Editors' Comments

From the Editor-in-Chief:

Dear Readers,

I start my first editorial by highlighting the outstanding leadership and contributions of Dorothy Leidner, our editor-in-chief over the last five years. Dorothy has left *MIS Quarterly Executive* in great shape. Under Dorothy's leadership, and with the guidance of our Senior Editors, we've had a steady flow of high-quality submissions allowing us to produce four excellent issues every year. Dorothy has tirelessly pushed the journal forward through various initiatives – including timely and topical annual special issues, the *ICIS* and *HICSS* practice oriented tracks and conference workshops. All the progress the journal has made in recent years would not have been possible without the help of our editorial board, the many reviewers, the publisher, and the production and managing editors. But Dorothy was our driving force and inspiration. She left some big shoes to fill, but also a clear way forward. I welcome the opportunity to continue along that path. Continuing our annual tradition, we have a special issue slated for December 2020. The focus will be on Artificial Intelligence in Organizations. The call for papers will be released soon, and, as always, there will be a pre-ICIS workshop for those interested in the special issue.

Some Reflections from the Editor-in-Chief

MIS Quarterly Executive was established in 2002 as a sister publication of *MIS Quarterly*. The objective was for *MISQE* to become the preeminent vehicle for Information Systems (IS) academics to disseminate their applied research to Information Technology executives and professionals. Today *MIS Quarterly Executive's* mission has evolved to "encourage practice-based research in information systems and to disseminate the results of that research in a manner that makes its relevance and utility readily apparent."[1] *MIS Quarterly Executive's* intended audience is current IS practitioners as well as those future IS executives who are currently sitting in our undergraduate, graduate, and executive education classrooms. This, my first editorial as the editor-in-chief, provides an opportunity to reflect on that mission and make it tangible for those colleagues who believe in rigor and relevance – as opposed to rigor versus relevance.

In a 1999 *MIS Quarterly* contribution to the rigor vs. relevance debate, Lynne Markus and Tom Davenport, argued that "IS academics should support [hybrid] business-academic journals[2] by submitting research to them and counting them heavily in promotion and tenure evaluations".[3] *MIS Quarterly Executive*, one of the journals of the *Association for Information Systems*, is the only community-owned hybrid business-academic journal and the only one fully focused on IS and IS practitioners. Thus, we are that hybrid journal Markus and Davenport imagined three years before our founding.

Long time readers of *MISQE*, authors who regularly submit to the journal, and the many colleagues who use *MISQE* articles in their classes, already have a feel for the defining traits of our journal. These readers understand the characteristics that distinguish an *MISQE* contribution. But I believe that there is a large, yet untapped audience of potential contributors. These are colleagues who are doing great applied work but have little or no experience writing for an executive audience. It is that audience that this editorial is targeting.

Here I will provide some thoughts on what makes a great *MISQE* article. In this issue I reflect on what current and future executives seek when reading a journal article. In future editorials I will dive more deeply into how to write to satisfy their needs. My analysis is, of course, limited to my personal point of view, but that perspective

1 https://aisel.aisnet.org/misqe/aimsandscope.html

2 They mentioned *Harvard Business Review, Sloan Management Review* and *California Management Review*. *MIS Quarterly Executive* had yet to be founded.

3 Davenport, T. H., Markus, M. L. (1999). Rigor vs. Relevance Revisited: Response To Benbasat and Zmud. *MIS Quarterly*, 23(1), 19-23 p. 21

emanates from almost twenty years publishing in both academic and applied research outlets.

Markus and Davenport warned of an inherent danger in the academic reward system, that: "promotion and tenure evaluations [are] based on publications in refereed academic journals (but not practitioner journals) and evaluative letters from academics (but not from practitioners)" (p. 19). Rather uniquely, the School I joined as an assistant professor, required the ability to speak to both academics and practicing managers. There, the tenure process solicited feedback from ten academics and ten practicing managers, both groups drawn from the professor's own field. This institutionalized reward system started me on thinking about the connection between academic research and practice,[4] discovering how rewarding practice-based research can be, kept me on that path till today.

