MISRC/CRITO Symposium on the Digital Divide  
Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis, August 27-28, 2004  

The Impact of the Digital Divide on Management and Policy  
Determinants and Implications of Unequal Access to Information Technology  

It is widely presumed that universal access to information technology (IT) would bring about a global community of interaction, commerce, and learning resulting in higher standards of living and improved social welfare. However, during the 1990s researchers and policy experts began debating the existence of a “digital divide” between those with access and those without access to IT. After a decade of debate by experts in public policy, communications, philosophy, business management and economics there still is no consensus on the definition, extent, or even the existence of the digital divide. While this issue has been addressed in many contexts, there has been little attention given to the impact of the digital divide on management strategies and policy formulation.

Purpose of the Symposium

For those in the management and policy communities, the existence of the digital divide should have a profound impact on how firms compete globally, the creation of the information age organization, and the diffusion of online commerce, strategies for offering online services, and policies for promoting access to IT and the Internet. Recent research within the academic community indicates that the digital divide can be identified at three levels:

- **National Level** – while some countries have invested heavily in IT and adopted policies to promote corporate and individual adoption, other countries are being left behind technologically, and may never be able to catch up to their neighbors;
- **Organizational Level** – some organizations use IT to gain advantage over their rivals and redefine the rules of engagement within their industry, while others lag behind as technological followers putting themselves at a strategic disadvantage; and
- **Household Level** – those who are technologically, sociologically, or economically disadvantaged may lack or forgo access to IT creating a gap between themselves and those who choose to make IT an integral part of their daily life. Indeed, there is considerable variation in access to technology across geographical areas; e.g., access to broadband Internet access is still very sparse in rural areas.

The potential existence of the digital divide is of interest to those conducting research in business management, especially in the areas of information systems and marketing, and those working in related areas of economics and public policy. Specific phenomena of interest within the context of the digital divide are adoption and dissemination of information technology, the pricing and diffusion of online products and services, the creation of an IT-
literate workforce, the way organizations make strategic use of IT, and the formulation of policies regarding the regulation and promotion of access to technology and the Internet.

The MISRC/CRITO Symposium on the Digital Divide will bring together researchers and scholars who are studying the contributing factors and the business implications of these issues to engage in a dialog that will promote further research in the area. The two-day event will allow researchers to present their research findings, receive feedback from symposium participants, and interact with an expert research panel to debate the key managerial and business issues related to the digital divide.

**Research Topics**

Symposium organizers invite scholarly papers to be submitted and presented on a range of issues related to the determinants and business implications of the digital divide. Submissions may utilize technical, managerial, behavioral, organizational, and/or economic perspectives on the study of the digital divide. The topics in the workshop may include (but will not be limited to) the following:

- What is the extent of the digital divide at the national, organizational, or household level? What is the current level of access to IT and what factors prohibit access?
- What are the microeconomic implications of the three levels of the digital divide? What are the macroeconomic implications?
- What potential negative consequences are there for bridging the divide? Are there some stakeholders that may have an incentive to not have the divide bridged? What are the policy reasons to subsidize or not subsidize access?
- Is there a linkage between IT access/ adoption to worker productivity, corporate advantage, or economic development?
- Are corporations that lag behind necessarily at a disadvantage?
- What are the implications of the digital divide for online commerce?
- How does the digital divide differ in developing regions versus industrialized countries at the household level? at the corporate level?
- How does the existence of the digital divide impact online and offline pricing?
- Does a “digital divide” exist between online users as to how they use online services and what are the implications for commerce? What is the nature of this “divide”? What impact will the digital divide have on economic stratification and corporate strategy within and between countries?
- How does the digital divide affect corporations that operate across national boundaries? those that engage in offshore outsourcing of IT services?
- What are the appropriate methodological approaches to studying the digital divide within the IS research community?
- What are the appropriate research directions for the IS research community related to the digital divide?

Submissions can be conceptual papers that frame the issues and inspire further research, empirical studies of the digital divide and its implications, case studies that illustrate corporate or economic policies related to the digital divide, or analytical modeling of the divide and its implications.
Symposium Co-Chairs
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Manuscript Submission
Based on the above scope and guidelines, authors are invited to submit papers representing original contributions on the digital divide. Submitted manuscripts should be not more than 5,000 words in length excluding tables and figures. Full-length papers are not required in the case of theory building or conceptually oriented submissions. However, submissions must contain a sufficient description of the phenomenon, theoretical or conceptual perspective, and intended contributions for reviewers to assess the merit and potential of the submission. Authors must articulate how their work contributes to the intended goals of the symposium.

Submissions must be emailed to Fred Riggins (friggins@csom.umn.edu). Documents in standard word processing formats (e.g., PDF or Microsoft Word) are preferred.

We will invite a number of authors to submit post-symposium revisions of the highest quality papers for expedited review and consideration for publication in the *Journal of the Association of Information Systems*. The review process will be similar to what the journal uses following its annual “JAIS Theory Workshop,” which involves participants from the workshop as reviewers, as well as senior editor reviewers. If you are interested in submitting a paper that you also would like to have considered for *JAIS*, please contact Fred Riggins in advance of submission to indicate your interest, and obtain additional guidance.

Important Dates
June 14, 2004:       Deadline for submission of papers
July 16, 2004:       Acceptance notification
August 27-28, 2004:  Symposium dates

Event Location
The event will be held at the Executive Development Center of the Carlson School of Management, 321 19th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55455 on the University of Minnesota campus. The EDC is located on the second floor of the CSOM building.

Event Sponsors
The Symposium on the Digital Divide is sponsored by the MIS Research Center at the Carlson School of Management of the University of Minnesota and the Center for Research on Information Technology in Organizations at the University of California, Irvine.

Further information is available at the [www.misrc.umn.edu/symposia/dd](http://www.misrc.umn.edu/symposia/dd)