

## FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

Welcome to this special issue of the *Journal of Individual Employment Rights* devoted to “Implications of Technology and Information Systems for Individual Employment Rights.” The rise of the Internet has helped to create and sustain the growth of the global economy. Even in organizations traditionally characterized as regional or local enterprises, individual employees and their employers are increasingly under pressure to perform in the context of the global economy. Examining the tension between individual employment rights and employer obligations arising in an information technology-dominated global environment has fueled a number of the research questions posed here.

In editing this special issue, we have had as our goal the idea of covering IT and individual employment rights from as many different aspects as possible. The body of IT and information systems literature frequently is characterized in terms of the actor in the information systems development project. Typically, projects include employers who initiate systems projects, investing in them to improve productivity and profitability; diverse users of the information technology (employees); systems analysts and programmers who analyze, design, and develop information systems; IT professionals who design, create and manage voice and data networks; organizations that use IT strategically to achieve their goals; and the international context comprised of firms that are multinational entities or which have locations worldwide and a global community, replete with the full panoply of wealthy and developing nations that strive to use IT to further their political, economic, social, and legal objectives in interaction with each other and their citizens.

Viewed from this perspective, we hope you judge this special issue as providing balanced coverage of the use and development of information technology by individual employees in organizations here and abroad. We have included articles covering the perspective of organizations attempting to use IT strategically and operationally to support desired individual employee behaviors; the user perspective; the international perspective on employee e-mail usage and privacy in several different countries, and the perspective of African American IT professionals in the United States.

We believe that this is a timely topic and that the five research articles offered in this issue will enable you, as reader, to view this subject from multiple scholarly perspectives. The articles submitted for review underwent a rigorous double-blind

peer review process and authors' whose work survived the first round completed multiple revisions during the following process. The reviewers and authors worked diligently throughout to ensure that their articles were current and consequently, we believe that the material will provide fresh insights into their topics. The articles herein reflect the work of eight very diverse authors in terms of race, age, gender, and country of origin. In fact, a cursory inspection of their backgrounds reveals that our eight authors originally hailed from four different countries. Their ability to live and work internationally is evident in the research material you will find in this issue. All of the articles take a unique research perspective and each has made a contribution to our understanding of IT and individual employment rights.

Our lead article, "Using High-Performance Work Systems to Support Individual Employment Rights and Decrease Employee Telecommunication Violations in the Workplace," by Zachary M. Leffakis (University of Toledo, USA) and William J. Doll (University of Toledo, USA) makes a contribution by proposing a unique idea for developing a High Performance Work System (HPWS) to "lower employees' propensity to misuse telecommunications," by creating an effective work environment that ensures a climate of mutual communication and trust that "telecommunication systems will be operated properly." The authors convincingly demonstrate that in this way employees will have to surrender their expectation of privacy and at the same time they can be free of harassing activities of colleagues, as well as escaping authoritarian prevention and control methods often employed in relation to the operation of telecommunication systems in the workplace.

The second article in this special issue, entitled "Balancing Employee and Employer Rights: An International Comparison of E-mail Privacy in the Workplace," by André M. Everett (University of Otago, New Zealand), Yim-Yu Wong (San Francisco State University, USA) and John Paynter (University of Auckland, NZ) demonstrates a changing global response to individuals and the information technology (IT) of e-mail and Internet services that they use in the workplace. Their international study examines e-mail rights and privacy privileges versus employer monitoring of employee Internet activities with specific examples from relevant legislation in several English-speaking countries, including New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. Their systematic and thorough investigation serves to deepen our awareness of the growing tension between employee privacy rights and company security, and their work is a meaningful contribution to the ongoing debate over employee rights to privacy versus an employer's right to monitor employee interaction with information technology.

Our third article moves away from considering the usage of information technology into the realm of the design of information systems. In the article "Employee Rights and Participation in the Design of Information Systems in the European Union and the United States: Codetermination Laws and Voluntary Participation," by Evan W. Duggan (University of Alabama, USA), and Din K.

Duggan (Ernst & Young, Atlanta, USA) the authors have performed a critical appraisal, using literature from IT as well as the legal literature, to examine employee rights to participate in the design of information systems from the perspective of employees in the European Union and in the United States. Duggan and Duggan make a contribution by illuminating the similarities and differences between voluntary employee participation in systems design projects versus participation that is part of codetermination laws, highlighting the organizational benefits of employee participation in systems design and noting the potential for improved quality of work life when this approach is taken.

The fourth article in this special issue is “Agile Methodologies and the Lone Systems Analyst: When Individual Creativity and Organizational Goals Collide in the Global IT Environment,” by Julie E. Kendall (Rutgers University, USA) and Kenneth E. Kendall (Rutgers University, USA). In this article, we describe a current dilemma faced by employees (systems analysts and programmers) who develop information systems when their organization adopts new methods of working that require close collaboration with one other person on a programming project. The global information technology environment has contributed to pressures on IT professionals to adopt methods that deliver innovative systems rapidly. However, individual work styles and preferences often valued in creative environments are being challenged by organizational demands to develop new information systems in a competitive, interactive, and rapid manner. Through our work we have sought to contribute to the field by raising awareness of the tension between classical systems development methodologies and innovative ones. In addition, we cover the difficulty faced by organization in trying to respond competitively to new market demands while respecting the creativity and skills of the individuals upon whom they are relying.

Shifting the emphasis away from the employee as IT user and design participant, the fifth and final article in this issue focuses on a specific group of IT professionals, “African-American IT Professionals: Diversity and Employment Rights Considered,” by Fay Cobb Payton (North Carolina State University, USA). Payton’s original research investigates information systems development from the standpoint of African-American IT professionals who are IT workers educated to be telecommunications workers, systems analysts, systems designers, network administrators, database administrators, and so on. Payton identifies four classes of factors that appear to impede career advancement, each of which holds broader implications for individual employment rights of African-American IT professionals. Her insights, derived from analysis of 30 in-depth interviews, are revealing and make a strong contribution to our understanding of the stark contrasts between the individual and collective employment experiences of the African-American IT professionals and their white counterparts.

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