Expanding the Frontiers of Information Systems Research

JAIS call for submission to Research Perspectives

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Information technologies (IT) are fundamental to the societal transformations that continue to mark the digital age. The information systems (IS) discipline is equipped to deal with this societal transformation in a way that few other disciplines can – yet IS researchers have traditionally focused on issues revolving around the organizational adoption of business-oriented IT and the organizational and industrial ramifications of this adoption.[1]

Yet we all know that the impact of IT is far more sweeping and wider than is typically dealt with in the IS literature. IT is increasingly central to non-business organizations, new forms of social activity, leisure activities, community building, and has a primary role in shaping contemporary society. IT comes in many forms including embedded systems, mobile applications, infrastructures, or immersive graphical simulation. This special issue of Journal of the Association for Information Systems (JAIS) is intended to explore and push the boundaries of IS research. It aims to challenge members of our discipline to take the core ideas and methods of our domain and apply them creatively to other domains, within more diverse contexts, and to reach new goals. Examples of ideas core to the IS discipline, yet foreign to other fields include:

-The concept of ***Socio-technical systems:*** IT does not deterministically drive social changes any more than social actors can act outside and independently of IT. Instead, the technological and the social interact and interlace to result in continuous, sweeping changes to all corners of society: families, businesses, schools, hospitals, governments, and so on. The information systems discipline is uniquely equipped to deal with the socio-technical phenomena and associated discontinuous changes in the digital context, but this lens (as noted above) is often relatively narrowly applied in describing and understanding certain types of changes in organizations associated with certain types of technologies. *As IT-related changes sweep across society, how can we draw upon the socio-technical view and methods and broaden their application – particularly to those domains that tend to ignore IT artifacts?*

- The idea of ***Design science:*** The design and development of any contemporary product or service is intertwined with information technologies. The IS discipline has a rich history of research into the development of IT artifacts in complex environments and can inform the domains that are only now starting to look at such issues. Whether designing complex electro-mechanical products, supply chain processes, or viral marketing campaigns, lessons from design science can inform these domains. *Given the importance of IT artifacts to every element of designing and organizational development, how can IS design principles and design thinking*

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[1] Sidorova, A., Valacich, J.S., Evangelopolous, N. and Ramakrishnan, T. (2008) "Uncovering the intellectual core of the information systems discipline," *MIS Quarterly* 32(3).

apply to domains which are increasingly concerned with design but yet are unfamiliar with design thinking?

- The idea of **Knowledge processes:** The global landscape has been aptly described as a "knowledge society," complete with a "knowledge economy," requiring a "knowledge-based view of the firm." Yet often the espoused view of knowledge is simplistic and highly abstract - separated from the technologies, artifacts and processes which enable or sustain such knowledge processes. IT artifacts are inseparable from any type of present-day knowledge work. Yet, most characterizations of knowledge based firms are void of any analysis of material and behavioural impacts of IT on knowledge processes. At the same time The IS discipline has a tradition of dealing with knowledge in its different material and behavioral forms, critically review its relationships to data and information, and the relationship between knowledge and practices, routines, and artifacts. *Since knowledge has become so central to so many aspects of contemporary societies, there are many domains that can benefit from nuanced and sophisticated material and behavioral views of knowledge that are prevalent in IS research.*

These examples are but three of several "core" areas of work where the body of information systems research can inform new domains and contexts. In this call, we are seeking contributions to research perspectives that convey far-reaching and radical visions for the impact of the IS discipline. We would like to encourage work in what might otherwise be considered to be risky; domains that are outside of the traditional focus of the IS discipline; and methods or theories that otherwise would not be considered. The emphasis of this special issue will be asking how the IS discipline can inform some of these areas and by doing so expand or leverage its core. While considering such a contribution, we invite potential authors to ask: *what are important domains and ideas at the "edge," and what does our discipline have to say that can benefit those who study these domains?*

Examples of potential contributions (not exclusive list):
- How can the IS discipline help frame and address the world's big problems (e.g., poverty, violence, the environment)?
- How can the IS discipline help inform and address critical aspects of national policy and nation building (e.g., regulation, democracy, infrastructure)?
- How can the IS discipline help inform other disciplines with the most pressing problems in their fields (e.g., innovation, design, globalization, market analytics, new media)?
- How can IS discipline help understand non-conventional aspects of organizational behaviour and related IT uses (e.g. crime, identity, humor).
- How can IS discipline help understand broad and long waves of change in peoples' live (e.g., morality, social relationships, health, sanity)?
- How can IS discipline inform novel and 'non-traditional' forms of deploying IT in organizations and other social contexts (e.g., mobile apps, virtual worlds, games, etc.).

The goal of this special issue is to inspire, to provoke, and to challenge. We encourage submissions with radical goals, ambitious thinking, and a positive, proactive view of the IS discipline's potential to improve relevant scholarship, and by doing so perhaps the world.

IS Research Perspectives

Note that this call is looking for submissions to the "Research Perspectives" section in JAIS which, among other things is intended to "encourage interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration." The research perspectives section is intended to offer "the potential to see IS phenomena in new ways and build revelatory theory... to broaden our view of IS..."[2] According to JAIS policy the following defines what constitutes a research perspective article:

"IS Research Perspectives is a special section of JAIS. Its overall mission is to provoke exciting discussion about critical issues that shape the business of doing IS research. We seek articles that debate and analyze issues that are important to researchers in the IS field, but which are not research articles per se. These paper may question or critique our institutions, our assumptions, our blinders, our disputes, our paradigms, how we define the boundaries of our subject, the way we make knowledge claims, the way we generalize, how we define research domains, what we privilege in our research or what we do not publish, among other things. We are particularly interested in articles that bridge the traditional domains of IS research and/or associated domains, or that articulate the nature and consequences of divisions among researchers. Finally, we seek papers that conclude by offering constructive guidance that will help the field to progress and develop. We are interested in forays into issues that IS scholars talk about in the hallways or debate during conference luncheons that have a bearing on the community, its organization, and its mission.

Submitted articles should be accessible to AIS members, but at the same time crisp, rigorous, and scholarly. Shorter articles are no less likely to be accepted than long ones; research perspective articles need not be lengthy to have impact. Authors will indicate that the paper is a "research perspective" when the paper is submitted."

Important Dates

Authors are encouraged to contact the special issue editors with abstracts, extended abstracts, outlines, or summaries before the submission date to get preliminary feedback on potential contributions.

March 28, 2011   Initial submissions due
         Note: when submitting in the JAIS system, be sure to indicate that it is for the "Expanding the Frontiers of IS Research Special Issue" in the cover letter.

June 13, 2011   Reviews back to authors

September 5, 2011   Revisions due

November 28, 2011   Reviews back to authors

January 17, 2012   Final revision due

Publication: March-April 2012

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[2] See research perspectives editorial by Carol Saunders:
http://aisel.aisnet.org/jais/IS_Research_Perspectives_editorial.pdf

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