EDITOR'S COMMENTS ▰▰▰▰▰▰

Between a Rock and a Hard Spot ▰▰▰▰

Many researchers in the Information Systems discipline are clamoring for a fifth, or even sixth, issue of the *MIS Quarterly* each year. With a backlog of 21 articles in addition to a full set of papers for a special issue on Standard Making, there are enough accepted articles to make this a reality in 2006. Further, given the editorial practices of former Editors-in-Chief, as well as my attempts to increase the number of papers through a broadening of topics and developmental reviewing, it appears that the backlog will continue to grow. So what is the problem? Why can't the *MIS Quarterly* plan on a fifth issue each and every year? The answer lies in the costs.

Reasons for a Growing Backlog

My efforts to encourage more developmental reviewing appear to have been favorably received. Some reviewers who previously had concentrated on outlining problems with reviews are now spending additional effort to develop suggestions for authors to combat the problems they unearth. Training and working with reviewers through the editorial team should encourage even more developmental reviewing. We have also revised the reviewing form to accentuate what is interesting in each submission.

Editorial board appointments and special issues are two ways in which I am working to broaden the *MIS Quarterly*'s coverage. A number of years ago, then Editor-in-Chief Allen Lee challenged Al Hevner, Sal March, Jinsoo Park, and Sudha Ram to write an article explaining the intricacies of design science research to the broader IS community. That article, published in 2004,[1] was well-received by the IS community and was recently select by ISI Essential Science Indicators as the October 2005 Fast Breaking Paper in the field of Economics and Business.[2] To further encourage more submissions on the topic, a special issue on Design Science Research coedited by Sal March and Veda Storey was recently announced. The *MIS Quarterly* also recently announced a special issue on a topic of keen interest to both researcher and practitioner communities: Offshoring. If you have not seen the Call for Papers for these two issues, please read about them at **http://www.misq.org/**. If you think that your area of research is underrepresented at the *MIS Quarterly*, consider working with leaders in that area to propose a special issue. The new policy about special issues is posted at **http://www.misq.org/policies/SIPolicy.pdf**.

I anticipated that developmental reviewing and broadening the research categories published in the *MIS Quarterly* would increase the backlog of articles to be published. I promised that I would work on ways to accommodate the increased number of papers accepted for publication. Thanks to the editorial policies of Ron Weber and the developmental efforts of the editorial board, we have a healthy backlog of papers. That backlog promises to grow, in part because of the developmental reviews and higher number of submissions.

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[1]A. R. Hevner, S. T. March, J. Park, and S. Ram, "Design Science in Information Systems Research," *MIS Quarterly* (28:1), March 2004, pp. 75-105.

[2]**http://www.esi-topics.com/fbp/2005/october05-AlanRHevner.html**.

A Fifth Issue

I naively thought that the *MIS Quarterly* could accommodate this backlog by printing a fifth issue online every year. The Special Issue on Standard Making coedited by Kalle Lyytinen and John King was the first issue I slated for online publication. The funding was not available to print this special issue as a fifth regular paper issue, so I thought we could make it available to all in an electronic format. Anyone interested in the article could obtain it from the *MIS Quarterly* website whether or not he/she was a member of AIS, had a subscription to the *MIS Quarterly*, or worked at a university whose library held a subscription to the journal. This would mean that the articles would have much more potential exposure since there would be no restrictions on accessing the articles. The anticipated increased exposure is consistent with a report by Lawrence that computer science articles *published online* are cited an average 2.6 times more often than those published offline.[3] Further, publishing a special issue electronically would mean that as many articles as were deemed acceptable for publication by the coeditors could be published, instead of the 6 to 8 articles per issue that typically can be accommodated in a print issue.

Unfortunately, there are a number of reasons why it was impossible to publish a completely electronic fifth issue each year. I won't elaborate on all of these reasons, but I will share with you the problems of image and archiving. This will be followed by a discussion of costs.

Image. Since IS researchers read and provide the articles for the *MIS Quarterly*, I had anticipated that this group would be supportive of using technology to deliver their research. However, as I shared my thoughts about an electronic fifth issue, many of my IS colleagues were aghast. They were concerned that articles published online would be of a lower quality than articles delivered via the print medium. Ironically, when I asked these researchers if they had a subscription for a print version of the *MIS Quarterly* none had a subscription. Rather they received the *MIS Quarterly* articles online, either through their university or from the **www.aisnet.org** site for AIS members. It became clear to me that IS researchers have concerns about the quality of electronic-only issues even though they read it online and are very familiar with the *MIS Quarterly's* rigorous review process. Demonstrating that they publish high-quality research is a challenge faced by electronic-only journals as they struggle to gain acceptance. The *MIS Quarterly's* rigorous review process ensures the quality of its published articles, even were they to be published online only.

