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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the multiple rewards of teaching information systems (IS) abroad, drawing on the experience of an IS professor who has been awarded three Fulbright scholarships in the 1990s. The author draws extensively upon personal experiences in Russia to illustrate the challenges and benefits of teaching in foreign institutions. The impact of the experience is discussed in these areas: course content, curriculum development, economic development, research, and professional development. The opportunities and incentives to teach information systems abroad have increased significantly in the 1990s, particularly in emerging economies, where the need for IS faculty is critical. Although information systems have "gone global" in practice, few positions are reserved for IS faculty in prestigious educational and research exchange programs, in contrast with fields such as economics, business administration, and marketing. Often IS faculty must locate programs and host institutions, and solicit and submit invitations to teach to grantors such as the U.S. Information Agency. The need for IS faculty, particularly in emerging economies, is critical. Continuous reexamination of scope and mission is symptomatic of a healthy, vibrant discipline. Work in societies which are self-consciously engaged in historic geopolitical and socio-economic transition offers irreplaceable experience for insights and creative solutions which are impossible at arms length. A list of research subjects is included to illustrate the panoply of resources available for IS practitioners and educators. (Contains 24 references.) (Author/AEF)

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TAKING THE SHOW ON THE ROAD: THE MULTIPLE REWARDS OF TEACHING INFORMATION SYSTEMS ABROAD

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This paper discusses the multiple rewards of teaching information systems (IS) abroad, drawing on the experience of an IS professor who has been awarded three Fulbright scholarships in the 1990s. The author draws extensively upon personal experiences in Russia to illustrate the challenges and benefits of teaching in foreign institutions. The impact of the experience is discussed in these areas: course content, curriculum development, economic development, research, and professional development.

The opportunities and incentives to teach information systems abroad have increased significantly in the 1990s, particularly in emerging economies, where the need for IS faculty is critical. Although information systems (IS) have "gone global" in practice, few positions are reserved for IS faculty in prestigious educational and research exchange programs, in contrast with fields such as economics, business administration, and marketing. Often IS faculty must locate programs and host institutions, and solicit and submit invitations to teach to grantors such as the USIA. The need for IS faculty, particularly in emerging economies, is critical. Continuous re-examination of scope and mission is symptomatic of a healthy, vibrant discipline. Work in societies which are self-consciously engaged in historic geopolitical and socio-economic transition offers irreplaceable experience for insights and creative solutions which are impossible at arms length. A list of research subjects is included to illustrate the panoply of resources available for IS practitioners and educators who "take the show on the road".

THE GLOBALIZATION OF EDUCATION

In the 1990s, opportunities and incentives to work abroad increased significantly for IS practitioners and educators. Information-rich and communication-intensive services such as insurance accounting, medicine, law, security, publishing, financial services, management consulting, software programming, and advertising became internationalized. By 1997, IT-enabled global services comprised almost a third of United States exports, and the quantity and the value of exported services continues to increase annually. By 1997, IT-enabled global services comprised almost a third of United States exports, and the quantity and the value of exported services is accelerating and irreversible.

Seminal improvements in information technology (IT) and communications facilitated the maturation of the global market and the implementation of progressive business strategies, and simultaneously stimulated seismic geopolitical and infrastructure changes in emerging markets, especially in Eastern Europe. As a result, in the last half of the decade, a broad variety of white collar professionals work routinely with global business partners, regulators, and customers throughout the wired world.

The globalization of education followed and mirrored the internationalization of IS and business services. Universities have been followers, not leaders, in both globalization and also business reengineering. In the intense

competition for applicants in the past twenty years, schools of higher learning have reinvented themselves, progressing from contained space, to universities without walls, to universities across borders. The search for new pools of applicants, American students' demands for study abroad and for intensive language training, the enhanced prestige gained through international partnerships, and the demonstration effect of lucrative global alliances created both a need and a willingness to serve students both at home and abroad through faculty exchanges. Colleges or faculty who avoid the new arena face critical experiential, intellectual, and financial disadvantages.

