

Editor's Introduction

Recognizing the Value of Information Systems Research

Conducting high-quality research is an important role of scholars. New knowledge cannot be discovered without continuous research and development. In the information systems area, however, quite a few people are suspicious of the value of research and particularly the knowledge derived from research and publication in our area. As a senior scholar staying in the arena for more than 30 years, I have seen this kind of debate appeared several times. It may be frustrating for scholars who would like to see immediate contribution of research findings from individual or a group of papers. Nonetheless, we can see substantial increase of our understanding or information technology in organizations in the past several decades.

When we argue about the value of information systems research, I believe the following needs to be considered. First, *research is a long-term endeavor*. In many cases, the value of a particular research is not recognized after a long period of time. With the many limitations of individual research (methods, subjects, context, etc.), it is unrealistic to expect individual research or published paper can make significantly observable contributions. Even in physical sciences, million-dollar projects provide no guarantee of immediate or long-term practical values to the real world.

Second, *knowledge discovery through research is a group endeavor*. We may not find significant contribution of quite a few papers, but these papers as a whole provide valuable insight for our understanding or interpretation of certain phenomena. I still remember the early years when researchers were investigating the role of cognitive styles in IS use until the paper by George Huber in Management Science "Much Ado About Nothing." This might be the first introspection of IS research if not counting the Management Misinformation Systems paper by Russell Ackoff in 1967.

Final, *the purpose of research is not just for problem solving*. Knowledge itself is a beauty created by human beings. We all know that problem solving (or immediate tangible value) is only one of the goals for research and development. We develop knowledge for solving immediate problem, along with better understanding and interpretation or prediction of what is going on in our world. This is particularly important for social science and business research. An engineering scholar develops a search algorithm that can run twice as fast as the current one, which is great. An IS researcher investigates why such a super algorithm is adopted in some organizations but not in others, which is great too. We should not feel ashamed because we do not develop the super-efficient search algorithm. It would be great if AR or Pokemon Go was developed by IS scholars. Our value is still there if we can explore what how and why AR makes the Pokemon Go

successful now, not before nor in the future.

Personally, I prefer a framework that uses three dimensions to assess the value of research in information systems (and possibly in any discipline): *tangible/intangible*, *functional/symbolic*, and *short-term/long-term*. Some research produces tangible results such as a method for evaluating the feasibility of an IS project, while others generate intangible values that help outsiders understand why a project can be evaluated in this way.

The division of functional versus symbolic values is also very important (Li, et al., 2015). Creating a method for assessing the quality of a website is a functional value of conducting research. Enriching the method to different contexts or providing various deviations makes our knowledge rich and professional. This is a symbolic value for building our respectable identity. In fact, the importance of symbolic value exists almost everywhere.

Although I am positive about the progress of IS research as a whole, I do want to raise a couple of concerns or suggestions. First, *over-stressing the reputation of journals may mislead the true nature of research*. As I mentioned before, the value of a research may not be discovered in a short time period. A research with long-term potential may be overlooked by reviewers of highly competitive publication outlets, simply because reviewers are looking for reasons to reject, not to accept a paper. There are always chances that good journals publish bad papers and good papers appear in average journals. We need to read the paper and sometimes wait for some time to judge the value of a research.

Second, it is wise for authors to *find a good fit between your research and publication outlets*. We know that top journals are competitive and type I errors are common. Therefore, it is wise to “publish” your excellent research, not necessarily in top journals. It’s great if your paper appears in top journals, but is still great if your paper appears in an average journal but get good readership and feedbacks. Some of my papers in reasonable journals are well-cited. The important thing is to get your paper to the right audience.

References

1. Ackoff, R.L. (1967), “Management Misinformation Systems,” *Management Science*, 14:4, pp. B147-B156.
2. Huber, G. (1983), “Cognitive Style as a Basis for MIS and DSS Designs: Much ADO About Nothing?” *Management Science*, 29:5, pp. 567-579.
3. Li, Y.W., Yang, S.M. and Liang. T.P. (2015), “Website Interactivity and Promotional Framing on Consumer Attitudes Toward Online Advertising: Functional versus Symbolic Brands,” *Pacific Asia Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 7:2, pp. 41-58.

In this Issue

Three papers are published in this issue to add our knowledge base. The first one by Ku, et al. investigates the effect of product type and recommendation method on consumers' intention to buy the recommended products. They conducted an experiment to see how product recommendation can be more effective. An interesting finding is that the effect of recommendation methods differ for different types of products.

The second paper by Mandal examines the role of partner relationship and IT integration on supply chain capabilities. An online survey was conducted to collect data from Indian manufacturing firms for evaluating the model. It provides new insight into our knowledge of supply chain capabilities.

The third paper by Cui, et al. studies the bidding strategies in China's online auction market. They conducted in-depth interviews to explore why bidders adopted different strategies and factors that affect the decision.

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