The journal's image is also salient for deans, promotion and tenure (P&T) committees, and other external parties. The legitimacy of electronic-only issues may be questioned when making promotion, tenure and reward decisions.[4] Speier, Palmer, Wren, and Hahn[5] found that faculty who served on P&T committees were more likely than other faculty to have a greater awareness of electronic publishing and to have read articles in electronic journals. However, the P&T committee members held either neutral or negative views of electronic journals compared to paper journals.

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[3]Ron Weber, "Some Futures of the Marketplace for Journals," Editorial Comments, *MIS Quarterly* (26:4), December 2002, pp. iii-ix.

[4]B. Cronin and K. Overfelt, "E-Journals and Tenure," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* (46), 1995, pp. 700-703; R. Kling and L. Covi, "Electronic Journals and Legitimate Media in the System of Scholarly Communication," *The Information Society* (11), 1995, pp. 261-271; B. Ives and S. L. Jarvenpaa, "Will the Internet Revolutionize Business Education and Research?," S*loan Management Review* (38), 1996, pp. 33-41.

[5]C. Speier, J. Palmer, D. Wren, and S. Hahn, "Faculty Perceptions of Electronic Journals as Scholarly Communication: A Question of Prestige and Legitimacy," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* (50:6), 1999, pp. 537-543.

Another group that has reservations about the quality of electronic journals is the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). This association measures and ranks academic libraries based on the number of titles they hold. While extremely knowledgeable about electronic journals, the ARL has not been able to find a way to incorporate the holding of electronic titles into its measurement and ranking system in a manner that ARL members accept. As a result, the ARL rankings continue to be based entirely on paper holdings, with no accommodation for the fact that electronic titles are an excellent way for an academic library to fulfill its mission.

Archiving. Even though electronic journals could simplify librarians' work, reduce costs, and lower the shelf space needed to store print materials, university libraries still maintain paper holdings. This is because ARL rankings are based in part upon the need for long-term archival preservation. Paper has two advantages when it comes to archiving: it is a known commodity and it can last for a long time. Historically, libraries have been responsible for archiving scholarly literature. Among librarians, electronic-only journals are NOT archival publications. Conceivably, commercial publishers or scholarly associations could assume responsibility for archiving, but this is neither a current reality, nor a likely near-term possibility.

Costs

Based on the reasons outline above, publishing a fifth issue of the *MIS Quarterly* in an online version only is unfortunately not a viable option at this time. This leaves the journal with a growing backlog and IS researchers whose careers would benefit from more published articles. In response to this demand, the *MIS Quarterly* will don a new look in 2006. It will grow to 8 ½" by 11" and change its font to marginally accommodate more articles. However, that is only a small step toward solving the backlog problem.

Here is one problem that can be solved with more money. But the economics of today's journal marketplace conspire against the *MIS Quarterly*. In his December 2002 editorial, Ron Weber provided a detailed analysis of the economics of the marketplace for journals. In this excellent editorial, Weber argues that the full costs of providing journal space are not borne directly by the scholars who produce the research that takes up the space. Rather, their research is subsidized by the universities that pay their salaries and fund the university libraries that subscribe to journals such as the *MIS Quarterly* that they need for their research. Further, scholars do not directly pay for the costs associated with the IS review process. Rather this cost is borne by their colleagues who provide reviews free of charge. Of course, it may be argued that scholars submitting to the MIS Quarterly indirectly pay for the costs by serving in turn as reviewers for their colleagues' manuscripts.

Declining journal subscriptions. According to Weber, individual researchers consume journal content to support their own research, pedagogy, consulting ,and service activities, but they are not paying for their journal content consumption activities. Because individual scholars can access journals for free via the Web-based facilities provided by their library, the average number of personal subscriptions per scientist has halved over the 20 year period between1981-2001.[6] The *MIS Quarterly* has similarly suffered a noticeable decline in the individual subscriptions of IS researchers.