Busy executives and future executives (i.e., students) perform an implicit calculation when evaluating whether an article is worth reading. Like any consumer gauging customer value – the "overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given"[5] – a reader will balance estimated learning against the cost of reading your work. In my experience there are three dimensions of an article that maximize "reader value" for a practicing audience: timeliness, actionability and clarity. Timeliness is about identifying problems or opportunities that executives are struggling with (or will soon struggle with). Actionability is about doing research that produces tangible practical guidelines that the reader can readily use to help them solve the problem, envision a solution, or move their thinking further as they seek a solution. Clarity is about delivering the timely actionable content (the value) in a way that limits costs, be those expressed in reading difficulty, length or accessibility of the material.

In future editorials I will expand on these three dimensions. But in closing let me tell you why I believe IS academics are best positioned to provide the kind of contributions that meet the above criteria. We are in this business because we are excited about information systems, information technology and the immense potential, and increasingly risks, their widespread adoption holds for organizations and society at large. This is what attracted us to the discipline and what shapes our research. Moreover, a large part our working time is spent teaching. There, in the classroom, our craft is effective communication and clear explanation. We pride ourselves on our ability to take complex topics and help our students understand them. It follows that we should have the market cornered when it comes to prescient knowledge of information technology and information systems. Prescience is about "anticipating and influencing".[6] Much of our professional life is spent studying theoretical phenomena and attempting to push forward our own and then our colleagues' and student's understanding of the phenomena we study. This work gives us an invaluable asset when it comes to influencing practice: deep knowledge of the theoretical phenomenon and a thorough understanding of its genesis and history. When this background is brought to bear on timely topics of interest to executives, it can provide actionable guidelines for them to implement and, if it is communicated clearly, a great contribution to practice is born. That contribution should appear in the pages of *MIS Quarterly Executive*.

In this Issue

The current issue, the first one for 2019, has five contributions: Three research articles, the report of the annual Society for Information Management's IT trends survey and a SIM APC report. The first two articles, titled "Digital Transformation Requires Workforce Transformation" and "The Three Stages of a Virtual Workforce" respectively, are part of the special issue on Optimizing the Digital Workforce edited by Michelle Kaarst-Brown, Fred Niederman, Jeria Quesenberry, and Tim Weitzel. I echo the appreciation in Dorothy's last issue for the work of the special issue editors, and I refer you to their editorial in this issue.

The third article, titled "How a Software Vendor Weathered the Stormy Journey to the

4 Piccoli, G., & Wagner, E. L. (2003). The value of academic research. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 44(2), 29-38.

5 Zeithaml, V. A. (1988). Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: A means. *Journal of Marketing*, 52(3), 2–22.

6 Corley, K. G., & Gioia, D. A. (2011). Building theory about theory building: what constitutes a theoretical contribution? *Academy of management review*, 36(1), 12-32 (p. 23)

Cloud" is authored by Xiao Xiao and Jonas Hedman, both from the Copenhagen Business School. This paper tells the story of a traditional software vendor that managed to navigate a six-year transition to a cloud-based business model. The lessons provided by the authors will prove useful to the many other companies currently in the midst of a similar journey.

The report of the 38th Society for Information Management's IT trends survey is prepared by Leon Kappelman, Russell Torres, Ephraim McLean, Chris Maurer, Vess Johnson and Kevin Kim. The findings, surely to be of interest to practicing manager and academics alike, are based on the authors' analysis of responses from IT executives in 793 organizations. Rounding up the issue is the SIM APC report titled "Digital Transformation at Carestream Health" authored by Heathers Smith of Queen's University and Richard Watson of the University of Georgia. While the report is published through our agreement with SIM and does not go through the standard *MISQE* review process, it relates the compelling story of company overcoming difficulties and challenges in its digital transformation efforts.

Read on!

Gabriele Piccoli
Editor-in-Chief