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**Article**

## Assembling a big mosaic: A review of recent books on electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM)

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Stefan Strohmeier\*

## **Assembling a Big Mosaic – A Review of Recent Books on Electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM)\*\***

This paper aims to review recent academic books on general e-HRM. Mapping major academic responsibilities, books on researching, teaching and also practicing e-HRM are reviewed. To this end, brief outlines of the current states of researching, teaching and practicing e-HRM are given and books are reviewed referring to their contributions to the respective state of knowledge.

### **Ein komplexes Mosaik - Sammelrezension von Büchern zum elektronischen Personalmanagement (e-HRM)**

Der vorliegende Beitrag dient der Rezension von Büchern zum elektronischen Personalmanagement (e-HRM), wobei Werke zur Forschung, Lehre und Praxis des elektronischen Personalmanagements berücksichtigt werden. Dazu wird zunächst der gegenwärtig Stand von Forschung, Lehre und Praxis des elektronischen Personalmanagements jeweils kurz skizziert und anschließend untersucht, welchen Beitrag entsprechende Bücher zum jeweiligen Stand des Wissens liefern.

Key words: **electronic HRM (e-HR[M]), Human Resource Information Systems, virtual HRM, web-based HRM, book review**  
(JEL: M12, M15, M59)

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## 1. Introduction

Within the last two decades the ongoing “electronization” of practical human resource management (HRM) brought about the term and concept of “electronic HRM” or “e-HRM”. Though a generally accepted definition is missing, e-HRM can be concretized as the (planning, provision, implementation, operation and) application of information technology for both supporting and networking at least two (individual and/or collective) actors in their shared performing of HR tasks (Strohmeier, 2007). As a consequence of the ongoing practical adoption of e-HRM academic interest in the topic of e-HRM set in about a decade ago as well. In the interim, a considerable number of academic papers and a smaller number of academic books indicate an increasing academic interest in e-HRM. Still, however, even basic aspects of e-HRM seem to be unclear or even worse to be suspect to many HR academics. Complementing existing reviews of academic papers (Bondarouk & Furtmüller, 2012; Strohmeier, 2007) the current paper therefore aims at a *review of recent academic books on general e-HRM*. *Recent* means that due to the notorious progress in information technology and the resulting quick obsolescence of related publications, books older than a decade (e.g., Kavanagh et al., 1990) are excluded from this review. Moreover, *academic* means that due to the academic target group of the review a larger set of e-HRM books of practical provenance (e.g., Waddill & Marquardt, 2011) are excluded, too. Finally, *general* means that existing books specialized on specific subsets of e-HRM such as e-recruiting or e-learning (e.g., Andrews & Haythronthwaite, 2007) are excluded as well. Using the *major objective* of an e-HRM book as categorization criterion,

- books on researching e-HRM,
- books on teaching e-HRM and
- books on practicing e-HRM

can be distinguished. Given that this triad actually maps the major academic functions of *researching*, *teaching* and – though only partly agreed – also *counseling*, each category is incorporated. In the following sections, brief outlines of the current states of researching, teaching, and practicing e-HRM are given. Based on this, books of each category are reviewed referring to their contributions to the respective state of knowledge.

## 2. Review

### 2.1 Books on researching e-HRM

Given the increased practical adoption and prominence of e-HRM, research on the topic started more than a decade ago and was continuously increasing from that time on (Bondarouk & Furtmüller, 2012; Strohmeier, 2007). In the interim there are numerous contributions<sup>1</sup> mainly from the disciplines of information systems, (human resource) management, and psychology, which are mainly following the so called positivist or else interpretivist research approach. The contributions cover a broad and heterogeneous range of *research topics* referring to different technologies

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<sup>1</sup> Searching for „e-HRM“ in a scholarly search engine (www.scholar.google.com) currently reveals roughly 1,200 contributions.

