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Editorial Forum

Roles and Responsibilities of a Senior Editor

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Contributions

In this editorial forum, we individually discuss (1) the roles and responsibilities of a senior editor (SE) as informed by our experiences, (2) key challenges to fulfilling the role of senior editor, and (3) philosophies/characteristics/values/practices that are associated with the most effective SEs. A consensus emerges that it is the responsibility of SEs to determine the final disposition of papers submitted to their journal in light of various tradeoffs. In making these decisions, the SE must be cognizant of authors' careers and the field's intellectual development. We recognize the constructive element of the SE role and the importance of their offering guidance to the authors. While there was disagreement as to whether the "invisible college" or formal policies should be enacted to limit undesirable practices, suggestions emerged about how SEs could be better recognized for their contributions and SE-related policies could be enacted to improve the review process.

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1. Suprateek Sarker: Introduction

Few colleagues would disagree with the assertion that serving as a senior editor (SE) for a leading IS journal is one of the most important research-related service roles in our community. SEs are the face of a journal because they are the ones authors and reviewers interact with. In fact, I know from personal experience that authors' and reviewers' perceptions regarding a journal's character and quality are largely based on the SEs' reputations as well as the nature of interactions that authors and reviewers have had with the SEs – this makes the SE role both rewarding and challenging. It can be rewarding because SEs enjoy a high level of visibility that offers them an opportunity to actively shape the research conversation and scholarly culture in the discipline, often beyond what they could hope to accomplish even as successful researchers. This can bring immense personal and professional satisfaction. Further, having the opportunity to serve the research community as SE signals a wider recognition of the individuals' scholarly contributions, collegiality, and leadership, which can positively impact their academic reputations and careers.

As in most situations, the rewards don't come without challenges or additional responsibilities, which can include:

- coping with the inordinately high workload of handling the constant flow of manuscripts in a timely manner,
- selecting only the very best work for publication in an environment where standards of excellence are contested and the reviewer inputs are varied,
- managing the implications of power and politics associated with the publication game,
- identifying (and developing) suitable reviewers/associate editors and cajoling them to provide *yet another* report, and
- perhaps, most importantly, trying to ensure that authors, especially those who receive unfavorable decisions (i.e., the vast majority), see value in engaging with the journal's review process and do not feel alienated from the journal, research, and/or academic life due to what they might perceive as an unjust, arbitrary, or closed editorial policies/practices.

Furthermore, SEs often need to balance between different (and sometimes contradictory) roles, such as those of a "gatekeeper", "adjudicator", "aggregator", "process facilitator", "diamond cutter", "champion", or even a "change agent for the discipline", which can lead to a number of dilemmas.

- Should SEs try their utmost to preserve the essential elements of the authors' original manuscript as it moves through the review process or should SEs allow (or even encourage) the co-construction of a revised manuscript in the review process that may be related to but substantially different from the original manuscript submitted?
- Should SEs' decision making be primarily "reviewer-driven", where reviewers' recommendations and suggestions form the basis of the outcome of the review process, or should the decision making be primarily "SE-driven", where reviewers serve in an advisory capacity and the judgment of SEs is key?
- Should SEs welcome close interactions and consultations with authors (and reviewers) or should they maintain a distance with them?
- Should SEs look at a manuscript under consideration in isolation or should they also consider the human and disciplinary context surrounding the manuscript?

- Should SEs seek to accept manuscripts that meticulously follow existing conventions or should they seek to accept otherwise exciting manuscripts that may fall short of satisfying existing standards, or may even raise questions about well-established standards?
- More broadly, should SEs privilege process considerations (e.g., seek to ensure procedural justice, constructiveness, and timeliness) or should they privilege the outcome (e.g., focus solely on the quality of papers accepted, as judged using current conventions and apparent trends, and perhaps considerations such as potential for citations, best paper awards, and recognition within and outside the discipline) when the two (process and outcome) are not in alignment?

Dealing with the above tensions can consume significant cognitive and emotional energy of the SE since universally acceptable/justifiable positions or courses of action do not really exist. In some cases, certain conditions make a particular position more desirable; in other cases, a hybrid or middle path approach may be suitable; and, in yet others, it may be wise to pursue seemingly opposite courses of action simultaneously. A follow-up question that then arises is: How can we ensure that the different approaches followed under different circumstances are not only efficient and effective but are also reasonably equitable for the various stakeholders, especially the authors? The contributions in this forum do not necessarily address each of these questions directly, but they do shed light on issues related to the questions.

It is quite remarkable that, despite the critical nature of the SE role in our research lives and the complex set of challenges they face, we have had very little public discussion in our discipline on what serving as SE actually entails and on how SEs might deal with the role's many challenges¹. Such a discussion, highlighting not just formal roles and responsibilities or espoused values but how these are enacted in practice, can be potentially valuable. For present and future SEs, being aware of different perspectives on these issues can help them reflect on their own views and be more effective. Other members of the research community—authors, reviewers, associate editors, where applicable—may be able to develop a better sense of the values that SEs hold dear and the considerations that SEs need to balance. Such an understanding may inform their interactions with SEs and also help them make sense of SEs' behaviors, which, at times, may appear quite perplexing.

We invited several scholars who have served as a SE at the *Journal of the AIS*, *MIS Quarterly*, and/or *Information Systems Research* to contribute to the forum. The contributors (some of whom are or have been editors-in-chief of these journals) represent different research traditions, different regions, and somewhat different perspectives on what the SE role is all about. Needless to say, we are well aware that contributors to this forum represent a small proportion of the many excellent editors in our community; we would definitely have liked to invite more SEs to participate. However, we are hopeful that the small subset of voices in the forum highlights many of the core issues that would resonate with the other SEs.

To provide some structure to the discussion, in our invitation, we suggested that contributors to this forum touch on issues related to a number of questions.

- What is their view on the role of SEs in journals that they are (or have been) involved with?
- What are the key challenges that SEs face?

¹ It was Professor Carol Saunders, a former editor-in-chief of *MIS Quarterly* and also a former senior editor of the *Journal of the AIS*, who alerted me to the need to reflect on this issue as a community. In fact, she kindly offered to write a guest editorial on the roles and responsibilities of SEs. Our subsequent discussion led to the decision to include multiple perspectives on this topic in the form of an editorial forum that we present here.

- What philosophies/characteristics/values/practices do they associate with the most effective SEs?
- What SE practices would they like to see discouraged? To what extent, if at all, would it make sense to put in place some SE guidelines or policies to discourage undesirable practices related to the review process? (What might they be?)

