

# Around the World Business Process Education and Research has taken off, except in the USA. Why?

*Panel*

**Jeff Howells**

University of Georgia  
jhowells@uga.edu

**Bob Bostrom**

University of Georgia  
bostrom@uga.edu

**Rui Sousa**

University of Minho  
rds@dsi.uminho.pt

**Barbara Weber**

University of Innsbruck  
barbara.weber@uibk.ac.at

**Richard Welke**

Georgia State University  
Richard.Welke@eci.gsu.edu

## ABSTRACT

Today's leading organizations are investing millions of dollars in Business Process Management (BPM) related services and software products. The BPM area is expected to be a \$26B industry next year and grow by at least 12% for the foreseeable future. However, the bulk of BPM research and university-level course offerings are not in the USA. Why is there so little BPM education and research in the USA? Why are top recruiting firms for this area in the USA going to Europe or to Ops Management or Industrial Engineering? Are we laggards in the USA, or do we know something the rest of the world fails to see? These questions and the other questions and related topics will be addressed in this panel session.

## Keywords

Business Process Management, BPM, BPM teaching and research

## PANEL OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

BPM has become a complex amalgam of various process-focused disciplines ranging from Taylor's early 1900's work, through the TQM, Six-Sigma and Lean movements directed at process quality and efficiency, to the reengineering and workflow movements of the 90's into the "third wave" (Fingar & Smith) in the mid 2000's rooted in Pi-calculus or Petri Nets, and beyond to highly adaptive and resilient processes and supporting software that supports emergent business process capture, definition and support (sometimes called "Adaptive Case Management" or ACM). While many of the largest BPM software and process-consulting providers are based or have a strong presence in the USA (IBM, Oracle, Software AG, Tibco, PegaSystems, Appian), the bulk of research and university-level course offerings and programs occur in Europe (NL, DE, LX), Australia, and increasingly South America (e.g., Venezuela, Brazil, Columbia). Recently, the European Union established a BPM Roundtable Structure bringing academics and industry together in twenty one national forums. Some global forums are also being established. The IEEE Taskforce on Process Mining is an example that brings together researchers and companies from 21 countries and more than 60 organizations world-wide. There are only three university-based participants from USA on the taskforce.

The growth in BPM area is reflected in the changing IT development software infrastructure. In the 60s, 70s and 80s organizations were building core and supporting systems by themselves. Later the common systems across organizations were provided as packaged software solutions in order to minimize the cost. Individual packaged solutions lead to integrated packages such as ERP systems. Today's leading organizations are differentiated by leveraging what they already have in place, and reusing their software investments of the last decades, no matter what technology they are using. At the beginning of this new era we all had to learn how to break monolithic systems into reusable components usually referred to as computing/web services. This new era is often referred to as composed or component development since we are composing information systems from reusable components minimizing new program coding. This compose era is evolving from technologies such as of EAI, Web Services, SOA, Decision/Rule and Business Process Management Systems (BDMS,

BPMS). BPMS provide one of the most powerful composition platforms for the development and execution process-based information systems.

To the extent research and education in the USA on BPM exists in academe, it is focused on Lean-Six-Sigma (LSS) or BPR, with ERP-based processes (e.g. SAP) being the primary exemplars. This focus is very limited to a very small piece of the evolving BPM landscape. Why is there so little BPM education and research in the USA? Why are top recruiting firms for this area in the USA going to Europe or to Ops Management or Industrial Engineering? Are we laggards in the USA, or do we know something the rest of the world fails to see?

These questions and the other questions and topics outlined below will be addressed in this panel session.

1. What is the state of BPM-related University teaching in the US vs. other 1st and 2nd world countries? Does this matter? Addressing these questions will include overviewing key BPM topics that are and/or need to be taught.
2. Why is there so little USA research focused on this area? Does it have something to do with the research focus: predictive quality focus vs. a prescriptive or applied quality focus?
3. Related to 1 and 2, how do we develop better BPM educational programs and research interest in the USA?
4. Big data (and data scientists) are the “big” thing in the USA at the moment. But “Big Data” insights simply signal a potential need for change. Without adaptive processes it’s useless. Shouldn’t BPM be part of this equation as an enabler of adaptive processes? Or are there better ways to achieve adaptive processes?
5. To the extent processes play any role in USA business school offerings; they’re mainly focused on manufacturing (with a few focusing on ERP delivered “best practice” processes). But 80-90% of the USA economy is service-based. So why are we teaching Ops Mgmt., production-based process thinking when our economy demands BPM-service-based thinking to remain competitive?

## APPROACH

The approach taken in this panel is as follows:

1. Brief introduction by Moderator
2. A Panel Member will provide brief overview addressing the following two questions: What is BPM? What are key BPM technologies?
3. Each Panelist will have 5 minutes to address the key question: Around the World Business Process Education and Research has taken off, except in the USA. Why? This will be followed by engagement with the audience on this question facilitated by the moderator.
4. Selected panelist(s) will then address one of the additional questions or topics outlined in overview above or raised by the audience. This will be followed by engagement with the audience on this question/topic facilitated by the moderator.
5. Each Panelist will provide brief closing statement, followed by Moderator wrap-up.