(such as portals, Intranets or ERP-systems), different technological processes (such as providing, implementing or applying technologies), different managerial processes (such as e-recruiting, e-compensation or e-learning) and different consequences (such as costs, effectiveness, trust, or operational relief) on different levels (micro-, meso- and/or macro-level) of e-HRM (Strohmeier, 2007). While earlier research mostly referred to operational e-HRM (realizing internal effectiveness and efficiency gains via technology) recent research switched to relational (improving relationships with and services for internal and external HR clients via technology) and transformational e-HRM (strategic re-orientation and re-structuring of HR via technology) (Bondarouk & Furtmüller, 2012). Despite of their number, the offered results are still *patchy*, i.e., they rather arbitrarily cover the research field with numerous focal detail studies, and are still *non-cumulative*, i.e., they do not lead to resilient knowledge since not securing – and sometimes even clearly contradicting – findings of previous studies (Bondarouk & Furtmüller, 2012; Strohmeier, 2007). Moreover, referring to *theoretical explanations* of e-HRM, research lacks endogenous theories and therefore either works without theoretical foundations or borrows scattered, mostly behaviorally oriented theories (such as procedural justice theory or technology acceptance model) from different disciplines, but without having any leading theoretical paradigm. In connection with existing empirical uncertainties and disagreements, a prior task for future research is theoretical progress by elaborating on theories (Bondarouk & Furtmüller, 2012; Marler & Fisher, 2012; Strohmeier, 2007). Finally, referring to *research methods* of e-HRM, so far the usual set of qualitative and quantitative empirical methods is employed. However, as a peculiarity of the research field, the future exploitation of data which automatically emerge because of the ongoing usage of electronic systems is recommended. Moreover, the complementation of the applied “reactive” methods (research regularly starts *after* developments/innovations in practice) by methods that allow “proactive” research such as experiments is seen as a reasonable development (Strohmeier, 2007). Therefore the following review of three major *books on researching e-HRM* analyses which (new) topical insights, which (new) theoretical explanations, and which (new) methods are respectively offered.

The title of the first book “*Electronic HRM in Theory and Practice*” edited by Tanya Bondarouk, Huub Ruël and Jan Kees Looise (2011, Emerald, 176 pages) might imply at first glance that academics *and* practitioners are addressed. Yet, the nine articles written by academics of the e-HRM field uncover a distinctly research oriented contribution. This is also stressed by the explicit objectives of the book that are delivering a state of the art of theoretical developments, addressing methodological issues, and identifying future directions of e-HRM *research* (p. xii). Referring to *new topical insights*, there are research contributions which examine the relationship of HR strategy and e-HRM (chapter 4 by Reddington et al.), HR shared service centers (chapter 5 by Bondarouk), different types of usage of HR intranets (chapter 6 by Guiderdoni-Jourdain & Oiry), language issues in international e-HRM applications (chapter 7 by Heikkilä & Smale), changes and advancements in e-recruiting (chapter 8 by Girard & Fallery) and drivers of e-recruiting adoption (chapter 9 by Parry & Olivás-Luján). These respective contributions are typical examples of existing e-HRM research papers and offer insights in specific topics, for instance, that electronization is not only a

driver of ongoing change of HRM, but is subject to substantial change itself (chapter 8 on the changes of e-recruiting). Therewith the chapters focus diverse, sometimes also quite specific topics in e-HRM. Beyond the respective insights, readers who are unfamiliar with e-HRM research additionally get a clear impression of the diversity and breadth of e-HRM research, but without any systematic overview on the entire research field. A further topically oriented section presents emerging research questions for future research based on an integrative view of organization and technology (chapter 2 by Ruël et al.). Referring to (new) *theoretical foundations* most of the papers present explicit theoretical foundations, that are still diverse since comprising for instance theories from innovation (e.g., diffusion of innovations), management (e.g., resource based view) as well as information systems (e.g., adapted structuration theory) research. Moreover, one chapter directly deals with theoretical approaches, which are able to explain success and failure of e-HRM implementation and derive a corresponding new model for research (chapter 1 by Bondarouk). Relating to (new) *research methods*, basically positivist and interpretivist positions are presented, while qualitative designs prevail in the respective chapters. Furthermore, a methodical innovation endogenous to the research field of e-HRM is discussed by using the data and methods of “web mining” in empirical e-HRM research (chapter 3 by Strohmeier & Piazza). In sum, a distinctly research oriented book is presented. Not specifically aiming at an initial introduction or general overview of the field (see Bondarouk & Furtmüller, 2012; Strohmeier, 2007), several new topical, theoretical, and methodical contributions are offered, which make the book a valuable read for a clearly research focused readership.

