place our discipline on a more solid base than is currently the case.

As speculation was encouraged, we have some papers that may raise more questions than they answer. Nevertheless, in each paper there are valuable insights into elemental problems. We have papers that are **meta-theoretical** - they examine the nature and types of Information Systems theory, the form and justification for knowledge statements, and definitional aspects of theory. In addition, authors have nominated specific candidate theories as important for the Information Systems discipline: including Karl Popper's ontology, the **Bunge-Wand-Weber** ontology, actor-network theory, cultural-historical activity theory, philosophical theories of ownership and property, and theories of agency.

The papers selected to appear in this issue originated in contributions to the workshop "Information Systems Foundations: Building the Theoretical Base" at the Australian National University, 1-2 **October,** 2002. We thank the participants in this workshop, the reviewers, and the sponsors of the workshop: the School of Business and Information Management and the National Institute of Economics and Business. We also thank the members of the Plenary Panel at the workshop, who gave their views on the critical issues facing the Information Systems discipline. These panel members were Professor Graham **Pervan, (Curtin** University), Ann Steward, (Principal Advisor **e-Strategy,** National Office of the Information Economy), and **Roxanne Missingham** (Assistant Director General, Resources Sharing Division National Library of Australia).

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