Preface

This book is a compilation of chapters written by leading researchers from all over the world. Those researchers’ common characteristic is that they have investigated issues at the intersection of the fields of information systems (IS) and evolutionary psychology (EP). The main goal of this book is to serve as a reference for IS research building on EP concepts and theories (in short, IS-EP research). The book is organized in three main parts: Part I focuses on EP concepts and theories that can be used as a basis for IS-EP research; Part II provides several exemplars of IS-EP research in practice; and Part III summarizes emerging issues and debate that can inform IS-EP research, including debate regarding philosophical foundations and credibility of related findings.

IS-EP research is generally concerned with the use of concepts and theories from EP in the study of IS, particularly regarding the impact of modern information and communication technologies on the behavior of individuals, groups, and organizations. From a practitioners’ perspective, the most immediate consumers of IS-EP research are those who develop and use IS, of which a large contingent are in businesses that employ IS to support marketing, order-taking, production, and delivery of goods and services. In this context, IS-EP findings may be particularly useful due to the present need to design web-based interfaces that will be used by individuals from different cultures, and often different countries, and whose common denominator is their human nature.

EP has the potential to become one of the pillars on which IS research can take place. The explanatory power of EP comes from the fact that its underlying ideas relate to the basic design of our brain (and, more generally, our body, including endocrine glands that strongly influence our brain processes and our behavior), and thus can form the basis on which fundamental explanations of behavior in the context of IS design and use can be developed. EP also arguably holds the key to many counterintuitive explanations of behavior toward modern technologies, because many of the evolved instincts that influence our behavior are below the level of our conscious awareness. Often those instincts lead to behavioral responses whose motivations and patterns are not self-evident to the individuals involved – e.g., the fact that we tend to develop vivid memories of facts surrounding a surprising event, whether that event occurs in a real or technology-created (virtual) environment.
The range of topics covered by the authors of the chapters that make up this book arguably represents the state of the art of IS-EP research today. Moreover, several of the chapters in this book raise issues that are likely to feature prominently in the future debate on and application of IS-EP research, not only in the fields of IS and EP, but in several other fields, such as marketing and economics. Among the key reasons for these positive aspects of this book is that its contributing authors are certainly among the most influential thinkers and practitioners of IS-EP research in the world today, not only in IS but also in a few other related disciplines. Those authors are also pioneers, sometimes “swimming against the current” in their fields or subfields of research, and their chapters will hopefully pave the way for the future of IS-EP research.

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Laredo, Texas

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