Research Seminar:
Critiquing Sociomateriality: An Integrative Semiotic Framework for Information Systems Research

Presenter:
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Date:
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Venue:
Room 2063, Level 2, West Wing, Quadrangle Building
School of Information Systems, Technology and Management
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Abstract
The presentation argues that semiotics, the theory of signs and symbols, is at the heart of the representation and transmission of information and meaning, and is thus central, to communication and information systems, but especially in their contemporary, more virtualized forms. The paper is distinctive in eschewing post-structuralist uses of Saussurian semiotics, and recent theorizations of sociomateriality, instead developing an integrative framework grounded in Habermasian concepts, Peirceian semiotics and an underlying, integrating critical realist philosophy. We develop a semiotic framework to help analyze the complex interactions between three different worlds – the personal, the social and the material. Here semiosis relates to the personal world through the generation and interpretation of signs and messages. It relates to the material world in that all signs must have some form of physical embodiment in order to be signs, and must also be transmitted through some form of physical media. Semiosis relates to the social world in that the connotive aspects of sign systems are social rather than individual – they exist before and beyond the individual’s use of signs. The personal, social and material worlds between them bear relationships of sociation, sociomateriality and embodiment. The framework draws on fundamental concepts of information, meaning and embodied cognition. The presentation examines critically the implications of this formulation for studying information systems. It discusses commonalities with and departures from other studies, illustrates points with empirical examples, and details how the integrative framework can be utilized.

Biography
Leslie Willcocks is Professor in Technology Work and Globalization and Director of the Outsourcing Unit at London School of Economics and Political Science. He is Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Information Technology and JIT Teaching Cases, Associate Fellow Green Templeton College, Oxford, and has been Visiting Professor at many other universities. He holds a doctorate in
Leslie has a global reputation for his work in outsourcing, global strategy, organizational change and managing digital business. He has researched, educated and advised major corporations and governments globally on these issues for 25 years, and is co-author of 45 academic books and over 230 refereed journal papers on these subjects. He is a regular keynote speaker at international practitioner and academic conferences, and has been retained as expert witness by major corporations and government institutions in the UK, USA and Australia.

He is Fellow of the British Computer Society, and Institute of Personnel Development, a Certified Outsourcing Professional, and a Founding Fellow of the National Outsourcing Association. In February 2001 he won the PriceWaterhouseCoopers/Michael Corbett Associates World Outsourcing Achievement Award, and in 2014 was elected to the Hall of Fame of the IAOP, the professional institute for outsourcing (138,000 members and associates).

His AIS service includes: Founding member of ECIS, governance and steering committee first 7 years. Joint Programme chair for ECIS Verona. Multiple times track chair at ECIS. Joint chair of the First ECIS Phd Colloquium (Cork, 1997). ICIS programme committee service for four years. Programme chair (with Dov Teni) for Tel Aviv ICIS (subsequently moved to Barcelona). International programme chair ICIS St. Louis. Founded the first ICIS teaching case track. Multiple times track chair and panellist at ICIS. Senior Editor MISQ Executive (9 years). Senior Editor Information Systems Research (3 years).

Forthcoming books include Nine Keys to World Class BPO (Bloomsbury, 2015), Becoming Strategic: South Africa, BPO and the Global Marketplace (Palgrave, 2015), and The Economics of Outsourcing (Edward Elgar, 2014). As at August 2014 Leslie had 15,659 citations to his work, a H Index of 66, and an i10 Index of 160.