Finally, we asked contributors to highlight any other issue that they felt strongly about on this topic.

I am very grateful to have received contributions from Professors Ritu Agarwal, Paulo Goes, Shirley Gregor, Ola Henfridsson, Carol Saunders, and Bernard Tan. All of them are distinguished scholars and highly regarded senior editors in our discipline. They are also incredibly pressed for time. However, all of them recognize the importance of the forum's topic and have taken the time to weigh in. We have sought to maintain the individuality of their perspectives and have, thus, presented them with minimal editing.

Let me conclude by thanking all the contributors, especially Professor Carol Saunders, who not only initiated the conversation that led to the editorial forum but also helped in putting this collection of perspectives together.

2. Ritu Agarwal: Ruminations on the Role of a Senior Editor

I approached this reflection from a multiplicity of perspectives. In the past, I have had the privilege of serving as senior editor (SE) for *MIS Quarterly* and *Information Systems Research*; thus, I speak from the experience of one who has worn the SE “hat” for many years. In my current role as EIC, in addition to taking responsibility as SE for many submissions, I work closely with the *ISR*'s team of SEs in crafting strategy for the journal and in maintaining its standards of excellence. And, of course, as an author in the early days of my career, I have been fortunate to have some of the best senior scholars in our discipline assist a relatively inexperienced researcher in “raising her game” to the level of a top journal.

I reached out to a handful of current and former SEs at *ISR* whose work I have significant respect for to share their views on the frustrations, the gratifications, and the challenges of being an SE. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of Chris Forman, Ram Gopal, Radhika Santhanam, Rob Fichman, Amrit Tiwana, and Anandhi Bharadwaj in refining my own perspective on the topic.

It is incontrovertible that SEs play a critical role in any peer-reviewed top journal. At *ISR*, SEs have absolute responsibility for and autonomy in managing a submission from selecting the associate editor to helping to choose reviewers, and, of course, in finally determining the outcome of the review process. SEs work completely independently, with the EIC getting engaged only on very rare occasions where the situation warrants it. In essence, then, the SE is the “editor-in-chief” for all papers they are handling. This is a role of immense consequence—often, what SEs do and how much effort they put into each paper can spell the difference between a rejection and an eventual acceptance. We must also recognize that it is a highly visible role: to the extent that most of our major journals follow a double-blind review process, the SE is the only individual whose identity is known to authors, and, often, they are the public face of the journal. In certain instances, the visibility can be somewhat disconcerting, particularly when authors do not respond to rejection decisions professionally. SEs play another critical role: they serve as a check and balance on the EIC; a sounding board that provides valuable input into the future direction of the journal, such as special issues, awards for excellent performance, and the identification of the next generation of editorial board members. The appropriate metaphor here is that SEs are the “board of directors” for the journal.

2.1. On Qualities and Behaviors

What are the qualities and behaviors of a great SE? I identify five critical dimensions; these are by no means an exhaustive list of qualities, but I chose them as the top five. First, above all, a self-evident requirement for an SE appointment is that the individual be an outstanding scholar with a record of substantial contributions in their domain of research. The individual must be able to take a lengthy review packet (sometimes as much as 20 pages!) and provide clear direction for how the authors must proceed. But, by itself, that is a very incomplete picture of an exceptional SE. As Einstein famously said, “Most people say that it is the intellect which makes a great scientist. They are wrong; it is character”. In the context of the SE role, character is being vigilant to the fact that it is *only* the ideas and the quality of the research that should matter; all other considerations are irrelevant and should not factor into judgments. Character is also about being generous with time. The SE role is a significant commitment and any colleague taking on the responsibility needs to do so with a complete understanding of the effort and workload requirement. The best SEs are those who are not only able to provide fair, constructive, and author-friendly guidance but who are also heedful of the need for timeliness in feedback.

Second, in addition to depth, the SE must have disciplinary breadth. The information systems discipline is expansive, diverse, and multi-paradigmatic. *ISR* receives submissions across the entire spectrum of research genres, topics, research questions, and methodological approaches. Often, papers do not exactly fit the expertise of any SE on the board. I expect SEs to have the maturity and experience to be comfortable with managing papers that may be only tangentially related to their own area of research.

Third, there is the ineffable quality of “good taste”—the intuition that a piece of research is promising and likely to be impactful. It is very rarely the case that a paper submitted to *ISR* is at the stage of development that it is ready for acceptance (to be sure, on very atypical occasions this does happen!). I depend on SEs to have a well-developed instinct for what papers might be influential and important, identify the “nuggets” in them, and, to the extent that the paper addresses an interesting and novel question and has the potential to make a useful contribution, work proactively with the review team and authors to help surface the contribution. Good SEs are also able to look ahead and have a keen eye on developments that may become important to the discipline in the future. Then, they actively shepherd submissions in non-traditional and innovative areas through the review process.

Finally, two qualities that set an extraordinary SE apart from one who is merely competent are courage and discipline. It takes considerable fortitude to challenge or even overturn the feedback from AEs and reviewers, who will, on occasion, miss the big picture in the paper for a range of micro-level issues. If the SE believes that a paper has a contribution to make, I depend on them to have the strength of will to guide the review team towards seeing the research with fresh eyes or even being bold enough to make the call on their own. And discipline—I alluded earlier to the need for timely feedback. SEs are busy people as most senior researchers tend to be. Yet, the best SEs are those who consistently do their duties on time and ensure that AEs are reviewers and also sensitive to cycle time.

2.2. On Gratifications and Frustrations

Across the board, SEs find the act of writing an acceptance letter to be immensely gratifying! In most cases, the SEs input has been critical to shaping the paper so that it is a piece of work that the authors can be proud of. An SE with considerable experience commented on the satisfaction of managing a “...a manuscript with a very interesting result but needed major renovation in its framing and theorizing... I pushed the authors through multiple rounds and they rose to the challenge”. In a similar spirit, another SE noted, “...satisfying aspect is observing authors learn and develop their perspectives as the paper evolves”. The opportunity to be exposed to cutting-edge research ahead of the “market” is also an important positive externality of the SE role.