The decline of subscriptions of individual IS researchers can be linked in part to the symbiotic alliance between the *MIS Quarterly* and the Association for Information Systems (AIS). Weber describes this

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[6]C, Tenopir and D. King, "Lessons for the Future of Journals," *Nature* (413), December 18, 2001, *pp.* 672- 674.

alliance in great detail in his editorial of September 2002.[7] (I'm quite fortunate to follow in the footsteps of Editors-in-Chief who have provided meticulous documentation.) The terms of the alliance are that AIS pays an annual fee to the *MIS Quarterly* in return for the right to make all current and past issues of the journal available online "free" to AIS members as a part of the package of services offered by AIS to its members. It is password-protected and resident in AIS's eLibrary. AIS members who want to obtain a print version of the *MIS Quarterly* and the full benefits afforded by a subscription have to subscribe separately. With the doubling of AIS membership, the contribution per member for the online access is now less than $8 per member. Discussions are currently underway with AIS officers to increase the amount paid for online access to reflect the growing number of AIS members who access the *MIS Quarterly* online. But the reality is that AIS is currently working to stabilize its financial position. It funds both *Communications of the AIS* and *Journal of the AIS* and pays *MISQ Executive* for online access. Access to all of these journals is a wonderful benefit of membership. My belief is that AIS members value their online access to the *MIS Quarterly* more highly than the current $8 (or less) that is being paid on their behalf, and they would be willing for AIS to make tradeoffs in other areas in order to increase its payment for the service.

Not surprisingly, the number of individual subscriptions to the *MIS Quarterly* has dropped since the alliance between AIS was signed on April 30, 2002. The good news is that AIS members now have greater access to the journal. The bad news is that subscription fees contribute little toward covering the full costs of printing even the four regular issues.

I am working with the other Senior Editors and the *MIS Quarterly* Policy Committee to find a way to fund a fifth issue each year and to continue to make it possible for AIS members to have easy access to the journal in electronic form. We are exploring several options **in addition** to renegotiating with AIS to reflect the fair value of the online service provided to AIS's growing membership. These additional options include a page fee for published papers or a journal submission fee.

Publication Fees. There are a few IS-related journals that charge a print fee for pages. For example, a number of IEEE journals and *Presence: Teleoperator and Virtual Environments* charge voluntary page charges up to a certain page limit. In some cases these journals charge a higher obligatory page fee for articles exceeding a 12 page limit. *The Information Society* charges $1200 for the first page and $500 per page for each additional page (up to 4). The page charges are a way of recovering costs from those who benefit most from an article's publication, the authors. However, the distribution of costs is spread across a limited portion of the community.

Submission fees. Submission fees are relatively rare in IS, marketing, and management journals. It is another story, though, when you look at journals in accounting, finance, and economics. Most top-ranked finance journals charge a submission fee somewhere between $100 and $200. The journals with lower ranks (i.e., less than 30th) often charge less, perhaps in the $50 range. The submission fee charged depends if you are a member of an association affiliated with the journal. *Journal of Financial Economics* charges the most: $550, but if you are a current subscriber to the journal it is *only* $500. The journal returns all but $100 if the paper is not sent out for review. Accounting journals tend to fall in the $75 to $100 range for members, but $100 to $200 for nonmembers. As of January 1, 2006, *Journal of Accounting Research* is going to raise its fee from $250 to $350. The submission fees in many economics journals fall in the $50 to $100 range.

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[7]R. Weber, "The Alliance," *MIS Quarterly* (26:3), September 2002, pp. v-xi.

A submission fee spreads the cost of supporting the journal broadly over the IS community, and it places the burden on people who are directly benefiting from the *MIS Quarterly's* excellent reviewing services. It also should be able to cover the costs of a fifth issue each year. The fee could be waived by the Editor-in-Chief for hardship cases (e.g., researchers in developing countries who do not have the funds available, or doctoral students).

It is my goal to make the fifth issue a reality. There is no question that this will benefit the IS academic community. The other Senior Editors and the *MIS Quarterly* Policy Committee, as well as some of you, have strongly encouraged me to pursue this objective. I am not sure yet how we will fund a fifth issue each year and to continue to make it possible for AIS members to have easy online access to the journal. I am hopeful, though, that the IS research community will support the *MIS Quarterly* if asked to share more of the economic burden of the increased number of articles from which they will be able to benefit.

I am interested in learning your opinions about how to find our way through the rock and the hard spot. If you have any additional suggestions for financing a fifth issue or if you wish to indicate your support of some or all of the alternatives above, please email me at misq@bus.ucf.edu.