In a quite similar way, the “*Handbook on research on e-transformation and human resource management technologies*” (Information Science Reference, 2009, 490 pages) edited by Tanya Bondarouk, Huub Ruël, Karine Guiderdoni-Jourdain and Ewan Oiry and written by academics from the e-HRM field aims at achieving an overview on research contributions, addressing the integration of HR- and IS-oriented research and identifying future research directions (p. xxii). The voluminous book comprises 25 chapters, which are categorized into seven sections. From a *topical perspective*, a broad spectrum of focal subjects in e-HRM is treated, which thus are only exemplarily rendered in the following. The first section “e-HRM transformation and strategic HRM” comprises chapters that deal with the assumption that e-HRM shows the potential to transform HRM into a strategic function and business partner. E.g., chapter 1 written by Foster tries to explain why such potentials remain mostly unexploited so far. The second section on “user involvement and user participation” highlights the crucial role of different and new actor categories in e-HRM as, e.g., chapter 4 by Koopman and Batenburg aims at explaining success of employee self service applications. The subsequent third section emphasizes an international dimension of e-HRM. An interesting exemplary article (chapter 9 by Smale & Heikkilä) for instance deals with global standardization and local adaption of electronic HR processes. A further section deals with e-recruiting; within this section, for instance, basic changes of recruiting processes and roles due to electronization are investigated (chapter 12 by Parry & Tyson). As a peculiarity, the section on “modeling and designing e-HRM architectures” is particularly noteworthy. While the contributions regularly are based on the (so called) positivist or

else interpretivist research approach, this section refers to a “design approach”, which aims at offering technical artifacts able to solve organizational problems. For example, chapter 16 (by Laumer & Eckardt) develops the architecture of an e-recruiting system able to comprehensively support recruiting related tasks. A further section deals with acceptance and performance consequences of e-HRM (e.g., chapter 18 by Bondarouk et al. on the acceptance of HRIS in SME’s). A final section refers to further “varied” topics, such as the consequences of IT for trade unions (chapter 22 by Michaux). Relating to *theories and methods*, respective theories and methods are interspersed throughout the chapters, but explicitly and primarily theory- or method-focused chapters are missing. In sum, a rich fund of focal topics is presented, which demonstrates the breadth and manifoldness of the field and again clearly addresses a research-oriented readership.