The demanding responsibility of being an SE, unfortunately, comes with its share of frustrations that, as a community who benefits from the peer-review process, we have an active duty to address. SEs have reported many ways in which their role can be frustrating. A persistent concern is a lack of

timeliness on the part of the AE and reviewers. Equally disturbing are the (thankfully) rare occasions when an AE or reviewer provides feedback that can only be construed as unprofessional. Papers that fail to converge after multiple rounds of review because each side (authors and reviewers) becomes intransigent and is unwilling to compromise generate substantial disappointment for the SE. I also hear, disturbingly, that AEs and reviewers sometimes fall prey to the trap of believing that peer review is about power as opposed to a thoughtful and critical evaluation of research and fail to adopt an attitude of constructive development. A final and perhaps the most distressing frustration is inappropriate behavior on the part of some, such as subtly signaling identity and, thereby, compromising the double blind-review process, or adopting a “bullying” stance in the review process. Such behaviors must be actively discouraged by our community.

2.3. The EIC’s Challenge

As EIC, I play the role of an SE but also as the overall “manager” of the journal. In this role, I experience all of the challenges of one with complete responsibility and accountability for journal performance but limited power to incentivize or sanction behavior. In my view, appointment as an SE is a privilege, a signal of accomplishment, and an opportunity to influence and shape the future trajectory of the discipline. The “job” is given only to a select handful of scholars in the discipline and should be viewed as an honor. In addition to the honor, it is equally an aspect of professional service and comes with a set of duties and obligations that sometimes get overlooked. There are three SE behaviors and practices that are of particular concern for an EIC. First, persistent and prolonged delays in the review process are grossly unfair to the authors and extremely damaging to the journal’s reputation. I have had the unfortunate experience of working with SEs who have become completely non-responsive. My choice set in such situations is limited: taking over a paper that is well through the review process is not fair to authors, and, unsurprisingly, many express a preference to not do so. Asking the SE to step off the board is always a possibility, but it is not an adequate deterrent since the SE appointment is already “a line on the resume”. SEs must recognize that, to the extent that our colleagues’ promotion and tenure decisions are sometimes dependent on the outcomes of the review process, incessant delays can only be characterized as flagrant negligence on their part. Delays also prevent state-of-the art research being published in the journal in a timely manner and create negative externalities for the discipline as a whole.

A second behavior that is disconcerting and that relates to the desirable SE quality of “synthesis” that I discuss earlier is when SEs choose to play the role of a “post office” and simply regurgitate the review panel’s feedback without expending effort in giving clear direction to authors. In circumstances like this, arguably, the SE is not doing the job they have committed to. Finally, and with the qualification that this behavior is only very rarely observed, a critical concern for the EIC is when considerations other than the pure scientific merits of the paper color the SE’s judgment. Although I can only “guess” at what the underlying reasons might be, I suspect they range from the inability to say “no” to a senior scholar or respected colleague or perhaps a sense of quid pro quo for others evaluating the SE’s own work.

2.4. Concluding Thoughts

The role of a senior editor at a top research journal is multifaceted. As Amrit Tiwana, an exemplary SE at ISR, evocatively summarizes, the SE is simultaneously a “A steward, an NBA referee, and Charlie Rose”, a custodian of standards and innovation in the discipline, a referee who ensures that the game is played fairly and without foul, and a facilitator of intelligent discourse among colleagues during the review process. But, paramount, an SE must take on the role with full cognizance of the effort it takes to be an exceptional SE and a firm commitment to execute the role with sincerity and dedication.

3. Paulo Goes: The Role of the Senior Editor in MIS Quarterly

A simple but informative view of the review process is that of a classification/diagnostics model. After the application of the process, no matter how many rounds it may take, a submission is classified into two buckets: accept or reject. There are, therefore, two sources of errors with such models: Type I error (accept what should be rejected), also known as a false positive error in a diagnostic system, and the Type II error (reject what should be accepted), equivalent to the false negative error of a diagnostic system.

The key for implementing reliable and effective classification systems is to understand the risks and costs associated with making these errors. The systems are then calibrated based on the inherent tolerances for making each type of error. In a medical environment, for example, it is extremely costly to make a false negative error, in which a patient would be told they don't carry a condition when in reality the condition exists. On the other hand, a false positive error in the medical environment may be emotionally taxing at first, but, when the patient finds out they don't have a disease after all, it can be a relief. Similar interpretations and evaluations of costs of errors are prevalent in several business decisions associated with classification: alerting consumers about a credit card fraud that doesn't exist or not alerting about a real fraud or deciding to target a consumer with high-level advertising effort when that consumer is not likely to purchase at all. In data mining and business intelligence classes, we teach about many such situations to have students understand that (1) classification systems have inherent errors and (2) decision makers need to understand the tradeoffs between making decisions in the presence of these errors.

In a journal such as *MISQ*, the actors involved in the deciding the fate of a submission need to be aware of the risks and costs of making errors. By emphasizing avoiding Type I errors, reviewers may be inherently incurring Type II errors. Focusing on avoiding Type I errors may create an environment that is averse to groundbreaking research and conducive to incremental research. The SE role is essential to provide the knowledge, experience, and guidance to the process when evaluating the risks and costs of each type of error.

The mission of *MISQ*'s review system is to accept and publish work that contributes to advancing knowledge in the information systems discipline. Obviously, in accomplishing this mission, the review system will reject the submissions that don't meet the contribution criteria as deemed by the several actors of the system. There are two crucial considerations here: (1) the criteria that is to be applied in determining the accept/reject decision, and (2) how the review system deals with the Type I / Type II inherent errors.

Unlike typical diagnostics and classification systems, the review system of a journal such as *MISQ* is not a one-shot evaluation process. Applying the acceptance criteria is an evolving process for each submission. It actively allows for *enhancing* the work through multiple (typically two or three) rounds of revision and evaluation. While the overall disposition options are reject and accept, there are additional intermediary options that allow revisions of the work that should follow the premise of enhancing the contribution.

The review system at *MISQ* is a hierarchical three-tier system designed to serve as a diagnostic/classification system and a contribution-enhancement system. To achieve both objectives and meet the overarching goal of publishing the work that will advance knowledge in the discipline, in my opinion, the three-tier system is absolutely necessary. In it, the role of the senior editor is of paramount importance.

The SE is ultimately responsible for the final disposition of the submission. In *MISQ*, the editor-in-chief assigns the submission to an SE based on the knowledge and experience that is required for the specific research work. From that initial assignment on, the SE is fully responsible for the entire review process, including the final decision. In rare circumstances, authors appeal the final decision by the SE and the EIC gets to handle the appeal. Invariably, unless there is a flagrant flaw with the process (extremely rare event), the SE's decision stands.

