



## **JAIS Special Issue Call for Participation**

### **Digital Responsibility: Social, Ethical, and Ecological Implications of IS**

**Deadline for submission: 3 November 2023**

#### **Motivation for this Special Issue**

Pervasive digitalization has influenced practically all aspects of the human experience and our institutions in business, society, and government. Diverse areas such as organizational management and strategy, urban affairs and city planning, healthcare, entertainment, safety, politics, and transportation have all been inexorably shaped by digital technologies. Such technologies have created non-trivial and non-reversible changes to our individual and collective behaviors (Kane et al., 2021), our institutions and organizations (Mihale-Wilson et al., 2022), as well as to human society and our planet at large (Elliott et al., 2021).

But with great power also comes great responsibility. The transformational changes from digitalization are neither unequivocally positive nor negative; more often than not, they are laden with ethical tensions between the contrasting outcomes they engender. For example, personal data digitalization can help individuals live longer and healthier lives, but it also challenges individual rights, obligations, and our sense of dignity (Leidner & Tona, 2021; Tam et al., 2019). Social media allows us greater connectivity and access, upholding the democratic principle of collective voice (Oh et al., 2015), but also becomes a vehicle for manipulating public opinion (Kitchens et al., 2020) and spreading fake news and falsehood (King et al., 2021; Turel & Osatuyi, 2021). Emerging technologies such as shared electric vehicles are coining a revolution in the mobility and energy sector (Kahlen et al., 2018), but also increase fears of labor substitution (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). The datafication of everyday behaviors has led to new healthcare opportunities but also increased surveillance (De Moya & Pallud, 2020; Sjöström et al., 2022). The wide embracement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) propels new opportunities for automation and decision-making, but also raises thorny ethical issues in terms of accountability, privacy, fairness, discrimination, and further biases (Benbya et al., 2021; Berente et al., 2021).

These observations surface the fact that digital technologies invoke competing narratives: the transformational and innovative powers of digital technologies (Benbunan-Fich et al., 2020; Nambisan et al., 2017; Wessel et al., 2021) often contrast dysfunctional outcomes of digitalization, such as social endangerment (Demetis & Kietzmann, 2021) or loss of human voice and autonomy (Demetis & Lee, 2018).

While digital technologies promise an exciting future, we have been cautioned that “the journey to the fully pervasive digitized world is also likely to be perilous” and “as much as the potential benefits of digital technology are real, so too are the risks and complexity that ride with them” (Yoo et al., 2012, p. 1406). Therefore, the key question that we must ask is: *how can we positively leverage the transformational powers of digital technologies without falling prey to their possible dysfunctional outcomes?*

We believe that the answer to this complex question partly lies in the consideration of an important construct: *responsibility*. Responsibility allows us to evaluate transformational digital technologies in a balanced manner, by factoring in both harmful and positive outcomes from the engagement with such artifacts (Voegtlin et al., 2022). Responsibility has become a salient term in this digital age, inspiring new streams of research such as corporate digital responsibility (Lobschat et al., 2021; Mihale-Wilson et al., 2022) and responsible innovation (Ahuja et al., 2023). Forcing us to engage in meta-ethical reflection (Stahl, 2012) responsibility is crucial to addressing some of the dysfunctional outcomes associated with the rapid proliferation of digital technologies – thus allowing for normative action consistent with human values and ethical defensibility (Chatterjee & Sarker, 2013; Chatterjee et al., 2009a; Chatterjee et al., 2009b).

As information systems researchers, it must be on us to better understand the concept of responsibility as it pertains to the enablement of positive outcomes of ongoing digitalization of our everyday lives while safeguarding the human experience against possible negative consequences of the same. We term this concept “digital responsibility”, which we believe can serve as an *organizing construct* of research that aims to inform the balancing of ethical and humanistic tensions pertaining to the rapid proliferation of digital technologies. Notably, focusing on digital responsibility allows us to challenge the often-embraced utopic narrative of digitalization – thus problematizing our vision for this special issue.

Digital responsibility is antithetical to “mindlessness” in designing and implementing digital technologies, which is often associated with the inability “to cope gracefully with changing, complex situations characteristic of high-risk domains” (Salovaara et al., 2019, p. 555). The lens of digital responsibility necessitates that we embark upon rigorously analyzing, explaining, predicting, as well as influencing, the potential costs, duties, and obligations of decisions that relate to the development, implementation, and use of digital information and communication technologies. Following such observations, unpacking the phenomenon of “digital responsibility” should be of utmost concern to IS researchers – and this is the central theme of this special issue.

### **What We Seek for this Special Issue**

**We are interested** in novel, exciting, and thought-provoking contributions that build cumulative knowledge about “digital responsibility” across all levels (personal, corporate, institutional, and societal) and domains of responsibility (individual, social, ethical, and ecological). So as not to constrain the range of contributions, we suggest understanding digital responsibility broadly as any accountabilities, liabilities, responsibilities, obligations, and duties that relate to the design, development, implementation, use and impact of digital technologies.