Changes in the Editorial Board

Associate Editors. Having served as Associate Editor (AE) for three years, and having worked with many AEs during my years as Senior Editor, it became apparent to me that AEs experience a substantial learning curve. In most cases they become extremely knowledgeable about what an AE is supposed to do just about the time that they step down from the position. Further, some AEs accept the position without really under-standing the amount of time that is required to do a good job. Still others are diverted to other scholarly activities. Thus, when I became Editor-in-Chief last January, I informed the current AEs that I was changing the term to two years with the possibility of an additional two-year term. This is good news for IS scholars who submit their research to the *MIS Quarterly* because there will be a higher percentage of more experienced AEs. The two-year rotation also affords more opportunity for reviewers with the interest and expertise needed to serve as an AE to join the editorial team. Another policy change that was actually started under Ron Weber and that was formalized this year is that we are only inviting tenured faculty to serve as AEs. We thought that it was unfair to subject untenured faculty to the heavy demands that would be placed on them as AEs.

I would like to thank the following retiring AEs for their outstanding efforts to ensure the quality of the *MIS Quarterly* publications: Yolande Chan (Queen's University), Gert-Jan deVreede (University of Nebraska at Omaha), Debabrata Dey (University of Washington), Varun Grover (Clemson University), Michelle Kaarst-Brown (Syracuse University), Dorothy Leidner (Baylor University), Shaila Miranda (University of Oklahoma), Mike Newman (University of Manchester and Agder University College), Blaize Horner Reich (University of British Colombia, Okanagan), Christina Soh (Nanyang Technological University), Sandy Staples (Queen's University), and James Y. L. Thong (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology).

The following AEs have completed a two year term and have agreed to serve an additional two-year term: Anol Bhattacherjee (University of South Florida), Moez Limayem (City University of Hong Kong and l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales de l'Université de Lausanne), JoEllen Moore (Southern Illinois University), Peter Axel Nielsen (Aalborg University), Alain Pinsonneault (McGill University), G. Prem Premkumar (Iowa State University), T. Ravichandran (Rensselear Polytechnic Institute), Vern Richardson (University of Arkansas), Radhika Santhanam (University of Kentucky), Mani Subramani (University of Minnesota), and Cathy Urquhart (University of Auckland).

These AEs have agreed to delay their retirement for a year to help ease us through the transition period: Susan Brown (University of Arizona), Wendy Currie (University of Warwick), Prabhudev Konana (University of Texas at Austin), Guy Paré (Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales Montreal), and H. Jeff Smith (Wake Forest University). I am especially appreciative of these "master" AEs because they have served three years and know how much work it is to do an outstanding job—and yet they have agreed to serve one more year.

And finally, I would like to welcome the following IS researchers who have accepted our invitation to serve as AEs: Ravi Bapna (University of Connecticut), Michael Barrett (University of Cambridge), Roger Chiang (University of Cincinnati), Elizabeth Davidson (University of Hawaii), Michael Gallivan (Georgia State University), Shirley Gregor (Australian National University), Ola Henfridsson (Viktoria Institute), Rajiv Kohli (William and Mary University), Neil Ramiller (Portland State University), Sundeep Sahay (University of Oslo), Suprateek Sarker (University of Washington), Cheri Speier (Michigan State University), Hock Hai Teo (National University of Singapore), Rita Walczuch (University of Maastricht), Edgar Whitley (London School of Economics), and Mun Yi (University of South Carolina).

Senior Editors. The *MIS Quarterly* has benefited considerably from the services of its three outstanding Senior Editors (SEs) who are retiring this year: Deborah Compeau (University of Western Ontario), Joey George (Florida State University), and Michael Myers (University of Auckland). Joey is resigning in order to devote more time to his new position as Editor-in-Chief of *Communications of the AIS* (*CAIS*). We wish him the best as he assumes his new responsibilities at *CAIS.* Michael had already retired once, but then he was recruited to evaluate the role of *MISQ Discovery.* We decided it was time to close down this department of the *MIS Quarterly*.

Our new Senior Editors were selected on the basis of their outstanding service as AEs and their exceptionally strong research records: Alan Dennis (Indiana University), Varun Grover (Clemson University), and Dorothy Leidner (Baylor University). The other SEs and I look forward to working with Alan, Varun, and Dorothy.

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