SEs are carefully selected from a distinguished set of experienced, successful researchers. They come from a layer of senior scholars in the discipline who are in a unique position to evaluate where the research contribution lies in the general context of the discipline. They have published extensively in top-tier journals and have tremendous experience with the editorial process. In the *MISQ* environment, they are responsible for overseeing and conducting the editorial operations that will accomplish the two crucial tasks mentioned above: (1) applying the criteria to decide the fate of the submission, and (2) exercise the judgment about the risks and costs related to Type I and Type II errors.

The criteria by which papers are judged are usually a combination of the novelty of the idea, the contribution of the work, the rigor and quality of the research execution, and how well the authors communicate the positioning, execution and findings of the work. The IS discipline is wide and diversified; there are various research paradigms and approaches: behavioral, organizational, economics of IS, design science, qualitative research, quantitative approaches, and so on. Each paradigm and sub-area has developed its own criteria for evaluating a work's contribution, execution quality, and so on. SEs have the responsibility to exercise their judgment and make the final call. In earlier rounds, the SE addresses the question: does the submission have the potential to contribute to knowledge? The SE is also responsible for determining the point in time in which the paper receives the final disposition of accept versus reject and reaches the end of the review process.

In *MISQ*'s three-tier hierarchy, reviewers are close to the research. They provide the first level of evaluation of the work and advise the associate editor. AEs consolidate the recommendations of the reviewers and makes their own assessment of the work and provide a recommendation to the SE. It is expected that the AE and the SE work together towards a recommendation for the paper. However, in case of divergence of opinion, it is the SE's call. To put it bluntly, the review process must not necessarily be a majority rule. *MISQ* relies on the vast experience of SE's to apply their learned knowledge of the publication criteria to the submission and, very importantly, evaluate and mitigate the risks and costs of the Type I and Type II errors that are inherent to the review process.

In the three-tier process, as we move from the specificity of the reviewers' knowledge to an SE's broader perspective, we go from relative high resistance to the possibility of committing a Type II error to a more lenient approach to work with that risk. And this is healthy; it is what SE's should contribute to the process—the ability to identify exciting ideas that are not fully developed yet and give them a chance to blossom—to work with the possibility of breaking away from safe, incremental perspectives and help develop substantial contributions to knowledge.

With the context above as background, I list below several practices that we encourage in *MISQ* that relate to the senior editor's role. I also direct the reader to read the document "The SE Role at *MISQ*", which is available online at <http://www.misq.org/skin/frontend/default/misq/pdf/SERole.pdf>.

- 1) Spend time reading the paper when it is first submitted. Use judgment to exercise the decision to desk reject the work for various reasons: lack of fit, low probability of success, insignificant contribution potential, poor execution, poor communication, and so on. A well-justified desk rejection is beneficial to all involved, including the authors.
- 2) Communicate with the associate editor before assigning the paper, during the review process, and after the AE's disposition.
- 3) Don't be afraid to overrule the associate editor, but clearly communicate back to the AE the reasons. Don't run the process as a "majority rule".
- 4) When deciding on the final outcome, think broadly about the contribution to knowledge dimension. Be prepared to absorb the risk of a Type II error, which may lead to a groundbreaking contribution.
- 5) Think very carefully before choosing a "reject but invite new submission". I see the value of this option, but, in my opinion, it has been used more frequently than it should.

It may make sense at the very beginning of the process when the SE and the AE jointly agree that the submission has potential but it is not ready yet. It also may apply after the first round of reviews when the referees add more insight to the real state of the submission. I personally think it should be rarely used in situations after the submission has gone through more than one round.

I end by emphasizing the point that I am very optimistic about the state of IS research. We have grown tremendously as a discipline, which shows in the depth of the pool and the caliber of our senior researchers. Our set of SEs represent our elite thinkers and leaders who have allowed the field to advance. Editors-in-chief and the IS community should be very grateful of the voluntary work of our senior editors.

4. Shirley Gregor: Lessons from the Field

My views on editorial responsibilities and practice have been formed primarily by my experiences as *J AIS*'s editor-in-chief (EIC) from 2010-2013 and also by my terms as associate editor and senior editor at *MIS Quarterly*. Reflection shows how much my own views have been influenced by social forces and interactions. At both *J AIS* and *MIS Quarterly*, regular annual meetings allowed editors access to what others thought about the journals' practices and provided significant learning experiences. At *MIS Quarterly*, I saw how a strong editor-in-chief could provide effective leadership in seeking out, encouraging, and supporting good work that had promise for publication. At both journals, I have learned practices that I would not naturally have adopted myself. These practices include proactively encouraging authors to submit interesting work that is seen at conferences, workshops, and PhD consortia and also include personal contact with authors during a review process.

4.1. The Role of Senior Editors?

SEs' role when I served my term at *J AIS* was influenced by an explicitly formulated policy of "developmental reviewing" that I inherited from those who had served before me. This policy aimed at telling authors quickly if their paper was unsuited for publication in the journal and passing on to senior editors only those papers that appeared to have some promise. Ideally, the senior editors would then, in turn, desk reject unsuitable papers and select only papers with promise for review. They could then devote more attention to these papers in working directly with authors towards publication. *J AIS* has a two-tier structure that means no associate editors, so senior editors work directly with reviewers, mostly members of the editorial board. Thus, for my three-year term, I read all the papers that came in to *J AIS* and either desk rejected or passed each paper on to an appropriate senior editor. Some advice for authors that resulted from my experiences in the EIC role are provided in an editorial note entitled "Eight Obstacles to Overcome in the Theory Testing Genre", co-authored with Gary Klein (2014), which was published in *J AIS*. To summarize, papers that were desk rejected usually either: (a) were not primarily about information systems, (b) had some fatal flaw such as a very poorly worded survey, or (c) did not demonstrate that they made, or had the potential to make, a contribution to knowledge (theory). The last criterion is of course to some extent subjective, but I have found that there is often unanimity on the reject decision when papers are reviewed by more than one person. Some of my thoughts on how knowledge contributions can be better demonstrated can be found in the Gregor and Klein's (2014) *J AIS* editorial and, for design science specifically, in Gregor and Hevner (2013). During my three years as EIC, I cannot recall a case where authors seriously questioned a decision made by me or by a senior editor to reject a paper without sending it to review, so I guess we erred on the side of caution!

In sum, I saw SEs' role at *J AIS* as about making decisions about which papers should proceed into the review process, to identify relatively quickly during the review process the papers that were unlikely to make it to publication, and to work with reviewers and authors to assist the other papers towards publication as much as possible.