The pressure on colleges and universities to open new markets can lead to a sea-change in academic life, an intellectual as well as a physical movement toward integrated, extended, and open institutions which facilitate not only cost-effective synergy but also quality improvements. Perhaps more than any discipline in the university, the quality of the IS curriculum depends on a global focus. The integration of communications and computer technology which spawned ubiquitous software houses, consulting services, and multinational management both enables and requires IS researchers and educators to "take the show on the road".

Educators who live and work in varied international settings, gain an expanded appreciation of IS in the new millennium through fresh cultural and economic perspectives, and can incorporate current global issues in research and in class with alacrity. For the IS educator, the movement abroad offers at least nine areas of opportunity:

1. multidisciplinary research and teaching;
2. exposure in the field to novel socioeconomic issues;
3. a fresh view of changing business needs and ranges of appropriate solutions;
4. the impact of varied value systems upon IS ethics;
5. acquaintance with a variety of IT infrastructures;
6. invaluable contacts and partnerships;
7. the exchange of student ideas and projects at home and abroad;

8. a position from which to anticipate and evaluate future global changes, with an area of specific global expertise;
9. time and a new space in which to listen and observe, to indulge in the role of witness and in travels of the mind.

IS teaching and research abroad requires not only multidisciplinary approaches, but also an ongoing evaluation of the parameters of IS as a field of study. For example, an ongoing examination of the confluence of factors which create strategic advantage in various global settings calls for an ongoing evaluation of purpose and method: "Are we asking the right questions?" "What is changing?" "What insights and tools can we borrow or supplement here?" This re-examination of scope and mission of IS ensures a healthy, vibrant field of study. Work in societies which are self-consciously engaged in historic socio-economic transitions offers not only insight into IS, but also life experiences which are impossible at arms length.

Four sections of this paper, drawing on experiences in Russia, and also Morocco to a lesser degree, illustrate some specific challenges and benefits of work abroad in these areas: course content, curriculum development, economic development, and research and professional development.

APPOINTMENTS ABROAD: A CHANGING PATTERN

Like other exportable United States-based services, education has become a "hot" global commodity. Educational services are exchanged in three ways: electronically through distance education, by the importation of foreign students, or by the exportation or exchange of faculty. American business education is especially salable, but the dominant paths for faculty to secure a foreign position have shifted in recent years. In the 1990s exchange programs, corporate grants, multiple campuses abroad, and marketing programs aimed at Internationals have increased. In contrast, grants and fellowships through non-profit private organizations and government agencies may be in permanent decline.

With the collapse of communism in the West and federal budget constraints, cuts in the United States Information Agency budget have reduced by approximately 25 per cent the number of Fulbright senior fellows sent abroad in the past three years. Also, in 1997, responsibility for the senior scholar program was transferred to the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars, and numerous changes in the Fulbright program, especially shorter awards, are being contemplated. Although information systems (IS) have "gone global" in practice, few positions are reserved for IS faculty in prestigious educational and research exchange programs, in contrast with fields such as economics, business administration, and marketing.

However, the growth of the Internet and collaborative partnerships create innumerable opportunities for IS faculty who want to teach abroad. This is particularly true of institutional alliances, often involving multiparty arrangements between schools in the United States, Western and Eastern Europe, China, and the Pacific Rim. Within Russia, for example, Ohio State has a relationship with the University of Tomsk, the University of Maryland engages in faculty and student exchanges with the University of Irkutsk, and the University of Alaska has an arrangement with Vladivostok. Interested faculty may ask numerous United States-based universities about vacant positions abroad which the sponsoring institution is generally eager to fill. Resource reference books such as Deans' and Loch's Thunderbird Guide, assist educators to locate host institutions and programs, to propose a foreign appointment directly or through third parties. When a bilateral agreement is not already in place, however, faculty must convince their administration to grant leaves of absence and possibly financial support.

