



**Journal of the Association for Information Systems**

**Special Issue Call for Participation:**

**Technology and Social Inclusion: Building a dialectic on the role of technology in inclusion and exclusion from societies, organizations, economies, and academe**

**Deadline for submission: 15 March 2021**

**Guest Editors**

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Social inclusion—the ability to participate fully in one’s social world—presents tremendous challenges in our increasingly digital world and for the IS field. This special issue represents a rallying cry to the IS community; we call for research that theorizes about social inclusion and the critical role of information systems in enabling or preventing individuals and social groups from participating in the societies in which they are embedded.

For many in today’s world, information systems are integral to interacting with nearly every social institution (healthcare, employment, government, education) and to maintaining social roles and relationships (Carter and Grover 2015). The inability to access and leverage these information systems, and the social institutions they support, perpetuates inequalities and differences between “haves and have nots” that create or sustain destructive social divisions. In contrast, access to these information systems affords opportunities to close the gap between “haves and have nots” and build a stronger global economy and society (Hsieh et al. 2008). Recent research suggests that information and communication technologies (ICTs) can also simultaneously include and exclude the digitally disadvantaged (Pethig and Kroenung 2019), painting a complex picture in need of fresh perspectives.

While IS social inclusion research tends to point to surface differences, e.g., sex and race, the growing information economy has created opportunities for inclusion and exclusion on a wider spectrum of diversity, including differences in age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, nationality, emotional, physical, mental and developmental abilities, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual

orientation, skin color, socio-economic status, and values/ethics (Trauth 2017). The existence of biases against individuals and social groups based on these characteristics are undeniable. We ignore the implications of these biases at our peril because there are social and economic consequences to them.

We solicit two categories of papers that examine social inclusion and information systems: societal and discipline specific.

**Societal opportunities** to study inclusion span a wide spectrum of IT/IS practice and research. Consider Silicon Valley's abysmal diversity metrics (Ioannou 2018), the Google anti-diversity memo (Bogost 2017), and the gamergate controversy (Dewey 2014). These examples underscore a need to understand and address persistent biases against marginalized groups that manifest in the cultures of "corporate IT" and online communities. Consider the persistent gender gap in the IT workforce: 80-90% of software developers worldwide are men (Stack Overflow 2015). This staggering imbalance may help explain implicit biases woven into the fabric of IT artifacts, such as Amazon's AI recruiting system, which systematically discriminated against women candidates (Dastin 2015), or facial recognition tools that misidentify people of color at a rate of five to ten times higher than Caucasians (Simonite 2019). We solicit papers that consider the implications of biases and excluding individuals from access to the broader information economy, be it access to technologies and data or access to participate in the IT workforce or IT enabled-economic activity.

**Discipline-specific opportunities** to study inclusion focus on issues tied to how we conduct and construct the Information Systems discipline. There are a multitude of issues in need of attention: from how economic disparities frame opportunities to participate in the discipline, including but not limited to: emergent "pay to play" publishing; the demographic composition of IS doctoral programs (Payton 2005); our tradition of locating conferences in expensive locations, and examining how research norms prioritize understanding technology's implications for Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic (WEIRD) societies. Such work is important, because research shows that 80% of academic studies are conducted using participants from WEIRD societies, but only 12% of the world population falls into this category (Henrich et al 2010). These dual drivers of economics of participation and norms for research means valuable cultural contexts that could contribute to rich theories are lost (Davison and Martinsons 2016) and that we run the risk of a particular world-view being inscribed in how we study and design ICT (Walsham 2005).

### **Submission Parameters**

We seek new theories and explanations for how ICT enables exclusion and affords opportunities for inclusion. We encourage authors to frame, theorize, and when possible, measure concepts relating to inclusion/exclusion. Including demographic moderators in existing models and offering "social inclusion explanations" for these differences is not sufficient because this approach is largely atheoretical (Trauth 2013). A social inclusion lens should pervade the research--driving the research questions, theory, model development, and explanation of findings. We particularly emphasize the need for social inclusion theories--imported or indigenous--that provide a strong grounding for research studies.

We invite researchers who do not consider themselves “social inclusion scholars” to apply a social inclusion lens to their area of expertise. As we extend this invitation, we also offer an assurance that we understand the difficulty of studying social inclusion and recognize the perceived risks surrounding the topic area: fear of saying the wrong thing, of unintentionally offending an audience or reviewer, or not having a “right” to speak about certain topics because one does not come from the context of study. This special issue represents the intentional creation of space for difficult conversations with a team of open-minded editors and reviewers equipped to mediate such conversations.

For those who may be exploring this literature for the first time, we recommend the following review papers and special issues as a starting point. The very first special issue in JAIS documents efforts to identify and address the digital divide and provides a benchmark for understanding both sociological and economic aspects of digital disadvantage (Kaufmann 2005, 2006). A more recent special issue in JAIS furthers social inclusion research while focusing on the role of ICT in developing countries (Sahay et al. 2017). Trauth (2017) provides a map and research agenda on the broader social inclusion literature, with a particularly detailed picture of the literature on gender issues; Gallivan (2013) provides a structured literature review of gender and IT research as well. These reviews and special issues link to a rich and varied literature on social inclusion research in information systems.

