

Journal of the Association of Information Systems

Call for Papers for Special Issue

Advances in Qualitative IS Research Methodologies

Guest co-editors:

Dubravka Cecez-Kecmanovic, UNSW, Australia

Robert Davison, The City University of Hong Kong, China

Walter Fernandez, UNSW, Australia

Patrick Finnegan, UNSW, Australia

Shan Pan, UNSW, Australia

Suprateek Sarker, University of Virginia, USA

Background

Research methodologies have been of central importance to the Information Systems (IS) field since its inception. Epistemological and methodological concerns in IS have spawned insightful debates among the community of scholars about legitimate research topics and objects, the nature of knowledge and acceptable ways and forms of knowledge production, as well as relevance for practice. The limitations of dominant research methods and the lack of relevance of IS research have been debated in the last three decades with repeated calls for new approaches and methodological advances (e.g. Hirschheim, 1985; Orlowski and Baroudi, 1991; Hirschheim and Klein, 1992; Walsham, 1995; Galliers, 2001; Mingers, 2003; Chen and Hirschheim, 2004; Niehaves, 2005; Ramiller and Pentland, 2009).

Questions regarding research methodology are becoming even more critical in the digital era wherein IS research phenomena are being found to be increasingly ubiquitous, dynamic, and complex and for which the existing dominant modes of knowledge production are too limiting, and sometimes even obsolete. Being at the epicentre of the digital revolution IS researchers have the opportunity, and indeed an obligation, to lead inquiries into the emerging territories of digital transformations taking place in old and new forms of working and organizing, both locally and globally, in private, public or third sector, and more broadly in societies. These ongoing digital transformations challenge IS researchers to develop new, innovative, and imaginative research methodologies and related methods.

The purpose of the Special Issue is to foster and contribute to **methodological advances of qualitative research** including new philosophical approaches and innovative research designs and methods that enable more profound, critically engaged, practically relevant and reflexive insights into IS and organizing in the digital era. We invite IS scholars to think differently about these emerging and increasingly intertwined social and technological phenomena and explore bold vision and methodological innovations in conducting IS inquiries.

Building on the rich tradition of epistemological and methodological debates in IS and social sciences more broadly, this Special Issue aims to:

- 1) *Provide an unconventional forum for a critical reflection and wide-open debate on fundamental issues in IS research: paradigmatic and philosophical foundations, epistemological and methodologies choices, and implications for knowledge production, justification and relevance;*
- 2) *Stimulate epistemic developments above and beyond the well-trodden methodological paths to encourage and equip IS researchers to grapple with the complex and emerging IS phenomena of the digital age; and*
- 3) *Advance IS research by proposing, developing, and show-casing new, visionary and innovative qualitative research methodologies and methods/techniques, and illustrating their contributions to knowledge creation.*

We encourage scholars to submit works that contribute to these key aims. Papers of a methodological and conceptual nature as well as those that are empirical are welcome. While contributing to any of the three aims, the papers may focus on, but are not restricted to, the following:

General themes:

- epistemological concerns, methodological concerns and concerns with methods – reviews and critical reflections on IS research practices; tensions and challenges of aligning epistemology to methodology and then to method(s)
- methodological questions of adopting new philosophies/approaches in IS research (e.g. sociomateriality, practice theory, process theorizing);
- alternative modes of IS inquiry - innovative approaches, methodologies and methods; new forms and challenges of knowledge production; technologically enabled and assisted IS inquiries;
- revisiting generalizability in IS research – past debates vs future challenges;
- new and emerging IS phenomena/objects/foci/domains in the digital era, such as: digitization processes in private, public and third sector; social networking; virtual(izing) reality; openness phenomena (open innovation, value co-creation); global sourcing and crowdsourcing; new technology-enabled modes of working and organizing; electronic markets; vertical and horizontal transformation of industries; enterprise systems, globalization and transformation of organizations;
- qualitative research and methodological challenges in the era of Big Data;
- new answers to old questions: does IS research matter in practice (and for whom) and why should we care?
- new strategies and genres for representing qualitative research in electronic journals such as the *Journal of the AIS*.

