

■ KENNETH E. KENDALL, Feature Editor, School of Business-Camden, Rutgers University



Kenneth E. Kendall

is a professor of information systems in the School of Business-Camden, Rutgers University. He recently co-authored *Systems Analysis and Design (4th ed., Prentice Hall)* and edited *Emerging Information*

Technologies: Improving Decisions, Cooperation, and Infrastructure (Sage Publications). Dr. Kendall has published articles in *MIS Quarterly*, *Management Science*, *Operations Research*, *Decision Sciences*, *Information & Management*, and many other journals. He is one of the founders of the *International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS)*. Dr. Kendall is the past chair of *IFIP Working Group 8.2* and has served as a vice president for the *Decision Sciences Institute*. He is the *MIS editor* for the *Journal of Management Systems*, and an associate editor for *Decision Sciences*, *Information Systems Journal*, and *Information Resources Management Journal*. Professor Kendall's current research focuses on studying push and pull technologies and developing new tools for e-commerce analysis and design. He has designed graduate and undergraduate e-commerce programs at Rutgers and is scheduled to speak on e-commerce on at least four continents during this next year.

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Chun Kwong Han

is currently an associate professor and director of Electronic University at Universiti Putra Malaysia. He obtained a PhD in information technology from Cambridge University's Engineering Department. Dr

Han is the founding president of the *Management Science/Operations Research Society of Malaysia* and the *Call Centre Association (Malaysia)*. He is the author of the book *Government Information Technology Policies and Systems: Success Strategies in Developed and Developing Countries (Commonwealth Secretariat, London)*. His research papers have appeared in journals such as *OMEGA*, *Information & Management*, *Journal of Applied Systems Analysis and Accounting*, *Management and Information Technologies*. He is editor-in-chief of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management Sciences*.

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In this new column on e-commerce I hope to introduce a wide spectrum of opinions that will allow e-commerce programs to develop in our universities. I plan to invite academics and businesspeople to tell us their dreams, plans, and accomplishments. This is an opportunity for DSI members in a variety of disciplines to contribute, so one column may deal with e-commerce marketing, and the next may feature collaborative systems used in e-commerce sites.

Recently, *The Economist* (February 5-11, 2000) published an article entitled: "The Tiger and the Tech." It talked about Asia going "Internet mad" but questioned whether countries in Southeast Asia can catch up. We know from experience that, not only can countries catch up, but sometimes they can leapfrog over others, bypassing steps along the way. This month's column by Dr. Han describes how a Malaysian university plans to enter the world of e-commerce.

Creation of a Centre for Electronic Business at Universiti Putra Malaysia

Chun Kwong Han, Universiti Putra Malaysia



Electronic Business (e-business or e-commerce), the new way of doing business in the digital economy, is an increasingly important area that has yet to be adequately addressed at the national, industry, and firm levels. In Malaysia, the National E-Commerce Committee, chaired by the Chief Secretary, and the National IT Council's E-Economy Working Group, chaired by the Minister of International Trade and Industry, are in the process of finalizing two important projects: (1) the National E-Commerce Framework and Master plan and (2) the E-Economy Blueprint. These exercises are a compilation of opinions of a selection of government officials and businesspersons. They are timely and will be beneficial mainly because they will get people to start talking about the issues.

Establishing a Center

If progress in e-business is to be made, the next logical step is to devote a substantial amount of time to research. Therefore, we are in the process of establishing a center of excellence in electronic business in the Malaysian Graduate School of Management at Universiti Putra Malaysia. The center is essential if the Malaysian

government, the business community, and society at large are to harness the full potential of the emerging knowledge economy. The Centre for Electronic Business will have the following strategic objectives:

- To develop national excellence in e-business and facilitate the development of the knowledge economy in Malaysia
- To enable Malaysia to position itself competitively in the emerging international knowledge economy through harnessing the full potential of e-business
- To accelerate the development of strategic core competencies in e-business
- To promote best practices in e-business in public and private sector organizations

The critical functions of the Centre for Electronic Business at UPM are focused on several inter-linked niches. For example, the center is set up to act as a watch-dog for the National E-Commerce Master plan and the E-Economy Blueprint. Beyond these formal projects, the center will also monitor the progress of e-business in general and make policy recommendations to the Malaysian government. When firms become successful in e-business, the center will provide a forum for dissemination of

best practices and in that way showcase e-business success stories in collaboration with industry.