We welcome submissions from various research traditions, including qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, and design science research. We will consider four types of articles:

1. Research Articles, i.e., traditional empirical scholarly work
2. Review/Theory Articles, i.e., development of new theory that may not be empirically tested and/or synthesis of an area of research. See JAIS’s manuscript categories page for more detail: <https://aisel.aisnet.org/jais/authorinfo.html>
3. Editorials/Issues and Opinions, i.e., identifying opportunities for future work and/or critiques of current research
4. Policy Papers, i.e., frameworks based on an analysis of evidence that offer prescriptive comments on how to create a more socially inclusive, equitable society related to IS/IT

Please contact the editors if you are not sure whether your research falls in the scope of the call. In the spirit of inclusion, we will consider any submission that examines diversity and inclusion challenges in the IS field, from any perspective, and then apply the high editorial standards of JAIS.

### **Topics of Interest**

The following topics of interest are by no means exhaustive and are not intended to constrain scholarly ideas. Rather, they are intended to help authors identify the range of topics and application areas that can fit into the scope of this call. We have organized these into broad categories and given examples of each. Some topics can fit more than one category.

*IT-related societal challenges and emerging phenomena that would benefit from a social inclusion lens; for example:*

- Algorithmic bias inherent in social media, search engines, and AI

- Analysis of exclusionary tactics and solutions related to cyberbullying
- Application of a social inclusion lens to mainstream IS/IT research topics such as technology acceptance, healthcare and big data
- Social inclusion implications of social media filter bubbles, echo chambers, fake news, troll farms, and other ways social media are appropriated for misinformation and control of social discourse, such as the Cambridge Analytica scandal, the 2016 US presidential election, Brexit and the Leave.eu campaign.

*Implications of social inclusion for how specific demographic groups or people with specific identity attributes relate to ICTs; for example:*

- Particular social inclusion challenges faced by underrepresented groups (e.g., age, minorities based on gender, gender identity, race, culture, sexual identity, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic status) in relation to use/design/development of ICTs
- Influence of the intersection of identity attributes (e.g., race, gender and culture) on adoption and use of ICTs
- Analysis of the digital divide and the digitally disadvantaged from a multilayered demographic perspective and exploration of socioeconomic divisions that impact access to or use of technology
- Implications of neurocognitive diversity of users and developers for ICT development and design

*How diversity and social inclusion issues relate to the IT workforce; for example:*

- Factors that influence the enrollment and retention of underrepresented identities in IS/IT educational and career pipelines
- Demographic analyses of IT workers and/or the under representation of minority groups in technical work
- Initiatives and programs to encourage underrepresented groups to seek training, entry, and re-entry to the information technology workforce
- Work-life balance issues for parents and caregivers in the information technology workforce

*Research methods, interventions, and policies related to social inclusion issues; for example:*

- Policy and position papers on how to address issues of inclusion in IS domains
- Examination of how are the research problems we choose to examine, the research methods we use, and the solutions we propose shaped by the composition and history of the IS community
- Theories, research frameworks, and methodologies for investigating diversity and inclusion issues in information technology
- Assessment and reflection on issues of social inclusion in the IS academic community

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## **SUBMISSION PROCESS**

This special issue aims to support the further development of research on social inclusion, and it is anticipated that there may be a large number of submissions. Prior to the submission deadline of 15 March 2021, there is an optional pre-submission feedback process.

Authors are strongly encouraged to submit a 1-page abstract by 15 June 2020. Papers that fit with the goals of the special issue will be asked to submit a 5-8 page extended abstract for feedback and will be invited to participate in a JAIS Special Issue Paper Development Workshop **to be held remotely during ICIS 2020**. Extended abstracts (5 - 8 pages) should be submitted by 1 December 2020 for circulation among participants and discussion at round tables at the Workshop. While participation in the pre-submission feedback process is optional, it is nevertheless strongly encouraged as it enables a dialogue between authors and editors and helps shape the paper. If authors cannot attend the workshop, one-on-one meetings with editors at AIS conferences or via Skype may be possible, depending on availability.

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE: We are still assembling the editorial board with the aim that all geographical regions of the AIS community and a broad range of theoretical perspectives on social inclusion are represented.

## OPTIONAL PRE-SUBMISSION FEEDBACK TIMELINE

- 15 June 2020 - 1-page abstracts due
- 01 August 2020 - Notifications of invitation to workshop
- 01 December 2020 - Extended abstracts due
- TBD December 2020 - ICIS research development workshop, **to be held remotely**

## SUBMISSION/REVISION TIMELINE

- 15 March 2021 - Submissions due
- 19 July 2021 - First round decisions made
- 15 November 2021 - 1st Revision due
- 14 March 2022 - Second round decision made
- 18 July 2022 - 2nd Revision due
- 14 November 2022 - Final decisions rendered

**Address all communication, including abstract and manuscript submissions to:**

[JAISinclusion@gmail.com](mailto:JAISinclusion@gmail.com)

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