

Editors' Comments

From the Editor-in-Chief:

Dear Readers,

As it is the *MISQ Executive's* tradition, we will host the SIM/MISQE pre-ICIS workshop at the *Fortieth International Conference on Information Systems* to be held in Munich, Germany in December 2019. Running the workshop will be the guest editors for the special issue themed: "Artificial Intelligence in Organizations: Opportunities for Management and Implications for IS Research." This year's format is very innovative because the special issue is a joint effort between the *MIS Quarterly Executive* and the *Journal of AIS*. The workshop presents a great opportunity to get early feedback from the special issue editors and the participating senior editors from both journals. The call for abstracts for the workshop as well as the call for paper for the joint special issue is available on the *MISQE* website. My heartfelt thank you to the special issue and workshop editors: Hind Benbya (Montpellier Business School), Sirkka Jarvenpaa, (University of Texas), Stella Pachidi, (Cambridge University) and Tom Davenport, (Babson College).

Some Reflections from the Editor-in-Chief

In my last editorial I shared the mission of the *MIS Quarterly Executive* and started a series of reflections focused on making it tangible for potential authors who do rigorous research while striving to be relevant. *MIS Quarterly Executive*, a journal of the *Association for Information Systems*, is the only community-owned hybrid business-academic journal fully focused on Information Systems (IS) and targeting Information Systems practitioners. I offered some thoughts about what I believe current and future executives, our core audience, look for when reading a journal article. I identified 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 recommendations that the reader can readily implement to 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 minimizes the reader's cognitive burden, be those expressed in reading difficulty, length or accessibility of the material.

In this editorial I offer further thoughts on timeliness and how to be timely with your *MISQE* contributions. The dictionary defines timeliness as "the fact or quality of being done or occurring at a favorable or useful time."¹ For *MISQE* authors, this means providing novel and useful insights for current and future executives and IS practitioners. For this reason, since its inception, *MISQE* has adopted a fast-cycle review process that strives to return decisions quickly to authors. For those papers that can rapidly converge to a publication, the senior editors provide guidance and often make themselves available for a meeting or a call. Our editorial team's goal is to remove as many obstacles as possible so as to enable the timely publication of your ideas.

But the key architects of timely publication are our authors. The first and foremost step in timely production of insights is the selection of relevant research questions. Contributions to *MISQE* should strive to produce prescient knowledge,² to anticipate the questions our core audience is grappling with and to influence their thinking. This can only be done by engaging deeply with said audience – IS executives, and increasingly executives beyond the IS function. Perhaps the easiest vehicle for doing so is our classroom. Many of us teach in executive education programs, and most of us have the habit of inviting executives to provide guest lectures. These are "low-cost" ways to find out what's preoccupying them.

1 The Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/timeliness>).

2 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)

Another approach, perhaps more time consuming but certainly rewarding, is to engage directly with executives at practitioner conferences. *MISQE* has a formal partnership with the Society for Information Management (SIM). As I write this editorial, SIM is holding SIM Connect LIVE - its annual leadership conference. At SIM Connect LIVE there is an academic track that showcases *MISQE* authors and other academics engaging with practicing managers and executives. Another SIM offering is the Advanced Practices Council (APC), an exclusive membership program that enables high ranking information systems executives to meet multiple times a year and hold both peer discussions as well as commission customized research by academics and consultants on member-chosen topics. Presenting at these events is a great way to foster the conversation and develop ideas and contacts for timely research. Many of the larger metropolitan areas in the US also have local SIM chapters that meet regularly. While SIM is US centric, there are many similar associations throughout the world – like CIGREF in France or the CIO Board of HKCS in Hong Kong.

When access to groups like SIM or APC is not feasible, participating and presenting at the specialized practitioner conferences on the topics you are interested in (e.g., Blockchain) is a great way to make contacts and launch projects.

Another approach that I have seen successfully employed by some of the most accomplished academics is what I call the trifecta of a successful project. It starts with establishing relationships with executives as I described above, or by reading about new technology or emerging startups. In order to better understand the emerging phenomenon, the researcher engages with a company who is on the frontier of the trend to write a case study. A teaching case, of the type published by the *Communications of AIS*, often provides the best means to approach a firm. I have always found executives to be eager to support the teaching mission of universities – particularly if they are alumni. A case provides a formalized way to explore and understand the phenomenon with some immediate return in terms of publication and classroom impact. Writing an in-depth teaching note and discussing the case within executive programs or MBA classes helps refine ideas and zero in on the novelty of the insight.

This process can be repeated and refined with multiple cases – leading to high quality applied research of the kind sought by *MISQE*. One added advantage of this approach is that by writing the teaching note of a case and crafting an applied research publication, the researcher identifies both research questions and data sources that can then be used to design an academic study targeted to informing theory rather than practice. When successful, this approach yields one project with three highly valuable outcomes: better teaching, interesting questions for an academic publication and practical insight for managers.

Tom Davenport and Lynne Markus lamented twenty years ago³ how hybrid business-academic journals did not count heavily in tenure and promotion decisions. Not much has changed. Thus, while we wait for a more balanced reward system to become reality, structuring a project to create synergy between academic research, teaching duties and applied research is a critical skill for those of us who believe that we have a responsibility to deliver applicable research to our students and IS practitioners.

In this Issue

The current issue has four contributions, all research articles. The first one is titled “A Ten-Step Decision Path to Determine When to Use Blockchain Technologies.” The authors, Asger Pedersen, Marten Risius and Roman Beck, provide recommendations to organizations looking to adopt blockchain technology. They offer a balanced assessment of the technology, and an actionable framework that can guide practicing managers in deciding whether to implement a blockchain solution and, in the affirmative case, which kinds would best suit their needs.

The second article, “BBVA's Data Monetization Journey” was contributed by Elena Alfaro, Marco Bressan, Fabien Girardin, Juan Murillo, Ida Asadi Someh and Barbara Wixom. It provides an engaging case focused on the multi-year bank's journey toward successful data monetization. Extrapolating from the case study the authors abstract a set of five generally applicable

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

recommendations for managers seeking to convert data into financial returns.

The third article is titled “Designing Ethical Algorithms.” The author, Kristen Martin, tackles the timely question of algorithmic decision making. She first makes the case for the importance of addressing the issue of algorithmic bias and for drawing attention to developers’ and users’ responsibilities in addressing such biases. She then provides a way to think about such responsibilities and offers guidance to IT Executives and development teams to ensure the design and use of ethical algorithms.

The fourth article, titled “Three Differentiation Strategies for Competing in the Sharing Economy,” was contributed by Alexander Frey, Manuel Trenz and Daniel Veit. It analyzes three ride sharing solutions as strategy exemplars for the sharing economy. The authors use the three cases as a springboard to discuss differentiation strategies available to forward looking organizations. They then offer nine questions and three recommendations for managers looking to take advantage of sharing economy opportunities.

Read on!

Gabriele Piccoli
Editor-in-Chief