These themes can be explored on their own and also as part of the following tracks:

- a) **Methodological advances in case study research** including new perspectives/approaches in case study research of emerging IS phenomena; methodological challenges in multiple cases research; theorizing from cases – new methods and challenges;

- b) **Methodological advances in field/ethnography/virtual ethnography** research including: new ways of doing field work underpinned by novel approaches; field work in new digital environments (virtual, global, distributed, algorithmic worlds); unleashing discovery and learning from field work;
- c) **Methodological advances in action research** including different ontological and epistemological assumptions and their implications in conducting Action Research; integration or comparison of the variants of Action Research; innovative ways of approaching and doing Action Research and advancing theoretical and practical contributions of Action Research;
- d) **Methodological advances in Grounded Theory approaches** to knowledge production and theory building including: innovative ways of grounded theory development; challenges of grounded approaches in case study and field study inquiries, and technological assistance in grounded knowledge production and theory building.

The **key characteristics of manuscripts** that the Special Issue seeks to publish are:

- Novelty/innovativeness of methodological ideas, ability to transform our view of existing methodologies, or introducing new methodological approaches and methods relevant to studying Information Systems today and in the future;
- Bold ideas, imaginative perspectives, sound argumentation and, when applicable, empirical illustration of ideas;
- In case of a manuscript that is empirically-focused, the potential to serve as an exemplar for a particular methodology (say, virtual ethnography, grounded theory development using big data, discourse analysis)
- Potential for being found useful in the IS discipline and beyond.

Of course, the editors recognize that all of the above criteria are not necessarily relevant to each and every manuscript.

Researchers are invited to submit their paper that addresses one of the nominated themes/tracks and clearly contributes to the Special Issue aims. Authors will have an opportunity to present their papers at two workshops: pre-ACIS held in Sydney on 30 Nov 2016 (just before ACIS 2016 to be held in Wollongong) and pre-ICIS held in Dublin on 11 Dec. Participation in a workshop is not compulsory for the submission of a paper to the Special Issue. However, presenting a draft paper at a workshop will be very helpful to the authors for getting early feedback before submitting a paper to the Special Issue.

Important dates - updated

The submission of papers and the important dates are as follows:

Pre-ACIS Workshop	
20 Aug 2016	deadline for submission of extended abstracts
5 Sept 2016	authors informed of acceptance/rejection of abstracts
20 Nov 2016	deadline for full paper submission
30 Nov 2016	pre-ACIS workshop in Sydney (papers presented and discussed)

Pre-ICIS Workshop	
01 Sept 2016	deadline for submission of extended abstracts
15 Sept 2016	authors informed of acceptance/rejection of abstracts
01 Dec 2016	deadline for full paper submission
11 Dec 2016	Pre-ICIS Workshop in Dublin (papers presented and discussed)

Submission of paper to the Special Issue	
01 April 2017	deadline for submission of papers to the Special Issue
20 April 2017	authors advised regarding paper acceptance for review
10 June 2017	first round of reviews completed and authors advised regarding review outcomes
10 Aug 2017	deadline for revised papers
01 Oct 2017	second round of reviews completed and authors advised regarding review outcomes
15 Nov 2017	deadline for revised papers
01 Dec 2017	final editorial decision on papers acceptance for the SI
15 Dec 2017	Special Issue papers submitted to JAIS for publications

All papers will be peer reviewed and must follow the standard guidelines for manuscript preparation and submission posted on JAIS website (<http://aisel.aisnet.org/jais/>)

The papers presented at workshops and those submitted to the Special Issue will be also considered for publication in an edited volume. In such a way there will be an opportunity to publish a larger number of papers. More information about the planned edited volume will be provided at a later stage.

Workshop Organizing co-chairs:

Michael Cahalane, UNSW, Australia

Daniel Schlagwein, UNSW, Australia

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