A third contribution edited by Teresa Torres-Corronas and Mario Arias-Oliva is entitled “*Encyclopedia of Human Resource Information Systems: Challenges in e-HRM*” (Information Science Reference, 2009, 2 volumes, 909 pages). The major objective of the two volumes is “... describing the current state of HRM in the ICT era and to provide new knowledge on effective e-HRM” (p. xxx). Despite of the title, not every chapter shows an “encyclopedic” character and overviews alternate with conventional research contributions. Though these topics and questions might be of interest to a broad audience, content as well as “style” of the book mainly address researchers. Therefore it is categorized as a research oriented contribution. With reference to the *topics*, the mere number of 132 (brief) chapters indicates the huge scope of the contribution, which cannot be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Roughly categorizing the respective chapters based on their topical reference to e-HRM/HRIS, a first group deals with multifarious aspects of e-HRM and HRIS, such as call centers in e-HRM (chapter by Carroll), e-selection (chapter by Pollack), mobile learning (chapter by King), HR Intranets (chapter by Guilloux et al.), competence management systems (chapter by Urquiza), or HR business intelligence (chapter by Burgard & Piazza), among a lot of further topics. Yet, a second group of contributions show rather loose relationships with e-HRM and HRIS. These chapters refer for instance to HR topics (e.g., the chapter on managing psychological contracts by Akinyemi), to IS topics (e.g., the chapter on general decision support systems by Wang et al.), to virtual teams (e.g., the chapter on tasks of virtual teams by Araujo) or to knowledge management (e.g., the chapter on the social construction of knowledge by Revilla & Sánchez-Alarcos). This indicates a quite broad understanding of e-HRM with flowing transitions to both parental disciplines, HR and IS. This mixture of contributions of divergent topical relevance reveals a very broad conception of the book, which might well aggravate getting an overview and grasping the “core” of e-HRM, in particular for readers who are unfamiliar with the field so far. Nevertheless, the book offers a broad range of relevant and contributions worth reading, which emphasize the diversity and ubiquity of e-HRM. Again, the respective individual topics refer to the entire field of e-HRM and are not closer related to each other. Categorizing the chapters related to basic research approaches, again (so called) positivist and interpretivist studies are most commonly used, while at least a few chapters again use a design approach (e.g., the chapter on designing HR web services by Povalej & Weiß). A few chapters also explicitly deal with

*theoretical foundations* of the field, such as contingency theory (chapter by Bondarouk & Looise) activity theory (chapter by Guilloux et al.), or social capital theory (chapter by Sasovova). Methodical aspects are also considered within the research chapters, but explicit chapters, which primarily deal with methods or methodical innovations in e-HRM research, are missing. In sum, the book constitutes a distinctly rich repository for readers, who are interested in overviews of the multifarious technical and managerial aspects of e-HRM and/or in further e-HRM research contributions.

In summary, contributions on researching e-HRM are available as edited books, which collect research papers – sometimes in considerable volumes. In a *topical perspective*, the respective chapters refer to a broad range of different technical as well as managerial subjects. Basically, this complements the existing set of e-HRM research published in journals and proceedings, and therewith closes existing topical gaps of e-HRM research, but on the other hand, also numerous new topical gaps are uncovered by this research. From the *theoretical perspective*, some new theoretical directions are identified and utilized, but essential contributions, which explicitly and primarily deal with the foundations of the field, are still rare. Generally, the theoretical diversity of the research field seems to be still increasing, while this development refers as expected to existing theories of the parental disciplines; endogenous theories of e-HRM are not apparent so far. In a *method(ological) perspective*, the familiar set of quantitative and qualitative research methods within the frame of positivist and interpretivist research approaches is used throughout the papers. Only few contributions deal with methodological innovations. However, a set of design oriented contributions uncovers, that e-HRM inaugurates a “design research”-approach (e.g., Hevner et al., 2004), which so far is not widely known or used in HRM research. All in all, existing books on e-HRM research therewith show the same basic characteristics of general e-HRM research, i.e., e-HRM is depicted as a topically, theoretically and method(ological)ly diverse and broad, meanwhile widely established field of research at the intersection of HR and IS. Existing gaps, which might be filled by future books, still refer to a lot of untackled individual research topics, but also to introductory overviews of the increasingly broad and complex research field, and in particular to the methodological and theoretical foundations of e-HRM research.

## **2.2 Books on teaching e-HRM**

The ongoing electronization of HRM is obviously accompanied by modifications and extensions of HR qualification requirements. Consequently, there are claims that academic teaching should react to these changes by offering curricula, which take relevant e-HRM qualifications into account (e.g., Bell et al., 2006; Hempel, 2004). However, e-HRM qualifications seem not to play an outstanding role in academic teaching so far. A – yet somewhat dated – empirical study on the consideration of “e”-qualifications in leading U.S. institutions summarizes “... that the education of HR practitioners *does not provide adequate preparation for the challenges of e-HR ...*” (Hempel, 2004, 163f.; accentuation by me). This assumption seems to be also supported by the fact that current HRM textbooks frequently do not consider e-HRM at all or, else, offer rather limited and dated information on the subject. Unfortunately, existing literature and knowledge on teaching e-HRM is scant and mostly dated (see the brief overview in Williams, 2010).