4.2. What are the Key Challenges that Senior Editors Experience?

My immediate reaction is that time pressure is the key challenge faced in a developmental reviewing process such as that at *JAIS*. The developmental reviewing role means that senior editors need to read papers and reviewers' comments very carefully, weigh up possibly inconsistent reviews, and then give actionable advice to authors as to how they could proceed. Doing a good job on the senior editor report can mean many hours of concentrated, uninterrupted work—hours that are not easy for academics to find. A second related challenge is to balance the giving of advice and suggestions to authors against being overly prescriptive. I would like authors to feel that they can suggest alternative courses of action to suggestions I make, and some do this well.

4.3. What Practices Exemplify the Most Effective Senior Editors?

"Best practice" by senior editors is illustrated in the positive personal experiences I have had with senior editors who have helped me with my own papers that were regarded as unconventional at the time they were submitted but who were open-minded enough to find appropriate, good reviewers and to be constructive in giving advice. One of these papers was my *MIS Quarterly* paper on theory for which Allen Lee was the senior editor, and the other was my paper with David Jones on design science theory in *JAIS* for which Detmar Straub was the senior editor. I believe these instances illustrate behaviour that is indicative of very effective senior editors. First, they are not frightened to take on something that is novel. Second, they are able to provide constructive advice on how to improve a paper, something that comes from experience with writing high-quality papers and editing.

4.4. Are There Practices that I Would Like to See Discouraged?

One senior editor practice that should be discouraged is that where the senior editor merely summarizes reviewers' comments and gives a decision based on these comments. This practice keeps the senior editor workload down and means more timely completion of reports, but it does not add much value to authors. We would all like to think that the senior editor had actually read our paper! Attention should also continue to be paid to upholding ethical standards and concern for honesty in research and publishing. Those of us who have been senior editors or EIC will know that, occasionally, there are cases where colleagues do not conform to rules for academic conduct as prescribed by our universities and professional associations. We do need to set good examples for junior staff and to be able to discuss what is acceptable and not in grey areas.

4.5. Should Guidelines be Put in Place to Limit Undesirable Practices?

Many of the norms that guide journal and editorial practice are unwritten and influenced by peer pressure and concern for one's reputation as much as written guidelines. My personal belief is that it is our "invisible college" rather than further formal guidelines that encourage good practice. An exception is the developmental reviewing policy at *JAIS*, where capturing the journal's distinctive policy explicitly means that organizational knowledge can be passed on.

4.6. Any Other Issues?

I would like to conclude by mentioning the rewards of being a senior editor. The ultimate accolade for publishing excellent work of course belongs to the authors—they have done the work. However, a senior editor who has assisted in the publication process will feel some share in the glory. I get a good feeling especially when thinking of some design science papers for which I have served as editor. Two of these papers have gone on to win best paper awards. The design science approach is relatively novel and the review process for authors can be difficult. Nevertheless, it is great to see papers go out that can serve as exemplars for others and feel that one has helped in some way.

5. Ola Henfridsson: The Appreciative Senior Editor

A competent SE takes on the role as ultimate decision maker with several things in mind. First, the decisions to accept, or reject, manuscripts inevitably influence scholars' careers in our discipline. Second, the decisions shape the discipline in the areas that particular contributions target. Third, a review process should always start with the idea of making the manuscript acceptable. Fourth, the review process should bring forth the intellectual account that the authors have in mind. Lastly, engaged leadership of the loosely coupled review team is imperative to foster developmental reviewing.

Although I am convinced that a SE have many more things in mind, I mentioned these five because they resonate well with the highlights and challenges I have encountered in my own editorial work at, for instance, *MIS Quarterly* and *Information Systems Research*. The first two ones highlight the significant *responsibility* of a SE, not only with regard to the careers of researchers submitting their work but also for the intellectual development of the area in which an accepted paper is positioned. Indeed, it is vital that the SE, in every stage of the review process, shows the appropriate respect for the work of the authors and the relevance it typically has for their career. Moreover, they should recognize that a top-journal paper might indeed create new paths and directions for the research area targeted by the manuscript in question. This sense of responsibility, both for the individuals and for the discipline, is central to the idea of competent editing by a SE.

However, in this short piece, I leave the important responsibility aspect of serving as SE behind and instead concentrate on the idea manifested in the three last things I mention above. Perhaps it would be useful to refer to this idea as the *appreciative* side of being a SE. The importance of this aspect of editing has been highlighted by former editors-in-chief of the *MIS Quarterly*. Early on, Carol Saunders introduced the idea of developmental reviewing and "diamond-cutting" (Saunders, 2005) in proposing that reviewing is not about gatekeeping but about helping authors to develop their work. Similarly, Detmar Straub has underlined that "Type II-reviewing errors" are problematic for a journal and, ultimately, a discipline (Straub, 2008). Such errors occur when the IS community would have valued the manuscript highly if published but the review team did not think the manuscript made enough contribution. In many cases, such errors are related to too much focus on methodological rigor, Straub (2008) argues, who emphasizes that minimally acceptable methods should not stand in the way of groundbreaking work. If they did, we would potentially squeeze out the new thinking and creative work that break away from current hegemonies.

These views of past *MISQ* editors-in-chief recognize that competent reviewing and editing involve a constructive element. So, how does this recognition translate to the service as a SE? If there is such a thing as an appreciative SE, I would suggest that this would be an editor who seeks to manage a review process with the idea of enhancing the strengths of a manuscript rather than correcting its deficiencies. In approaching a new manuscript, this would involve making every effort to identify the underlying strengths of it and determine whether these strengths have enough potential to make it worthwhile for a review team to engage with the manuscript and its authors. Most manuscripts have strengths that can be leveraged, and I would propose that appreciative editing and reviewing is more likely to foster new thinking and creativity in our intellectual efforts. This appreciative attitude is not about softening requirements for making it into the journal. It is about strengthening the process by which a manuscript can reach those requirements. So, what would be elements of appreciative editing?

The appreciative SE seeks to start any review process with the idea to make the manuscript acceptable according to the standards of the journal. Such attitude takes time and effort since it is generally more challenging to identify the actions needed to improve a manuscript rather than to identify its "fatal flaws". Since senior editors cannot spend so much time on each of the manuscripts that pass through their hands, the appreciative SE needs to be quite picky about the manuscripts they take on (for a full review). Indeed, sometimes the frontend of the reviewing process would benefit from conversations with the authors, where the interaction would help identify the strengths of the author's idea. This aspect takes us to the next point, which is about making the review process centered on the *author's* research.

