December 2005

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A Discussion of Rick Watson's ICIS 2004 Proposals

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Recommended Citation
http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis2005/81

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HOW SHALL WE MANAGE OUR JOURNALS IN THE FUTURE? A DISCUSSION OF RICK WATSON’S ICIS 2004 PROPOSALS

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The Problem

At the 2004 ICIS, Rick Watson, then president of AIS, put forth a series of proposals about how we should manage the journals in IS in the years ahead. His proposals:

1. Accredit reviewers to assess the quality of the work
2. Create a market for journal articles in which editors would bid for articles accepted by the accredited reviewers

Watson cited advantages that include higher quality reviews, fairness to authors by shifting the balance of power between journals and authors, shorter times to decision and publication, better use of reviewers (our field’s scarcest resource), and more sophisticated use of the Internet.

These proposals deserve airing before the IS community. Although people in the field may disagree with specifics of the plan, its implementation, or even the whole plan, the proposal serves as a starting point for discussing how we improve the publication process in our field.

Why a Panel of Editors?

The panel consists of people who edit our journals. They are the principals who make the decisions about how the journal is to operate, usually in conjunction with the publications committee (for nonprofits) or the commercial publisher and their senior editors. Their decisions carry significant weight in how journals are managed and run. Their support and understanding are needed for change. The panel offers the community an opportunity to interact with them and share its feelings about what the future should be.

The Questions to be Addressed

Controversial is probably as good way to describe Watson’s (or any) proposal that breaks the status quo. For example, one panelist stated, “I like the idea of reviewer certification and a reviewer data base. The challenge is how the suggestions might be implemented. The panel could, in part, focus on how the ideas could be implemented….Of course, there might be disagreement about whether some or all of the ideas should be implemented….so that could lead to healthy debate.” Another panelist pointed
out that the problem is systemic with reviewing being only a part, and then raised objections on such issues as the limiting factors of reviewer pools, authors not able to specify where they want to be published, and the page limits created by fixed budgets that make it difficult to expand the number of articles published.

The proposals are also intertwined with a developing movement to make all journals free by having authors or their institutions pay hefty page charges for publication. This issue may come to a head around the time of ICIS.

We propose to ask the panelists to discuss the wisdom, the implications, and the implementation of

1. referee pools
2. shifting costs to the authors

and conclude with

3. their own proposed solutions to the problems of publication, particularly in terms of the use of IS technologies

The Format

A conventional format is planned. The chair will introduce the topic. We will then discuss each of the four issues for 10 to 15 minutes. Each panelist will present their position, pro, con, or neutral. Rick Watson will be offered the opportunity to respond if he is present and so chooses. Then the discussion will be thrown open to questions from the floor. The last 10 minutes will be used to ask each panelist to summarize their views.

The Follow Up

The session will be recorded and a joint paper for submission to CAIS will be prepared by the participants that allows each of them to extend their remarks if they so desire. The discussion from the floor will also be reported.

About the Panelists

Each panelist is a senior person in information systems who edits a major journal read by many of the people who attend ICIS. Each of them brings a long research publications list as an author and experience in all aspects of the publication process.

Paul Gray is completing a 7-year term as editor-in-chief of *Communications of the AIS*, a journal he founded. He is professor emeritus at Claremont Graduate University and visiting professor of information systems at the University of California at Irvine. His current research focuses on business intelligence, knowledge management, and electronic publication.

Kalle Lyytinen, editor-in-chief of *Journal of the AIS*, is the Iris S. Wolstein Professor at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. He also serves on the boards of several other IS Journals. His current research focuses on ubiquitous computing, health care, logistics, and large-scale systems.

Carol Saunders, editor-in-chief of the *MIS Quarterly*, is professor of MIS at the University of Central Florida. She is a fellow of AIS, and has served on the editorial boards of several IS journals. Her research focuses on virtualization, interorganizational relationships, and the impacts of IT on organizational power and communication.

Leslie P. Wilcocks is editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Information Technology*, one of the leading European journals in information systems. He is Professor in Information Systems at Warwick Business School at the University of Warwick, England. His research focuses on outsourcing, strategy, and electronic commerce.

Vladimir Zwass is editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Management Information Systems* and editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*. He is Distinguished Professor of Computer Science and MIS at Fairleigh Dickinson University. His current research focuses on electronic commerce and organizational memory.