TEACHING ABROAD

In developing economies and in the emerging economies of Eastern Europe, IS faculty are commonly invited to teach within Departments of Economics. Indeed administrators and faculty may not know what IS is, and often ask for catalogue descriptions and syllabi. Within the first and second tier of universities, Schools of

Business are uncommon; within polytechnic institutions and trade schools, informatics and computer science are established fields of specialization, but students in these departments typically lack the barest acquaintance with business applications except for a limited exposure to labor management. Across the spectrum of diverse educational systems, the key learning and teaching challenge is to position IS within a broad context of changing business needs and resources. IS educators are expected to present not only cases and dominant trends in United States business practice, but also understand "local" information needs and IS solutions. IS educators who focus on business information needs often introduce the host institution to an understanding of IS for the first time, and visiting professors can be enormously helpful in the foundation of an IS curriculum. In addition, IS cases and videos set in different economic systems have the bonus effect of teaching the importance of quality, cooperation, and competitiveness in successful organizations.

Although Eastern European institutions often accept English-speaking in the second half of the 1990s, the problem of language may arise there and elsewhere. The author taught both international business and IS in a variety of institutions in Russia and Morocco: all business courses were presented in French in Morocco, most lectures in Russia could be delivered in English, or in a combination of Russian and English with the help of a translator. However, research and networking would have been severely constricted without fluency in Russian.

It was a privilege to define "local" information needs and to identify the most important questions in finance, accounting, or marketing for colleagues and students in nascent market economies. IS educators who focus on business information needs often introduce the host institution to an understanding of IS for the first time, and visiting professors can be enormously helpful in the foundation of an IS curriculum and lasting relationships. In addition, IS cases and videos set in different economic systems have the bonus effect of teaching the importance of quality, cooperation, and competitiveness for successful organizations.

COURSE CONTENT AND METHODS IN THE KUZBASS

In 1994, the author taught an introductory course and three seminars in IS, including two seminars for faculty with a focus on business education, at Kemerovo State University, Kemerovo Polytechnic University, Tomsk University, and the Institute for Automatic Control (GUARETS) in Tomsk. In addition, three courses and a seminar in international business with an emphasis on international IS were offered in Kemerovo, at the State University and the Polytechnic; curriculum development materials and textbooks for a major in IS were acquired through a USIA grant and delivered to institutions in Kemerovo, Tomsk, Moscow, and Irkutsk. The author also wrote an article on feminism for a regional newspaper, and delivered presentations to the managers of Kuzbass Associates, an major exporting group from Western Siberia.

Academics were deeply and visibly impressed by the quality of IS textbooks, transparencies, and videos. In 1992 and 1993, the author's American students were asked to provide superior overheads with their MIS, systems analysis and design, and database management projects, and informed that the best of their projects would be used for teaching Russians in 1994. Russian students and faculty were deeply impressed by the range and quality of these independent projects. Some projects focused on activities such as inventory management, electronic music, transaction processing, security, or E-Mail using enterprises such as Toys R Us, a Broadway show (Miss Saigon), Harry's Liquor Store, Federal Express, and Sikorsky Aircraft. Other American students investigated broader topics: the information highway, desktop publishing, multimedia. Students' names were included on the overheads, and Russians often asked for personal information about the authors.

Projects and industry videos were extremely effective vehicles: seeing, rather than listening, improved learning and the credibility of the curriculum was enhanced through project walk-throughs and films made in the context of a modern business environment. IS educators who focus on business information needs often

introduce the host institution to an understanding of IS for the first time, and visiting professors can be enormously helpful in the foundation of an IS curriculum. In addition, IS cases and videos set in different economic systems have the bonus effect of teaching the importance of quality, cooperation, and competitiveness in successful organizations. Questions from faculty often centered on the issue of quality and competition within the university. To an American accustomed to relatively tame and gentele faculty meetings and committees, the shouting and heated discussions not only about teaching theory and technique, but also about topics such as tenure, teaching loads in the West, consulting activities, student evaluations, and textbook prices were memorable.

No topic was more difficult to approach than the issue of ethics in academic and business and information systems. The author visited dozens of computing facilities and university laboratories, and seldom saw any microcomputer software that did not appear to be pirated. Faculty and students frankly inquired about the potential to accelerate economic development by computer piracy, illicit access to proprietary information, on-line financial chicanery, and other breaches of ethics.