## PANEL PARTICIPANTS

### Dr. Bob Bostrom

Bob Bostrom is President of Bostrom & Associates, a training and consulting company focusing on facilitation and the effective integration of people and technology. He is also Professor Emeritus at the University of Georgia. He teaches part-time in Management Information Systems (MIS), primarily business process management, and Leadership areas. Besides over 150+ publications in leading academic and practitioner journals, he has extensive consulting and training experience in the areas of MIS management, business process management, organizational development, facilitation, leadership and digital collaboration and learning. His current research interests are focused on business process management, decision modeling, leadership, and effective design of organizations via integrating human and technological dimensions to create a better performing organization and a higher quality of work-life for organizational members.

### Jeff Howells (Moderator)

I was born in the UK, graduated with an undergraduate degree in Physics. I immigrated to the US, worked as a research engineer for Westinghouse. I graduated with an MBA from Indiana University. I worked for Unisys in a variety of management/technical positions mostly involving banking industry software products and then joined a financial subsidiary of ADP that provided service bureau based corporate cash management services to banks. I was promoted to General Manager after five years and later held a variety of staff/line positions at ADP including CIO of a large division. After

retiring several years ago, I have been teaching in the MIS Department of UGA primarily in the business process management and system analysis areas.

**Dr. Rui Sousa**

Rui Dinis de Sousa is the Director of the Master of Science in Information Systems at University of Minho (UMinho), Portugal. Graduated with a 5-year degree in Informatics and Systems Engineering and a Master of Science in Business Informatics from UMinho, he holds a PhD in Management Information Systems from University of Georgia, USA. He teaches BPM related courses for the master degree in Engineering and Management of Information Systems at UMinho. His current research includes enterprise engineering taking advantage of business process management approaches and technologies. Co-founder and vice-president both of the Portuguese Institute of BPM and the Portuguese Chapter of the Association of BPM Professionals, he co-organized the first Portuguese national BPM conference in 2008, and he has been serving since then either as conference or program chair of an annual event that brings together academics and industry, the BPM Lisbon conference. He is a co-founder of the Portuguese Chapter of the Association of Information Systems serving also as board member of the Portuguese Association of Information Systems. Co-editor of a book just released by IGI Global on Information Systems and Technology for Organizational Agility, Intelligence, and Resilience, he is also a co-author of a soon to be published book by Palgrave Macmillan on Organization Design and Engineering

**Dr. Barbara Weber**

Barbara Weber is an associate professor at the Department of Computer Science at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, where she leads the research cluster on business processes and workflows. Barbara holds a Habilitation degree in Computer Science and a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Innsbruck. She has published more than 100+ refereed papers in renowned journals and conference proceedings related to business process management. Barbara has been serving as editorial board member for the Information Systems journal and the Computing journal and has been organizing the BPI (Business Process Intelligence) workshop series and is member of the IEEE Taskforce on Process Mining. She has been PC chair of one of the leading scientific conference on business process management (BPM 2013) and will be general chair of BPM 2015 in Innsbruck. Moreover, she is co-author of the recently published book “Enabling Flexibility in Process-aware Information Systems” by Springer. Barbara’s research interests include business process management, process modeling, process flexibility, process mining, and collaboration. Barbara is head of the curriculum committee of the faculty of Mathematics, Informatics, and Physics at the Univ. of Innsbruck and involved in teaching several BPM related courses both for the bachelor and master degrees in Computer Science as well as for the master degree in Information Systems.

**Dr. Richard J. Welke**

Dr. Welke is director of the Center for Process Innovation, professor and previous chair of the CIS department at the J. Mack Robinson College of Business at Georgia State University. Prior appointments include professorships at TU-Delft (Cor Wit Research Professor), Erasmus University (Rotterdam School of Management) and McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario, Canada). Dr. Welke was co-founder of the information systems discipline’s now-major academic organizations, (ICIS, AIS, TIMS College on IS, and IFIP WG 8.2). He has owned and managed several CASE companies in Canada (MethodsWorks) and the US (ISDOS/Meta Systems), and has been CIO for two Atlanta-based engineering firms (Law (now AMEC) and HJ Russell, as well as serving in various advisory capacities at start-up companies including: Parkmobile, AppsNmotion, and B-Line. His 100+ papers are published in various books, refereed journals and conference proceedings. Dr. Welke’s past scholarly contributions have been in the areas of methodology engineering and meta-modeling; his current research is focused on business process management and service innovation. Recently published research is on BAM/CEP, business rules specifications for governance and compliance, SOA adoption among leading IS organizations, the business model-service-process confluence, and innovating with smartphone apps.

**EQUIPMENT NEEDS**

The only equipment needed for this panel is projector with connected computer and the ability to connect a laptop computer directly to the projector.