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It is a great pleasure and privilege to accept the responsibility of being the new feature editor of the Information Technology column. I thank Lance Elliot, the former guest editor, for his excellent work in writing for this column throughout the 1990s.

For the last few years this column has not been a regular feature, and the Institute is keen on getting it restarted. In his inaugural column, Keong Leong, the new editor of *Decision Line*, wrote that the vision of this publication is “to provide a forum for opinions, discussions, and philosophical statements regarding the Institute’s goals as well as be a means of keeping abreast of the latest developments in various disciplines.” The spirit of staying current with latest developments, as expressed in this vision, is highly relevant and appropriate to Information Technology (IT).

Information Technology permeates all facets of our society and a significant portion of the economy—both domestic and international. During the last decade IT has created new, if not more attractive, alternatives for the way we communicate, interact, and transact social and personal activities. For the economy, the IT sector has gone through and is still experiencing an evolving set of phenomenal developments. As recognized in the Economic Report of the President transmitted to the U.S. Congress in 2001, such developments have been dramatically significant within the IT sector and throughout the economy influenced by IT.

Innovations Within the IT Sector

by Sub Samaddar, Feature Editor

Historically, the innovation drivers and processes that create new information technology have shifted fundamentally from being supported by mostly governmental agencies (such as defense spending), to private investors (such as venture capitalists and entrepreneurs). This shift has caused an avalanche of continued new innovations in IT. Chapter 3 of the economic report discusses many of these developments of which I will focus on three for elucidation.

First, competition among IT firms has intensified significantly due to an increasingly deregulated economy in which international trade is a critical necessity. Such intense competition has forced a surge in private R & D spending on IT and in the pace of innovation (as measured by the number of IT patents granted annually) to provide newer strategic capabilities.

Second, IT firms have changed in the way they organize. IT firms are increasingly using more collaboration and networked effort among themselves in order to spread the costs and risks of innovation rather than going solo. Inter-firm knowledge and work transfer has become normal practice rather than a novel concept.

These developments together continue to fuel newer innovations in a cumulative manner.

Third, and not final, there have been new complementary developments within the sector, too. Innovations in one area have created demands in another. For instance, breakthroughs in communications and data compression techniques generate demand for improved software and for more powerful computers and other hardware.

Innovation Throughout Various Sectors of Economy

The same economic report referred above also testifies that companies from various sectors of the U.S. economy have been radically transformed by the new IT and other technologies that enable entire production and business processes to become more efficient, effective, and integrated. These transformations are manifested in various ways including the creation of newer and efficient methods for production processes, communication, coordination and control;

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before and after the meeting, and tours in the Shanghai area during the meeting.

Further information will appear in *Decision Line* and will be available through the DSI WebSite. The e-mail address for the conference is DSI2003@ceibs.edu

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changes in inventory and supply chain management, new relationships with customers, creation of new finance tools and knowledge products, trading capabilities and information transparencies, and shifting corporate boundaries.

A Multidisciplinary Phenomenon

IT is a multidisciplinary phenomenon that manifests itself in an interdisciplinary manner. The above developments undeniably influence what is of interest to most academic disciplines and practice professions that make up the membership base of the Institute.

This is because, as a natural consequence of the above mentioned and other developments in the IT sector and beyond, it has the potential of altering, redefining and continuously reshaping the problems of interest to various traditional College of Business disciplines such as DSC, MIS, POM, Management Science, Marketing, Finance, Organization Science, Strategy, Entrepreneurship, Economics, and so on. It is also recognized that disciplines such as Computer Science, Information Science, Sociol-

ogy, and Communications, which traditionally have resided in Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Colleges of Engineering and others, have been influenced by the developments in IT and are poised to influence the future developments that relate to IT. All these disciplines—some represented by the current membership and some are not—are involved, albeit to a varied degree, in defining issues and problems as they relate to the intersecting space of one's individual field and IT, and in developing theories to guide understanding, creating, and evaluating new applications that make ways to exploit latest innovations in the IT sector. Therefore it is quite predictable that the academics and practitioners from each of these membership disciplines can contribute to and find relevant information from this IT column.

I welcome article contributions from individuals engaged in researching, teaching, and practice of IT from the perspectives and benefits of each and every disciplines that make up the current constituent membership of the Institute. As a starter I would like to encourage contrib-

uting articles in a diverse set of topics and perspectives. Such topics can include any new development, issues and opinion/position paper on IT research, pedagogy and practice in the realm of both national and international dimensions. I would like to encourage a diverse set of authors from varied disciplines and schools of thoughts and practice (as identified, but not limited to, in the previous paragraph) as well. Articles should preferably be of four to six printed pages. Please send your contributions or ideas for this column and all inquiries to me.

References

- Economic Report of the President Transmitted to the Congress.* (January 2001). Council of Economic Advisers. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office.
- Leong, K. (2002). From the editor, *Decision Line*, 33(2), March. ■