Most Russians appeared not to believe that ethics and success are compatible; the author believed that Russian hosts politely tolerated discussions of ethics but simply did not believe ethics were significant at home or abroad.

In contrast, the author received an Inter-Country Fulbright to Morocco in the fall of 1994, and taught quality management and information systems in Rabat, at Mohammed V. University in the Faculty of Law and Economic and Social Sciences, and in Casablanca, at the Institute des Etudes de Commerce et d'Administration d'Enterprise. Interest in ethical issues and an appreciation for product quality and customer satisfaction was markedly greater in Morocco than in Russia. Also, university tradition and governance were similar in Morocco to the United States, and topics such as rank and tenure were not raised. The author was surprised that in both countries, teaching loads were quite modest and office hours were rarely required.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN TAGANROG

The author has been invited to teach for a semester and to assist in curriculum development in both Information Systems and International Business at Taganrog State University. From 1994 to 1997, E-mail discussions with Taganrog faculty and administrators about Taganrog's Economics curriculum began preparations for the lectureship in international business and information systems in the spring of 1998, as well as for research, ongoing relationships, and a method to develop course prototypes for the host institution. The fellowship was an exciting challenge in the ancient city on the Sea of Azov which was founded by Peter the Great and still serves as a window to Black Sea and to the commercial hub of Istanbul.

The author has been in contact with Taganrog since the summer of 1994, when two International Education Exchange students, one from Taganrog, served as research assistants for a Lattanze Center for Executive Information Studies consultantship. The team identified and analyzed data deficits for two dozen United States corporations who were interested in constructing decision support systems for trade and investment in Russia.

In both international business and information systems, information resource management (IRM) is a priority in Taganrog's curriculum, to assist the development of information and business systems which optimize the use of information: to supplement and rationalize the use of labor, capital, material resources, management skills, and partnerships. Entrepreneurs in emerging markets look to IRM for multiple business functions: to reduce waste, to improve product and service quality, to facilitate strategic planning, and to seek foreign aid and partnerships. The host institution at Taganrog is progressive, and has proposed to locate a module in IRM within a new major, "Data Systems in Economics". "Data Systems" is comparable to "Information Systems" in the West. The University seeks to integrate computer science skills, economic models, and new areas such as accounting, financial management, law, and environmental studies. Taganrog needs additional courses and materials which feature concrete examples of business

practice, especially in information systems, international marketing, and international management. The Rector also requested that the Fulbright fellow develop a cogent curriculum in international business theory and practice, and assist local firms to become export-oriented.

The most critical problem in international business education in Russia is the pressing need to couple marketing and management education with both IS and also Western economic theory. The discussion of economic theory in addition to IS practice requires cases studies, videos, and other germane materials ranging from the Yellow pages to bank statements. As a result, this project conveys significant research opportunities in the area of theory as well as practice. The most critical components in information systems in Russia are not hardware or software, but people and information itself. Because of cultural differences and a lack of business theory, introductory courses and systems analysis abroad must justify the need for critical intellectual shifts in Russia to develop quality information. Therefore, foreign students are exposed to game theory, the advantages of both competition and cooperation, through cases in information analysis and also through culture-specific exercises which encourage information sharing.

For hundreds of years, predating communism, economic development has been an intellectual problem in Russia. Western education can take for granted numerous accepted precepts, material preconditions, levels of business expertise, and a sense of economic community which do not exist in Russia at this time. Both domestic and external stakeholders must mold IS education to meet host countries' needs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND IS

Effective information systems and international business education in Russia is a priority for Russian policy makers, educators and entrepreneurs. Among the multiple rewards of teaching IS abroad is the chance to play a small role in the historic transition, to augment scarce information resources, to project future business needs, and to improve the information infrastructure. The Russian economy represents a conundrum: information deficits are critical in most industries, yet without a minimal level of market development, information resources cannot be much improved.

