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Debate Section Editorial Note

Karlheinz (Karl) Kautz

University of Wollongong, karlheinz.kautz@rmit.edu.au

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Debate Section Editorial Note

Karlheinz Kautz

University of Wollongong

Department Editor "Debate Section"

kautz@uow.edu.au

1 Introduction

By now, the CAIS debate section is well established and, after kicking off a debate on the value of IS research and the role of open access in scholarly publishing, the debate featured in this section follows up on the latter topic of scholarly publishing.

In the beginning of this 2015 (more specifically during the end of March and early April 2015), a discussion flared up on AIS World addressing the issue—though not unique for our discipline—of lengthy review cycle times in the IS discipline's journals.

After briefly considering and reflecting over some days on the subject while taking the different stated viewpoints of the published posts into account, as the section editor, I speculated over the subject's potential to be our next debate section. Subsequently, on April 6, I contacted one of the contributors—Professor Emeritus Juhani Iivari, former Senior and Associate Editor of some of our discipline's flagship journals such as *MISQ*, *Journal of the AIS*, and *European Journal of Information Systems* to name but three—to ask whether he would share his insights about peer reviewing and cycles time, which he had formulated earlier in an unpublished manuscript with the community as the starting point for CAIS's next debate section. Juhani answered from Finland where he lives and immediately and requested some time to rework the manuscript. After a short electronically mediated dialogue, I received the manuscript on April 25, 2015, at my workplace (the University of Wollongong in New South Wales, Australia).

Unfortunately, at that time, I had a heavy work load and, due to other assignments and private matters, a month went until I was able to mail invitations out to some of the protagonists of the online debate, which at that point had died out again. Thus, on May 31 and June 1, 2015, I sent out several invitations that included Juhani's manuscript. I provided both a deadline for accepting the invitation (June 14) and a deadline for the approximately 3000 words rejoinder (August 15). Within a few days, I received five positive answers indicating a willingness to contribute a rejoinder to Juhani's text. None of the invitees sent a decline; however, some did not answer to the invitation at all. In between, I received a request from a colleague who had not been invited but would like to contribute—a request I accepted.

The colleagues who accepted were the following: Dr. Paul Ralph, an early career researcher from the University of Auckland, New Zealand, who had made quite some provocative proposals during the online debate, among them to give reviewers only two options: reject or accept with minor revisions, to limit revisions to one cycle, to abandon blind review, to direct reviewers to evaluate methodology and rigor rather writing style, and more. Professor Emeritus Carol Saunders, former Editor-in-Chief of *MISQ*, had underlined the complexity of the review process in the IS discipline and requested that journals should enforce their stated policies and publish papers that have made it through some predetermined number of rounds of review. She underlined that journals are in the business of publishing papers and not rejecting them. Professor Manuel Mora, from the Autonomous University of Aguascalientes (UAA), Mexico and Editor-in-Chief of *International Journal of Information Technologies and Systems Approach*, triggered the online debate by pointing to an eight- to 18-month average review cycle time for most of our journals in the IS discipline and he summarized the online debate by listing as open issues the lack of acknowledgement in tenure-track careers by reviewing papers, the lack of time for conducting 5-10 reviews per year, and the lack of good reviewers willing to do reviews in reasonable time frames. Professor Tom Stafford from the University of Memphis, Tennessee, USA, and the former Editor of *Decision Sciences Journal* had contributed to strongly identifying the above issues and had provided some insights into the economic aspects running journals—in particular, those that request acceptance fees to cover any honorarium for their reviewers. Professor Murray Jennex, from the San Diego State University in California, USA, and Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Knowledge Management*, underlined the effort editors are putting into the reviewing process and, to make the issue even more complex, raised problems and opportunities that reviewing and managing conference papers bring to the topic. Finally, Professor Jan Recker, from the Queensland University of Technology, in Brisbane, Australia, and the newly appointed Editor-in-Chief of the CAIS, took a lively interest in the debate and, although not publically participating in the online exchange of opinions, wanted to use the opportunity to share his thoughts on the subject especially with regard to authors' responsibilities.

I received the most rejoinders on time or slightly after the due date after a gentle reminder; the last one arrived on September 3, 2015. After going through all texts, I sent the whole set to Juhani on September 10, and he let me know that he would write his rebuttal to the opinion pieces during October. Juhani delivered on October 19, and I started going through all eight documents again to prepare them for production and ship them to our production offices in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, on November 11.

The last thing missing from an editorial perspective was this editorial note. Editorial board members on a voluntary basis and, to a large extent, during their leisure time perform most of the work on *CAIS* and nearly all other scholarly journals: unfortunately, again both private and professional commitments (e.g., end of session, doctoral schools, and, not least, two conferences) kept me from finalizing this short text before now December 17, 2015.

Well, one might ask why I am bothering readers with this timeline: I definitely do not do so to excuse myself for delaying the section. Instead, I do so to demonstrate a reviewing and publishing cycle that was not even driven by the demand for extensive peer reviews over several iterations: the process in this case only involved a simple cycle and eight people. However, it illustrates, despite the available good will and digital infrastructure to overcome the spatial distance between all involved, the points that the participants of this debate section are raising.

Reducing cycle time of a work practice that is currently based on voluntary labor and, to a large extent, leisure time of editorial board members (who receive little esteem for reviewing) is a multifaceted matter. Beyond the traces the debate left on AIS world, I hope that the following eight texts—once published in early 2016 after another, hopefully short lag with Christmas and the summer break coming up in Australia—will contribute to resolving this pressing issue.

About the Authors

Karlheinz Kautz is a professor in IT Management & Innovation and currently serves as the Associate Dean Research in the Faculty of Business at the University of Wollongong, NSW, Australia. He is a founding member and a former chairman of the IFIP TC8 WG 8.6 on Diffusion, Transfer, and Implementation of Information Technology, a member TC8 WG 8.2 and of the AIS. He has performed various roles in IS journals and at IS conferences; presently as a senior editor of the *Journal of Information Technology*, the debate section editor of the *Communications of the AIS*, and an editorial board member of the *Journal of the AIS*. His research interests are in information systems development, the diffusion and adoption of information technology innovations and the organizational impact of IT. He has published widely in these areas.

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