A first relevant question refers to the actual qualification requirements due to e-HRM and the corresponding *objectives and content of teaching e-HRM*, but resilient knowledge on general requirements is still missing (Hempel, 2004). Roughly categorizing e-HRM related processes to be mastered by practitioners, technological and managerial processes can be distinguished. Initially, *technological processes*, i.e., the planning, providing (developing and/or purchasing), implementing, operating and applying the respective information systems, constitute a prominent line of work that has to be mastered by practitioners. The process of applying respective systems constitutes the intersection to the *managerial processes* of e-HRM, i.e., electronically recruiting, developing, compensating, etc. employees. Therefore, qualifications to perform both technical as well as managerial processes seem to be necessary, while technical and managerial qualifications yet might be split into different roles such as “HRIS specialist” (Williams, 2010) and “HR professional” (Hempel, 2004). A second relevant question refers to *how* the respective qualifications should be taught, i.e., the *methods of teaching e-HRM*. Active teaching methods, including “hands-on” computing, appear to be preferable (e.g., Bell, et al., 2006), yet again knowledge referring to suitable teaching methods is sparse. Given this, the following review of two *books on teaching e-HRM* refers to the objectives, contents and methods of teaching e-HRM.

A first teaching-oriented book is entitled “*Human Resource Information Systems: Basics, Applications, and Future Direction*” edited by Michael Kavanagh, Mohan Thite and Richard Johnson (Sage Publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2011, 623 pages) and comprises of 17 chapters which are written by the editors and several further mostly academic authors with a background in HRM. The editors explicitly highlight three *objectives of the book*, which are offering knowledge on development, implementation and maintenance of an HRIS, usage of HRIS within traditional HRM programs, and usage of HRIS for operational and strategic decision support (p. 6). The corresponding *contents of the book* are organized into five main parts, which refer to “Introduction of HRM and HRIS” (part I), “Determination of HRIS needs” (part II), “Implementation and Acceptance of HRIS” (part III), “HRIS applications” (part IV), and “Special Topics” (part V). With this structure the book evidently deals with both, technical processes (parts II and III) and managerial processes (part IV). Technical processes are treated for instance with systems needs analysis (chapter 4 by Alge & Bruner), systems design and acquisition (chapter 5 by Johnson & Dulebohn), costs-benefit analyses (chapter 7 by Karlson & Kavanagh) or (project and change management in) implementation (chapters 8 by Belardo & Kavanagh and 9 by Stone). Managerial processes are treated with administration and information (chapter 10 by Isenhour), talent management (chapter 11 by Johns and Kavanagh), recruiting and selection (chapter 12 by Lukaszewski et al.), training and development (chapter 13 by Burbach) and performance management and compensation (chapter 14 by Fay & Nardoni). Beyond the processual chapters, there are further sections referring to a general introduction, data management, information security, HRIS in an international context, and future developments. Throughout the book, the offered information is descriptive, and referring to the numerous recommendations of how to perform necessary process steps also normative; empirical insights and theoretical foundations are not intended. Due to the nature of edited books, the respective chapters are rather loosely coupled. Concerning the *didac-*



*tical methods*, a broad set of interrelated didactical methods beyond the textual and graphical presentation of contents characterizes the contribution as an “American style” textbook in a positive sense: At the beginning of each chapter a short “editor’s note” offers an anticipated summary of the chapter and explicit learning objectives highlight the mainly knowledge-oriented qualifications the respective chapter aims at. Moreover, a chapter summary, a synopsis of “key terms”, discussion questions, and a (real or synthetic) case study with corresponding case questions and/or case tasks are accessible at the end of each chapter. The book shows the clear aim of offering easily understandable information by using a simple language, giving examples, and explaining (rather than expecting) also “basics” of IS and HR. In sum, the textbook offers a plethora of insights on technical as well as managerial processes related to HRIS, which are prepared and presented in an adequate didactical manner. Given this, the book seems to be suitable for introductory courses, but the scope and depth of the offered information rather point towards advanced and specialized courses on HRIS for both HR as well as IS lecturers/courses/students.