Without a critical mass of robust data, computer literate personnel, and skilled knowledge workers, IS's value in the transition to a demand economy is limited at present. Russian managers cannot develop markets, rational internal procedures, business alliances, and, most importantly, improve goods and services without robust information resources. Indeed, not only must Russia seek competitive advantage in the global market through high quality and low cost exports, but also, in the second half of the 1990s, Russia must defend its domestic market against foreign goods. Butter, eggs, chocolate, clothing, sports equipment, canned goods, cookies, ice cream, produce, and cut flowers from Western Europe and the Pacific Rim have flooded stores and kiosks, from Moscow through Siberia to Vladivostok in Asian Russia. Although a surprising number of Russian business enterprises are well-capitalized, even the most elite educational institutions are impoverished. These schools are handicapped and embarrassed not only because of a lack of capital, but also by a dearth of textbooks and other teaching materials, by minimal exposure to mainstream IS scholarship and business applications, and by brain drain, as talented faculty leave teaching for more lucrative work in the emergent market economy. Those faculty who remain often have little or no acquaintance with market forces and occasionally are hostile to business practice.

Taganrog and other progressive institutions of higher learning are seeking to change the curriculum-wide emphasis on supervision and control, to challenge a prejudice against information sharing, and to augment information on personal responsibility and individual entrepreneurship.

Often, a culture-based communication gap separates Western business lecturers and Russian academics. IS educators who focus on business information needs often introduce the host institution to an understanding not only of an IS curriculum, but also business language and concepts. Even though some Western words, such as "marketing" have been imported intact into current Russian conversation, an understanding of the concepts behind business vocabulary will require years of market experimentation and competition. "Marketing", for example is often vilified as deceitful and wasteful promotion: the other four P's of the equation: product, price, and

place are not examined adequately. The role of IS in developing quality products and services was frequently challenged as frivolous, as was total quality theory itself. Students were often more receptive to quality methods and theory than faculty, evidence of a generation gap and a communication gap, in information systems and international business pedagogy.

Business education in Russia is young, yet affected by enduring cultural and economic factors. For example, "information poverty" is a widespread condition, the result of an ingrained and widespread reluctance to provide or share information, and also of the meager supply of useful information which was left as a legacy of failed central planning. Materially and economically, other contemporary problems constrain business education and practice: the lack of a satisfactory communications infrastructure, monetary instability, disruptions in supply and distribution, corruption, and changing regulations. Although education reform is a priority, the possibility of substantial investment in an expanded information systems or an international business curriculum often depends on external assistance.

RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Although numerous academic journals have suspended publication and the periodical section great repositories such as the Lenin library are nearly barren, the scholar enjoys unprecedented opportunities for primary research and other field work. Table 1 illustrates the range of Russian research contacts established from 1991-1995 (Chepaitis in Palvia, Palvia, and Roche, 1996). The author interviewed forty-four Russian and ten foreign entrepreneurs, researchers, and policy makers in five major cities during the summer of 1991, 1992, one semester in 1994, and consulting in 1995. Interviews were rewarding and memorable, with heavy use of popular aphorisms and humorous anecdotes, in the Russian style. Researchers must be nimble in such a dynamic environment: research data shifted dramatically and had to be re-examined and topics had to be redefined over the four-year period. The participants were three questions: their business conditions, their organizations' goals and information needs, and the availability of information resources. Data was often poor

quality, inconsistent, or unavailable, but, for Russia, research yielded remarkable and singular "finds". Interesting strategies for dealing with information shortages emerged. For example, YUGANSKNEFTGAS sent over 1,000 interns abroad into business environments where information is not scarce. A more common strategy, for small enterprises, is to do business with minimal, accurate data and develop modest decision models until conditions and the infrastructure improves. Numerous businesses sought foreign partnerships, "gray economy" sub-businesses, or relationships with middlemen who took benefited from imperfect information and imperfect competition.

Questionnaires are unpopular and unanswered, but interviews were often revealing and unforgettable. A cursory look at the research subjects may suggest the rich quality and intensity of learning and research through work abroad.