The appreciative SE seeks to bring forth the intellectual account that the authors have in mind. Even though authors sometimes have difficulty in verbalizing what they have in mind, searching for the intellectual message that lies at the heart of their study is one of the most important aspects of editing. When such a search is successful, it is a real pleasure to serve as an editor because not only have you contributed to realizing (what hopefully is) the full potential of a research study but also the authors will show you appreciation for your involvement in their intellectual development. Of course, the editor cannot do the actual work for the authors. However, the editor can encourage new ways to augment the intellectual direction pursued. The editor can help authors to crystallize the message. Essentially, serving as a SE is an active process of thinking and doing with the intention to carve out the most insightful contribution with the available material and resources.

Speaking about human resources, the reviewing process involves multiple actors. Even though the SE in principle can overrule the recommendation of an entire review team, it is certainly more constructive for everyone involved to foster a process where each individual view is valued and adds constructively to improve the research. There are a number of things a SE can do here. First, selecting the review team is one of the most important aspects of editing. Sometimes, I think that editors are tempted to just have the review assignments arranged as quickly as possible, but my experience is that it pays off to selectively design your review team. Such design would of course pay attention to each reviewer's competence and skills. I usually like to recruit a team including one expert in the substantive area and one in the methods. Another basis for recruiting reviewers is their good judgment, which is a quality that is invaluable in those cases where decisions can go either way. Second, communicating with the team is essential. Early on, I communicate why the reviewers have been recruited to the team so that they understand the expectations and feel more valued for their specific expertise. This will also build a common basis for assessing the manuscript, which certainly goes beyond the purely administrative side of things that systems like ScholarOne can offer. This will help the SE to pick up signals from reviewers before reports have been submitted. This will be valuable if the SE would like to shape the process or if there is a need of an additional reviewer covering a competence that was not thought of in the beginning of the process.

In sum, the appreciate side of being a SE is important and rewarding. It is important for shaping our intellectual future by making exciting research publishable. It is rewarding because one can immerse themselves into the work of leading researchers in our discipline.

6. Carol Saunders: The Role of the Senior Editor²

The review system in the Information Systems (IS) discipline is working to the extent that our journals publish high-quality work, some of which is well cited. While the system's output is often of good quality, the review process often leaves much to be desired, and it is questionable whether all good research gets appropriately published. Hopefully, each of you can easily recall a good experience where a paper that you submitted was improved by the review process and the paper was eventually published in a timely manner. Unfortunately, it is probably far easier for you to recall a negative experience where your paper went through years of revision before being turned down or where the paper, if published, bore no semblance to what you had really wanted it to say. It may be easier for you to recall the bad experiences for two reasons: there likely are more of them and/or individuals recall negative events more easily than positive ones (Colquitt, Lepine, & Wesson, 2014).

As editor-in-chief (EIC) of *MIS Quarterly (MISQ)* (2005-2007), I wanted to improve the review process. I started with what I believed was the cornerstone of the process: the reviewers. Like most other EICs, I wrote a number of editorials about how to review. I had hoped to produce a generation of "diamond cutters" to replace the numerous "gatekeepers" that could be found in many top journals (Saunders, 2005). Many reviewers tried to follow my advice. In most cases, however, they wrote very detailed

² I appreciate the comments of Detmar Straub and Lars Mathiassen on earlier versions of this paper.

critical reviews with suggestions to which most authors could not respond and then proffered a “major revision” recommendation.

Over time, I realized that the key must reside in the hands of the associate editors (AEs). It was up to the AEs to wade through the myriad reviewer comments, select those that could be implemented, determine whether or not the authors could make the changes in a reasonable number of rounds of revisions, suggest rejecting the paper if they couldn’t, and suggest a developmental strategy for proceeding if they could. To highlight the importance of this role, I instigated the annual Best Associate Editor Award. But the review system still wasn’t purring. Gradually I realized that the real burden of keeping the system running efficiently, effectively, and fairly fell on the shoulders of the senior editors (SEs).

In this essay, I outline what I consider the role of the senior editor to be, provide illustrations of good, bad, and ugly executions of the role, and conclude with suggestions to help SEs realize the full responsibilities of that role.

6.1. Senior Editor Role Description

The role of the senior editor has been very aptly described by Detmar Straub (n.d.) (EIC 2008-2012) on the *MIS Quarterly* website (<http://misq.org/se-role/>). This website describes in detail several relevant issues including a description of personal rewards for serving as SE, detailed procedures for handling papers, discussion of ways to ensure the privacy of the submitter’s intellectual property, expected workloads and timelines, and other editorial duties and ethical considerations. I summarize here some of the excellent points made by Detmar and add a few observations of my own.

The role of the SE is a rewarding one for numerous reasons, including the opportunity to help identify, shape, and make known excellent research to the IS community. SEs are at the “intellectual heart of the discipline” (Straub, n.d.) and participate in decisions and policy making that shape the discipline. Of course, being an SE also boosts one’s curriculum vita (CV) and makes an SE more valuable in the academic marketplace.

A very important point in the role description is that the SEs are the final arbiters in decisions about the submitted papers they handle. It is they, after considering the recommendation of the AE and the input from reviewers, who decide the fate of a paper: publication, revision, or removal from the review process. While the AE and reviewers play an important role, the review process “is not a democracy. It is a hierarchy” in which the SE is solely responsible for the handling and disposition of the manuscript (Straub, n.d.). This is because the SE holds a more holistic view of the process and the journal’s mission. SEs are selected to serve because of their knowledge, experience, and wisdom, and it is these properties that allow them to reach their own independent decisions—decisions which may override recommendations of some or all members of the review team. The SE’s independent decision is especially important when the SE thinks there is potential that the reviewers and AE do not see.

Straub (n.d.) continues with a very detailed discussion of steps that the SE should take when handling a paper that has been submitted for review. Much of the discussion addresses how the SE can establish a partnership with the AE. Not all journals have AEs, though those that do could benefit from the suggestions about the process. However, some suggestions could clearly benefit SEs at all journals. In particular, the SE should carefully read the paper, provide timely rejections with helpful explanations, choose a competent review team, manage the review process to ensure that it progresses in a smooth and timely manner, and provide guidance to the authors where needed. In some cases, the feedback from the AE and reviewers is adequate and little additional input is required from the SE. In other cases the SE needs to provide guidance where the suggestions of the reviewers are conflicting or where the review team many lack expertise or knowledge.