A second textbook is entitled “*Informationssysteme im Personalmanagement. Architektur – Funktionalität – Anwendung (Information Systems in Human Resource Management. Architecture – Functionality – Application)*” and written by Stefan Strohmeier (Vieweg+Teubner, 2008, 388 pages). The major *objective of the book* is offering in-depth knowledge on the architecture, functionality and applicability of different categories of information systems in HRM (p. V). The corresponding *content of the book* is structured in four parts with 28 chapters in total. The first part (“Foundations”) deals with architectural structures, technical processes, and legal regulations of HR information systems. The following three parts (“Data Maintaining Systems”, “Application Systems” and “Integration and Presentation Systems”) offer a comprehensive description of information system categories. Mainly HR-specific system categories such as workforce scheduling-systems (chapter 8), pay roll-systems (chapter 13), learning management-systems (chapter 20) or performance management-systems (chapter 21) are treated, while – complementing this – also a few general, yet HR-relevant categories such as database management-systems (chapter 4) or portal-systems (chapter 25) are considered. Each of the chapters shows the same internal structure by discussing the system architecture (understood as software components and their interaction), deriving the offered functionality and discussing the application in HR. In total, a surprisingly broad spectrum of 25 different categories is treated – while these still constitute a selection of existing categories. Therewith, again technical and managerial processes are subject of the book. Technical processes are compactly treated in an introductory chapter (3), while managerial processes of applying the IS are treated after presenting the respective systems category (chapter 4-28). Beyond technical and managerial processes, however, the genuine emphasis of the book lies in the in-depth depiction of the categories of relevant information systems as technological enablers of e-HRM. The book clearly uncovers the plurality and heterogeneity of existing system categories and therewith exposes the concept of “HRIS” as an increasingly broad and heterogeneous umbrella term. Moreover, the book concentrates on conceptual and descriptive knowledge. Empirical insights are limited to the practical adoption of the respective systems categories; theoretical foundations/explanations are not offered. Referring to the *methods*,

the book concentrates on the textual and graphical depiction of contents; additional didactical methods, such as cases or learning questions, are not applied. In sum, the book aims at supporting lecturers/courses/students, who/which aim at in-depth systems knowledge in the HR domain, and therefore may be used in HR- as well as IS-oriented courses. Given the breadth and depth of elaboration, and additionally given that certain “basics” of IS and particularly HR are required for understanding, the book is suitable for advanced and specialized, rather than introductory and general courses/students.

Though with different foci, the objectives and content of both contributions specifically refer to HRIS. Given that HRIS actually constitute the „enabling technology“ of e-HRM, teaching technical and managerial processes related to HRIS are of course core subjects of e-HRM. However, broader aspects of e-HRM, such as conceptual clarification, theoretical foundation and the empirical elucidation might constitute additional relevant objectives and content for future (books on) teaching e-HRM. In this respect, the separation of “electronic” and “conventional” learning objectives and content, as at least implied by both books, might be questionable. In particular the managerial “e”-processes should be taught integrated with general HR processes. For instance, the systematic integration of e-recruiting into courses or lessons on recruiting seems to be didactically preferable compared to a separated treatment. In this sense, future teaching should profit from textbooks, which systematically integrate “e”-content into general HR education.

