

Carol Saunders, JAIS Research Perspectives Editor

IS Research Perspectives: Outlet for Debate and Discussion

The *IS Research Perspectives* is a special section of the *Journal of the Association for Information Systems (JAIS)*, whose overall goal is to publish debate and discussion on critical issues in IS research. It was launched by Detmar Straub in October 2003, and the reins were transferred to Rudy Hirschheim in 2006. I have been working with Rudy as the senior editor of the section over the last few months. I want to thank both Detmar and Rudy for their outstanding work in establishing and promoting this section of the journal, and for their unwavering dedication to its development. It will be very difficult to fill their shoes, but I will do my best.

Kalle Lyytinen and I have been reflecting upon what the role of IS Research Perspectives should be now. Personally, I am finding this quite challenging. On one hand, I am experiencing an inner push to do something to make the section quite different. On the other hand, I really like the direction that this section has taken. For example, I would like to see more dialogues such as those that were sparked by the 2007 Special Issue on “Quo Vadis TAM.” I would like to continue the momentum!

Shortly after he took over the section, Rudy described communication gaps as an underlying rationale for its establishment. An abbreviated version of his discussion about the issue is now available on the JAIS website in the section [Why IS Research Perspectives?](#) Unfortunately, communication gaps continue to exist within the discipline and keep it from achieving its full potential. Take, for example, the communication gap between Wirtschaftsinformatik (German term for Business Informatics) and Information Systems (IS). Wirtschaftsinformatik researchers are German-speaking researchers concerned with solving practical business problems with Information Technology. To do so, they often use modeling, prototyping, workflow management, and business process management. They are very technically oriented and have achieved such major successes as the creation of the SAP R3 platform and related ecology. Though Wirtschaftsinformatik and IS researchers both look at some of the same phenomena, they study them through different lenses and, arguably, with different objectives in mind. They publish their results in different languages. For example, many Wirtschaftsinformatik studies are

targeted for the highly esteemed journal *Wirtschaftsinformatik* (<http://www.springerlink.com/content/120370/>), which, until recently, published all articles in German. Now an English version is published as well under the title Business & Information Systems Engineering (<http://springerlink.com/content/121294>). In his recent review of a highly cited design science article by Hevner, March, Park and Ram¹ that was earlier published in *MIS Quarterly*, Martin Bichler² points out that both the IEEE Computer Society and the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) with 100,000 and 80,000 members, respectively, eclipse by orders of magnitude the Association for Information Systems (AIS) in terms of members. Since all three societies are working on design science, communication between the communities would be of benefit to all. Of course, many of the members of AIS who speak English as a first or second language will never read Bichler's original article, since they do not understand German. Clearly, the language of communication separates these two communities. But, I would argue that there is an even greater gulf created by differences in methodologies and primary focus on the practitioner community. This gulf, like so many others within our discipline, needs to be better bridged in order for the discipline to achieve its full potential.

Our continued hope is that this section can be used to open that dialogue and to explore ways of closing communication gaps within the discipline. These gaps will not be closed without the efforts and good will of many. This section can serve as a forum for those efforts. What might these bridging articles look like? The Hevner et al. (2004) article is an excellent example of an article that encouraged the *Wirtschaftsinformatik* and IS communities, as well as different parts of the IS community, to talk with one another. Another type of bridging article might look at systems development from the reflective eyes of a design science/*Wirtschaftsinformatik* researcher and an interpretive researcher. Such an article might illustrate how the research in each community can inform the research of the other. One person probably would not be able to write such an article. In fact, the collaboration between researchers in two different communities would be a great way to start the dialogue. A third type of bridging article might provide concrete suggestions about how to overcome challenges in communicating and to create synergy

¹ [Hevner, A., March, S., Park, J. and Ram, S.](#) "Design Science in Information Systems Research," *MIS Quarterly*, 28(1), 2004, pp. 75-10

² Martin Bichler review of Hevner et al, "Für Sie Gelesen", *Wirtschaftsinformatik*, 48 (2), 2006, pp. 133-135.

across the various communities. Still another would address new topics in areas that inherently demand collaboration across disciplines. I would welcome these or other types of bridging submissions.

In addition to publishing articles that encourage interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration, this section offers the potential to see IS phenomena in new ways and build revelatory theory. To that end, we are now encouraging the submission of papers that use critical research—an approach that is underutilized in the IS discipline. Critical research tends to address social issues such as freedom, power, social controls, and value. With critical research, researchers in our discipline can challenge prevailing assumptions and can work to understand and improve our community and society. We will, of course, continue to encourage articles that stimulate debate and dialogue about a broad range of methodological practices and approaches.

Not only can we look at IS phenomena with new approaches, but as IS researchers, we can broaden our view of IS. Consider the following: a premium car is expected to have more than 100 million lines of software code by 2010; many of today's cell phones have more functionality than the mainframes that organizations used to run their businesses in the early decades of computer use; and whole new branches of information are being created such as health informatics, bioinformatics, and cheminformatics. These new types of IS offer exciting new areas of exploration. They are also affecting society in ways that are difficult to comprehend. Exploration of these various topics meets the objective of this section. We encourage you to do so! Please read more about the section at <http://aisel.aisnet.org/jais/about.html> and start the dialogue!