Ultimately, the SE is in charge of managing a paper’s review process. This means that the SE should contact the AE to explore why delays are occurring and contact (or make sure the AE contacts) tardy reviewers. Sometimes, the SE may decide to move ahead with only two reviews rather than wait for a

delinquent review. It is the SE who is responsible for ensuring that the review process is as fair, informative, and timely as possible.

6.2. Illustrations: The Good, Bad, and Ugly

I have been fortunate to benefit from the services of many good SEs. Let me give you some examples. Jane Webster, along with Rick Watson, made a significant contribution to the discipline when they proposed and then followed through on their suggestions for *MISQ*'s theory and review section. The theory and review section is designed to promote theorizing and theory development in the IS discipline. As SE of this section, Jane Webster was able to help me and my co-authors move our paper beyond a mere review to a theoretical contribution. And, by interfacing with us on a regular basis, the process was very timely. In another example, Detmar Straub provided instrumental guidance when he pointed me and my co-authors to the writings of Aristotle, Plato, and Einstein. He also told a reviewer on the second review team of the paper (a long story that I won't go into here) that it is not appropriate to reject a paper in the fourth round of a review. In a third example of a good SE, Suzanne Rivard (2014) wrote an editorial statement for *MISQ* that was based on her reflections as an SE. She states (Rivard, 2014, p. iii):

As I finish writing a letter that invites authors to revise the manuscript they submitted to the MISQ Theory and Review Department, I realize that the comments and recommendations I make about this manuscript would also apply to many other manuscript proposals or manuscripts I have received.

What is "good" about this editorial statement is that Rivard considered her many experiences as an SE and took the time to articulate suggestions to help future contributors to the theory and review section.

I also have some examples of SEs who themselves are neither bad nor ugly, but who, in my opinion, managed a very bad or ugly review process. I draw heavily on these two examples in making recommendations about how we can increase the potential of the SE role. In the most egregious example of a bad review process, the SE appointed two entirely different review teams for our paper. When after two rounds the reviewers were positive about our paper and appeared to converge in their opinions about how to proceed, the SE decided to appoint a completely different review team because "The problem with the earlier two reviewers was that they were totally unknown to me and to the new AE. It also seemed to me that the aspiration level they adopted was too low when one considers xxxx". The second review team the SE appointed had a new set of issues and they were far from developmental in communicating them to us. Frustratingly, they asked for things that the earlier reviewers had requested be taken out of the paper. The paper was with the review team from five to seven months for most rounds of review. Finally, after four years and five rounds of review, the SE decided to reject the paper. When I told the SE that I didn't think we had had a good review process, the SE responded that it was "an unfortunate case of a review process in which almost everything went wrong". It was especially unfortunate for the untenured co-author who would have benefitted from an early reject decision in the sense that we could have moved the paper through another good journal's processes and seen the paper accepted by the time of his promotion decision.

In a second example, a person was appointed to serve as SE on our paper who had not yet been tenured and who did not have as much expertise on the topic as the co-authors, two internationally recognized scholars in the topic area. Further, there was a conflict of interest for the person to serve as SE on our paper. All co-authors disagreed with the appropriateness of some of the SE's requirements. Ugliness ensued during the discussions about the SE's required changes to the paper.

6.3. New Proposed SE-related Policies

These examples all occurred in journals that had policies similar to that described on the senior editor role page on the *MISQ* website. In the cases of the good review process, SEs were adhering to the policies and even going above and beyond what is expected of good SEs. I applaud and appreciate the efforts of these and all other good SEs.

For those SEs who are concerned primarily about boosting their CV, the easiest and most expeditious way of handling papers is to always defer to the AE and use standard templates in writing their decision letters to authors. In such cases, it is not necessary for them to carefully read and assess the papers, and there is no need to provide developmental insights or guidance. This would exemplify the actions of a bad SE. Fortunately, I have seen or experienced the decisions of only a handful of such SEs. I believe the vast majority of SEs try to do a good job. Still, to ensure that they manage a good review process, I suggest that our discipline undertake some actions to improve the process.

Some journals have a policy that is similar to this one on the *MISQ* website: "This process will preempt endless cycles of revisions of papers that are finally rejected on the *n*th cycle". When my co-authors and I experienced a reject decision on the fifth round, it was clear that the policy was not being enforced in our case. We believe that if there was so little potential in the paper, the SE should have made that determination in less than four years and five rounds of revision. To make sure that this doesn't happen to other poor souls, I suggest that journals establish a policy that *papers that have made it through some number of rounds of review (i.e., two or three) must be published in that journal*. If the SE does not reject the paper by the stated round, then the SE is required to get the paper in a form that is acceptable for publication within a few more rounds. If there is that much potential that the SE can hold the authors on the line for three or four rounds of review, then that SE should make it clear what steps should be taken to make the article publishable.

Further, *journals should enforce their stated policies*. When expected timelines are posted on websites, the journal should determine if it is meeting its stated timelines. Of course, some papers may take longer than others to process for understandable reasons. However, the journal should try to assess if most papers are being processed within the stated time intervals and, if not, refine the process or articulate more realistic deadlines so the authors can make informed decisions about where to send their papers. It would be especially helpful if journals could publish their turnaround times in their journals, on their websites, or on the AIS website. There should be categories of turnaround statistics. If a journal has a large percentage of desk rejects within the period of a week, the turnaround statistics with this category of papers included can mask long turnaround times for papers that have made it through the first round of review successfully.

Journals are in the business of publishing papers, not rejecting them. *The EICs should establish a culture among the SEs of accepting, not rejecting, papers*. To strengthen this culture, the names of SEs who have accepted papers should be announced, if not publically, at least to the other SEs on a regular basis such as at the annual meeting. Moreover, the journal should share basic statistics among its SEs on how many papers each SE has processed, how many were rejected without review, how many were rejected after review, and how many eventually got published. Additionally, the SEs should be told the number of papers published by the journal the preceding year and the number of SEs so that they would know how many papers, on average, each SE needs to accept (i.e., develop) for the journal to maintain its position. Such statistics should form the basis for ongoing discussions at the annual meetings in which SEs hold each other accountable against the ideal role and principles described above. Such continuous discussions will also help incoming SEs more quickly form their own appropriate practices in a very demanding, and for many, quite new role. Finally, the discussions and openness offer greater transparency as to "power and politics in the processes and organization of knowledge" (Delbridge & Fiss, 2013, p. 330). Such transparency could encourage greater diversity of ideas and discourage undesirable gatekeeping, patronage, and the exclusion of ideas that run counter to existing knowledge structures.