### **2.3 Books on practicing e-HRM**

As in other domains, research contributions on e-HRM regularly aim at offering “implications for practice”. Nevertheless, also the domain of e-HRM seems to exhibit the “research-practice gap” from which both of its parental disciplines, HR and IS, suffer (Olivas-Luján & Rousseau, 2010). Obviously, the implications and recommendations offered by e-HRM research are often not exceptionally helpful to e-HRM practice. One reason for this can be seen in the “scholarly jargon” of research contributions, which complicates or even inhibits the understanding and transfer of e-HRM research results to practice (Olivas-Luján & Rousseau, 2010). Consequently, there are also a few academic books, which aim at informing and supporting practice in its versatile decisions referring to e-HRM. Yet, currently there is little knowledge about the concrete e-HRM related problems and needs of practice. Once more, *technological processes*, i.e., the planning, providing (developing and/or purchasing), implementing, operating and applying the respective information systems and *managerial processes* related to application, i.e., electronically recruiting, developing, compensating etc. employees, constitute a rough categorization of the challenges that practitioners of e-HRM have to cope with. The following review of *books on practicing e-HRM* therefore renders, which of these processes are tackled and how support is offered. Since academic books should offer reliable information based on research evidence rather than unjustified normative suggestions, it is also reviewed whether recommendations are research based.

Hal Gueutal and Dianna Stone have edited a book entitled “*The brave new world of e-HR: Human resource management in the digital age*” (2005, Jossey Bass, 310 pages), which

aims at providing HR professionals and IO-psychologist with "... insights about the major technical trends in the field" (p. xvi) and therefore can be categorized as a first book on practicing e-HRM. The nine chapters of the book are written by the editors and further mostly academic authors with a background in management or psychology. After an initial introduction in the history of e-HRM (chapter 1 by Fletcher), a "core set" of five chapters clearly deals with managerial processes of e-HRM, i.e., e-recruiting (chapter 2 by Stone et al.), e-selection (chapter 3 by Kehoe et al.), e-learning (chapter 4 by Salas et al.), e-performance management (chapter 5 by Cardy & Miller), and e-compensation (chapter 6 by Dulebohn & Marler). These chapters are complemented by subsequent discussions of delivery methods (chapter 7 by Gueutal & Falbe) and cross-cultural success and acceptance of e-HRM (chapter 8 by Stone-Romero), and, finally, an outlook on future developments in e-HRM (chapter 9 by Henson). All these chapters aim at offering useful insights and information for practice. In particular, the "core chapters" explicitly aim at comprehensively offering "guidelines", "tips" or "recommendations", which expectedly are of "tactical" rather than of detailed operational nature. These sections additionally expose that e-HRM aims at the managerial (beyond the mere operational) level of HRM and again reveal that HR processes and HR technologies are increasingly interwoven. Moreover, the respective chapters generally aim at a realistic and "balanced" picture, which also considers possible downsides and dysfunctional aspects of e-HRM, such as depersonalization, information overload, or problems with equality of treatment and data privacy. Referring to the *research orientation*, the respective recommendations regularly refer to research – as far as available at the date of writing. A "prime example" of collecting and transferring existing research knowledge for practitioners is the chapter on e-learning by Salas et al., which systematically bases recommendations on existing research results. It is particularly recommendable for readers interested in presenting research results to practice. Some sections (chapter 1 and 9) yet do not refer to related research. In sum, the authors present an instructive book, which focuses mainly on the managerial side of e-HRM and tries to offer tactical information and advice for persons responsible for the design of e-HRM concepts in practice. Given this, the book might also serve academic readers as an instructive introduction in major aspects of the field.

Guido Hertel and Udo Konradt have edited a further book on "*Human Resource Management im Inter- und Intranet (Human Resource Management in the Inter- and Intranet)*" (Hogrefe, 2004, 356 pages). Since the major objective is to give a first comprehensive overview on e-HRM and to derive recommendations for practice as far as possible based on existing insights (p. 9), this book can be categorized as practice-oriented. Basically, it comprises 19 chapters, which are written by the editors and several further mostly academic authors with a background in psychology. The structure of the book explicitly follows a "phase model" of HRM, which distinguishes "recruitment, selection and placement" (part 1), "integration and cooperation" (part 2) and "development and promotion" of employees (part 3). Therewith the book clearly aims at broadly covering the managerial processes of e-HRM, while there are also uncovered areas such as e-compensation. In particular, there are several chapters referring to the different managerial processes such as e-selection (chapter by Konradt & Hertel), e-