DEVELOPING AN INTERNATIONAL FOCUS IN IS COURSES

IS professionals, especially educators, have not yet identified the most important questions in international information systems. One unfortunate consequence is that technical aspects are over-emphasized, and international

TABLE 1
INTERVIEWS WITH RUSSIAN CITIZENS (44)1991-1995

<u>Firm/Occupation</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Firm/Occupation</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Location</u>
GEMMA telecom director	G	Irkutsk	Kuzbass External Associates, President	G	Kemerovo
Irkutsk State U. Rector, foreign relations	E	Irkutsk	Kuzbass Primapolis, shareholding firm, VP	G	Kemerovo
AG garden tools, management intern	P/S	Kemerovo	Kuzbassobank, chair, board of directors	P/S	Kemerovo
ASM air cargo, management intern	P/S	Kemerovo	The Professional, advertising	P/S	Kemerovo
Chemmash, marketing services, manager	P/S	Kemerovo	PROMEST, import/export, director	P/S	Kemerovo
Deputy Chief, mayor's office	A	Kemerovo	Raspadskaya coal, environmental engineer	C	Kemerovo
Development, Junior Achievement, director	A	Kemerovo	Restaurant manager	P/S	Kemerovo
EC consultant, lumber exports	C	Kemerovo	Tapes, audio supplies, manager	P/S	Kemerovo
Fedorev regional library, operations	A	Kemerovo	Siemens sales manager	P/S	Kemerovo
Fedorev regional library, acquisitions	A	Kemerovo	Ziminka coal, tools development, manager	G	Kemerovo
GARANT insurance	P/S	Kemerovo	Sigma, Russo-Japanese consultant/manager	G	Krasnoyarsk
Georgian greengrocer	P/S	Kemerovo	Moscow Central Stock Exchange, Vice President	P/S	Moscow
FATA joint venture, industrial tools, sales	G	Kemerovo	Moskva bookstore, sales	P/S	Moscow
Hospital intern/physician	P/S	Kemerovo	Produce farm, privatized sovkhov, director	P/S	Moscow
Informatics, software development	P/S	Kemerovo	Distance education, project director	E	Tomsk
Intourist travel, manager	A	Kemerovo	Dom. small hotel owner	P/S	Tomsk
Kemerovo airport, management intern	A	Kemerovo	Tomsk radio systems, IS developer	E	Tomsk
Kemerovo city ambulance dispatcher/manager	E	Kemerovo	Tomsk State U.-Russian-Am. exchange, dir.	E	Tomsk
Kemerovo State University, vice rector	E	Kemerovo	Siberian Adult Education Academy, dir.	E	Tomsk
Kemerovo Polytechnic U., Dean of Economics	E	Kemerovo	YUGANSKNEFTGAS, oil and gas, management intern	G	Tyumen
Knigi bookstore, manager/buyer	P/S	Kemerovo	Kouchat fried chicken rest., manager	P/S	Vladimir
KROMBANK, deputy manager	P/S	Kemerovo			

KEY

A= Public Admin. P/S= goods/services E= Education C= Consulting G= Global partners
(Chepaitis, in Palvia, Palvia, and Roche)

information systems is occasionally taught as an applied telecommunications course. In numerous surveys, corporate leaders criticize information systems education for its overemphasis of technology, such as hardware and programming, and for the neglect of basic business knowledge and skills (Wiersba). Ongoing global research and academic experiences abroad enrich current resources substantially, especially if IS travelers utilize expertise in related disciplines, such as economics, language, or international marketing. Hopefully, increased numbers of IS academics abroad working may augment the quantity and quality of international case studies, teaching modules, textbooks, and IS theory.

CONCLUSION

The synergy achieved through teaching serially at home and abroad is significant and unique. The leading challenges and constraints--cultural, linguistic, infrastructure, pedagogical, and organizational--are in themselves instructive. "Taking the show on the road" immerses IS educators in unexpected scenarios, into cultures where resource endowments and scarcities impact global IS deeply.

Teaching and learning abroad, creates a healthy and necessary appetite for work and learning in varied cultural, economic, and political settings which invigorates IS education, practice, and research.

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