Research in E-business

Research will be an essential function of the Centre for Electronic Business at UPM. The long-term research thrusts are the business, economic, social, cultural, and technological implications of e-business in the emerging knowledge economy. The target audiences are the Malaysian government, community interest groups, and businesses, particularly small businesses and the emerging group of cyberpreneurs. The outputs will be policy and strategy recommendations and new business models for industry.

The Centre is embarking on a major research program on e-commerce to firm-up the Centre's thought leadership in this subject. The overall broad aim of this strategic program of research is:

To understand and assess the full potentials of e-business as a common platform for Malaysian businesses and a springboard for the global marketplace, anticipate their various ramifications, and recommend options for national and organizational strategies and programs for developing core competencies to exploit e-commerce for increasing national competitive edge in the world marketplace.

The research program will focus on the following:

- The measurement of the current status of private and public sectors in Malaysia for e-business;
- An evaluation of the emerging trends in e-commerce practices and policies in the global context and gap analysis for Malaysia vis-à-vis the rest of the world especially EU, USA, ASEAN, Australia, Japan, and Sweden;
- An evaluation of the impacts and implications of e-commerce on the current system of taxation, security, privacy, intellectual property, commercial codes, dispute resolution, communication network infrastructure, payment system, logistical support, content regulation, content industry, and consumer protection. Strategic options and necessary realignments at the national, regional, and international levels are to be recommended;
- Critical appraisal of existing and planned e-commerce projects in the public and private sectors;
- Identifying business areas and niches in which Malaysian companies have natural competitive advantages;
- Potential impacts of e-commerce in critical economic sectors;
- Potential impacts on work culture, processes, and systems at organizational level

and organizational strategies to address them; and

- Identifying critical success factors in e-commerce at the national and sector levels, and the strategies, action plans, and projects to capitalize on strengths and opportunities

The Centre for Electronic Business at UPM will conduct needed empirical research.

As you can see, the general goals for the Centre for Electronic Business at UPM as well as the specific goals in the research center are meaningful and many. It will take a great amount of effort to achieve these goals, but it is critical that we begin now.

If you would like more information, you may email me at hanck@pc.jaring.my, visit the UPM website at <http://www.upm.edu.my>, or write to me at: Dr Chun Kwong Han, Director, Centre for Electronic Business, Malaysian Graduate School of Management, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia. ■

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The Doctoral Students Issues feature describes what was one of my favorite books when I was a doctoral student. Gordon B. Davis of the University of Minnesota describes the new, updated edition of *Writing the Doctoral Dissertation: A Systematic Approach*. This helpful book provides a useful guide to both doctoral students and the professors advising them on applying project management, combined with systems analysis, to the problem of writing a doctoral dissertation. In addition to composite case studies of students who managed their dissertation process poorly or well, it also contains tips for dealing with common prob-

lems encountered by students during the dissertation process and estimators for planning the time involved in dissertation work. The first edition was read by over 50,000 doctoral students and the newly updated edition promises to continue to be a useful guidebook.

I am happy to introduce the new Ecommerce column, which will be a continuing feature. Edited by Ken Kendall of Rutgers University, this column will take a multidisciplinary perspective on some of the research and teaching issues related to Ecommerce that we are faced with every day. He begins with an article by Chun

Kwong Han of the Universis Putra Malaysia, on "Creation of a Centre for Electronic Business at Universiti Putra Malaysia." It describes an industry-government collaboration to promote his country's excellence in e-business and position Malaysia competitively in the emerging knowledge economy. In addition to working with the Malaysian government to promote e-business, this center also provides research opportunities for studying the business, economic, social, cultural and technical implications of e-business.

Watch future issues of *Decision Line*, where we will continue to introduce new features! ■