Finally, because the role of the SE is so important and the SE's decision has such weight, *journals should not place untenured and/or junior faculty in the awkward position of being an SE*. They have not had the time to acquire both an in-depth knowledge of the discipline and the holistic perspective that is critical for SEs.

There are numerous types of justice (i.e., procedural, distributive, interactional). The most important of these has been shown to be procedural justice or the perceived fairness of the process and procedures to make allocation decisions (Colquitt et al., 2014). If submitters do not believe that their

papers will be reviewed fairly according to standard procedures (i.e., rejection within two or three rounds, one review team, knowledgeable and unbiased SEs, etc.), they will lose faith in the system. In order to maintain the integrity of the review system, the process must be perceived as fair. And it is the SEs who are in the best position to ensure the fairness and scholarliness of the system. It is for this reason that I have come to believe that the SEs are the most important part of a discipline's journal review system.

7. Bernard Tan: Perspective on Senior Editorships

One can characterize an academic discipline by the cumulative body of knowledge that the discipline generates (Grover, Ayyagari, Gokhale, Lim, & Coffey, 2006). Advances in this body of knowledge are captured in the papers published over time (particularly papers published in top-quality journals). The extent to which this body of knowledge improves human lives or facilitates human endeavors determines the value of the discipline to society. Senior editors (particularly those of top quality journals), who make editorial decisions about what to publish or not to publish, play a pivotal role in shaping advances in this body of knowledge and, thereby, in effectively contributing to the long-term well-being of the discipline.

Senior editors who conscientiously think about how to move the discipline forward tends to be more effective than those who see themselves as "gatekeepers". The former think about possibilities (i.e., why a paper may be publishable and how to make this happen), whereas the latter dwell on impossibilities (i.e., why a paper may not be publishable). While many papers submitted to premium journals indeed have critical weaknesses that preclude publication, there are also a good number of papers that can be developed into valuable publishable pieces if effective senior editors manage the review process. I have served in the selection committee of the Senior Scholars Consortium for the best information systems paper award since the inception of this award. Several past winners of this award have shared with me about how senior editors of their papers have offered exceptional guidance to help shape these papers into the eventual award-winning pieces. In this regard, I hope the Senior Scholars Consortium can also recognize the senior editors of award-winning papers.

Motivated by their desire to move the discipline forward, effective senior editors tend to exhibit several characteristics. First, they are innovation minded and appreciative of ideas that are fresh to the discipline, including work involving collaboration across disciplines. They know that publishing innovative papers can potentially enlarge the scope of work of the discipline and increase its contribution to society. For example, three decades ago, *Econometrica* published a paper on prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) that challenged utility theory, which was conventional wisdom then. Prospect theory went on to impact research work in several disciplines and yielded a Nobel Prize in 2002. Senior editors should not be fixated with the status quo because this can cause them to prefer papers that make only incremental contributions. If senior editors always demand established theories in each paper, then new theories can hardly ever emerge. This can potentially lead to a long-term situation where the discipline relies on theories from other disciplines but offers few fresh theoretical perspectives to other disciplines (Wade, Biehl, & Kim, 2006), which, thereby, undermines its value relative to other disciplines. Indeed, even among the papers contending for the best information systems paper award each year, papers presenting fresh theoretical perspectives were the exception (e.g., Jones & Gregor, 2007) rather than the norm. The efforts by *Journal of the AIS* to organize theory development workshops and publish theory papers are an antidote to this problem but much work remains to be done.

Second, effective senior editors are able to reasonably tradeoff the contributions with the limitations in papers in making editorial decisions. They are conscious of the fact that there is no such thing as flawless papers (even among those published in top-quality journals). While they do not tolerate critical flaws that can render papers' findings questionable, they are able to steer the review process without allow this to be bogged down by less pertinent issues that do not significantly affect papers' contributions. Senior editors should not simply average the recommendations of the review team in

making editorial decisions because the rationale for the recommendations would always be more important than those recommendations per se. I have, on some occasions, replaced or removed reviewers who misread the papers they reviewed and, therefore, offered irrelevant or unconstructive comments. I have also, on other occasions, benefited from senior editors who replaced or removed reviewers who misread my papers.

Third, effective senior editors actively help authors to leverage on the comments of the review team to develop high-quality papers. In addition to identifying flaws in papers that would require attention, they offer constructive suggestions about how those flaws may be addressed. Such guidance would be particularly valuable for reconciling differing opinions in the review team (e.g., when different reviewers suggest using different theoretical bases that are equally plausible). Senior editors should not simply tell authors to “address all the comments of the reviewers” and then leave authors to figure out what exactly to do. In other words, the review process is about developing papers with good potential rather than about finding fault. I have, on some occasions, corresponded with authors over email or met authors at conferences when they sought clarification about the comments of the review team. I have also, on other occasions, received valuable guidance from senior editors who helped to resolve differing opinions on my papers. If authors are enthusiastic enough to want to refine the papers, why should senior editors not have the same enthusiasm to guide authors?

Finally, effective senior editors manage the review process in a timely manner. They are cognizant of the fact that some authors may be working towards promotion and tenure, so unnecessary delays can potentially hurt the careers of these authors. Timely management of the review process starts from putting together a competent review team who are not already over-committed. Rather than always relying on the same pool of established reviewers who are highly sought after, senior editors can expand their pool of reviewers (e.g., through resources such as the *AIS Faculty Directory*) and use a mix of experienced and new reviewers. Every discipline needs to cultivate new reviewers for the future. Instead of simply relying on system reminders, senior editors can give personal attention to reviewers who contribute to significant delays in the review process. Most important, although it is deemed desirable to serve on editorial boards (particularly for top-quality journals), senior editors should avoid taking on more editorial (or other) roles than they are able to cope.

An academic discipline may engage in efforts to demonstrate its cognitive legitimacy, such as through mapping its intellectual core (e.g., Sidorova, Evangelopoulos, Valacich, & Ramakrishnan, 2008), or behavioral legitimacy, such as through highlighting its social capital (e.g., Xu, Chau, & Tan, 2014). But, even with such efforts, society would still appreciate disciplines that produce timely knowledge that improves human lives or facilitates human endeavors. Disciplines that serve society well will always find their place in society (including tertiary institutions) without ever having their relevance questioned. Through editorial decisions, senior editors (particularly those of top-quality journals) help shape the body of knowledge that emerge and, thereby, play a critical role that influence the future of their discipline. Senior editors should always be cognizant that their appointment is not for achieving personal glory but for advancing their discipline. This advancement happens not through papers they do not publish but through papers they publish, particularly innovative papers published in a timely manner.

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