We deliberately do not limit the call to a specific domain, theoretical lens, or research approach. We are looking for contributions that contain a substantive IS perspective but may also feature interdisciplinary

approaches (both theoretical and methodological). We also impose no constraints in terms of theory, method, paradigm, or context. We do not want labels and scripts associated with traditional IS paradigms, such as behavioral, design, economic, or organizational research, to constrain how this important and complex phenomenon is investigated. We welcome the entire spectrum of information systems research and invite innovative, rigorous, relevant, and exciting research on digital responsibility. We welcome empirical, design, as well as conceptual work, and we also welcome carefully crafted commentaries, research perspectives, or opinions. However, in every submission, the chosen research topic should be contemporary and relevant, speaking to current grand challenges of our time.

**We are not** interested in papers that advance *methodological contributions* even if they might have relevance to the study of digital responsibility. We also do not seek papers that advance our understand of *how* to build theory about digital responsibility. Likewise, we are not interested in papers whose contributions about digital responsibility build on data that were not originally collected for that purpose. Finally, contributions in which digital responsibility is merely a by-product of some other contribution, however valuable, are also not what we are after.

Potential topics of submissions include, but are not limited to:

- Designing and using digital technologies *for* and *with* responsibility
- Considerations of accountability, liability, fairness, and/or responsibility for digital technology design, implementation, and use
- Theoretical perspectives and/or empirical insights on the (un)intended social, ethical, and ecological consequences of digital technologies
- Theoretical underpinnings of the concept of digital responsibility, such as from an ethical theory perspective
- Design of digital technology to address social, ethical, and/or ecological challenges
- Individual, organizational, institutional, or societal strategies for leveraging IS for social, ethical, and/or ecological challenges and innovations
- The role of digital technology in promoting social, ethical, and ecological advancements
- Applications of emerging digital technologies (e.g., AI) to social, ethical, and/or ecological realms
- Societal, ethical, and ecological consequences of emerging digital technologies
- (Un-) ethical issues of IS and the data they generate
- Dignity, respect, and moral behavior in a digital world
- Social support and inclusion enabled by or embodied in digital technologies
- The balance of contradicting implications of IS (e.g., IS as a means for social change vs. IS for manipulating public opinion)
- The affordances of existing and emerging digital technologies for enacting digital responsibility

## **Process and Timeline**

Submissions to the Special Issue will close on November 3, 2023. Prospective authors are encouraged to submit initial versions of their paper to the conference theme track “Digital Responsibility” of the 2023 “Wirtschaftsinformatik” Conference (Sep 18-21, 2023, Paderborn, Germany) but submission or

participation at the conference is no requirement for submitting to the special issue. A paper development workshop will be held in May 2024 for authors of papers that advance beyond the first round of reviews. We plan for an in-person event but we will also make online participation possible.

Date	Event
November 3, 2023	Deadline for paper submissions
March, 2024	First-round review decisions
May, 2024	Hybrid Paper development workshop
July 11, 2024	Deadline for submission of revised papers
October, 2024	Second-round review decisions
December 8, 2024	Deadline for submission of revised papers
Early February, 2025	Provisional decision and final round of comments
February 27, 2025	Deadline for submission of revised papers
March 2025	Notification of final decisions

Submission to the special issue must be made via [Scholarone](#) and follow the [JAIS submission guidelines](#). Any questions about the special issue, please contact the editorial team at [jaisdigitalresponsibility@gmail.com](mailto:jaisdigitalresponsibility@gmail.com).

### Special Issue Senior Editors

**Jan Recker**, Universität Hamburg, [jan.christof.recker@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:jan.christof.recker@uni-hamburg.de)



Jan is Alexander-von-Humboldt Fellow and Nucleus Professor for Information Systems and Digital Innovation at Universität Hamburg, funded by the Excellence Strategy. He presently holds adjunct and visiting chair professor positions at the University of Agder, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and the QUT Business School. In his research, he explores how organizations deal with digital transformations, how digital innovations enable new ventures, how developers analyze or design new digital technologies, and how digital solutions can contribute to sustainable development goals.

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Sutirtha (“Suti”) is an Associate Professor of Information Systems (IS) at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). He received his PhD from Washington State University (WSU) in 2008. His current research focuses on ethical and humanistic issues in IS, IT and innovation, and IS disciplinary reflections. His work has been published in the AIS basket of journals such as *MISQ*, *JAIS*, *JMIS*, *ISJ*, *EJIS*, and *JSIS*. Suti serves as an SE at *JAIS* (starting his second SE term in 2022) and *ISJ*, and an AE at *Decision Sciences*. He has received multiple awards and honors including the JAIS best reviewer award in 2018 and the AIS Distinguished Member–Cum Laude honor in 2021.

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Janina is Assistant Professor of Digital Entrepreneurship and Diversity at the Department of Information Systems at Freie Universität Berlin. In her research, she focuses on distinct facets of entrepreneurial diversity and their implications for new venture creation processes in a digital age. To transfer her findings to education and practice, she initiated various seminars and conferences, such as WoMenventures and the Hello Diversity! Conference including a Podcast with the same name. Janina is also founder of the Digital Entrepreneurship Hub as well as the Hello Diversity! Studio, and associate member of the Einstein Center Digital Future.

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Monideepa is the Charles J. Dockendorff Endowed Professor of Information Systems at the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. In her current research, she explores technostress and how we can manage our frustration with digital technology, the dark and bright sides of social media use, and bias and its implications in artificial intelligence.

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