learning (chapter by Schaper & Konradt) or e-communication (chapter by Sassenberg). A few times, a “best practice” example of a company is used to illustrate the respective HR process (e.g., in the chapter on e-recruiting by Hesse). As a peculiarity, several chapters focus on virtual teams/virtual work, for instance on changing qualification requirements (chapter by Konradt), performance measurements/management (chapter by Wegge et al.), leadership and motivation (chapter by Hertel & Konradt), or training and development (chapter by Raabe & Schmitz) of/for virtual teams. This uncovers a particular understanding of “e-HRM”, which not only refers to electronically supported and networked HRM, but also to HRM which refers to electronically supported and networked employees. Beyond this, there are also a few chapters dealing with selected core technologies of e-HRM such as self service- and portal-systems (chapter by Schäffer-Külz) or groupware and workflow management-systems (chapter by Hamborg & Gruber). However, also in these few chapters managerial aspects, i.e., the application of these technologies in HR are discussed, rather than technical processes and design. Throughout the chapters, practitioners are supported by general information on the respective subjects, which is sometimes complemented by specific “guidelines”, “checklists” or the like. Again, this book refers to a general “tactical” level of managing human resources electronically. The book closes with an outlook on the future of e-HRM (chapter by Stone et al.). Concerning the *research orientation* of contents, some chapters offer rather conceptual or argumentative justification (e.g., the chapter on HR marketing by Frank & Giessen), while in general the aim of basing recommendations on existing research results is obvious. In sum, the book offers multiple insights mainly into the managerial side of e-HRM. Beyond this, also several focal aspects of managing virtual work and virtual teams are tackled in several chapters. Given this, the book is of interest for readers looking for a general introduction in e-HRM. These are practitioners with responsibility for certain (e-)HR processes as well as academics who aim at getting more acquainted with the versatile aspects of e-HRM.

In a quite similar vein, two further edited books offer a variety of chapters, which generally aim at informing and supporting e-HRM practice based on insights from research:

- Martin, G., Reddington, M., & Alexander, H. (2008) (Eds.). *Technology, Outsourcing and Transforming HR*, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Torres-Corronas, T., & Arias-Oliva, M. (2004) (Eds.). *e-Human Resources Management: Managing Knowledge People*, Hershey: Idea.

In brief, academic books on practicing e-HRM aim at summarizing and transferring existing e-HRM knowledge for practice. Again, a topically diverse set of technical as well as managerial insights are offered in these books. Due to the character of research oriented books, the content is of “tactical” nature and therefore interesting for general decision-makers rather than for persons, which are responsible for introducing or applying HR information systems in detail. Despite of the broad range of treated topics, existing gaps and emerging new developments such as mobile or community-based HRM leave room for further books on practicing e-HRM.

### 3. Conclusions

Rather silently, the ongoing “electronization” has evolved as one of the major transformations of HRM throughout the last two decades. Besides an expanding stock of academic research papers, which try to “get to grips” with a multifarious, quickly developing phenomenon, also a smaller set of academic books aim at offering a better understanding of e-HRM. Mapping major academic functions and target groups, these books offer a heterogeneous plethora of insights into researching, teaching and practicing e-HRM. Still, however, it is not easy to get the “big picture” of e-HRM. Like pieces of a big mosaic, the respective book chapters present smaller pieces of insights. Yet these pieces cannot offer the big picture until they are considered as a whole. In this sense, each new contribution on e-HRM improves our understanding of both, the detailed topic treated as well as the wider context of e-HRM. Despite of the copious insights offered by current academic books, still there are numerous gaps in understanding detail as well as general aspects, and thus a lot of further pieces are necessary to assemble the big mosaic of e-HRM.

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