Editorial Preview

In this issue, we are fortunate to have an Invited Paper from Dick Nolan and Jim Wetherbe which proposes a comprehensive framework for MIS research. I believe that this article represents a major piece of thinking concerning what MIS is all about. MIS academicians should find the article of particular use, but I would encourage our practitioner readers to consider the ideas expressed in the article. It has long been my opinion that the long run future of the practitioner community is inexorably associated with the ability of the growing number of MIS academic programs to produce high quality research and student output. The MIS area is maturing in academia, as is shown by the Nolan and Wetherbe article. One of the exciting things about the partnership between SMIS and the MIS Research Center at the University of Minnesota in producing this journal is that the relationship between the MIS academic and the practitioner is utilized and enhanced. The Nolan and Wetherbe article is proof of how the practitioner and academic can communicate with one another.

Further evidence of our emphasis on the integration of the practitioner and the academician is the blend of articles in the Application section. The first by a practitioner, William B. Miller, is an exposition on the five steps that ought to be taken to develop a truly successful information systems function.

The second article in this section is by Izak Benbasat and Iris Vessey. The article is a very comprehensive survey of techniques used for estimating programming time and costs. An evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses is also provided.

The third application article by Robert Zmud addresses the management of large software development projects. The article develops an approach that may be useful, and emphasizes modern practices in staffing, planning, and controlling software development.

Thus, this issue's Application section includes an "umbrella" article on MIS management and two articles dealing with two subtopics of concern to MIS managers. As a package, the three articles represent a related set of material that should be of use to IS practitioners and of potential interest to educators as well.

The Theory and Research section contains one article which is based upon research into the relationship between the characteristics of the information services function and those of the organization it serves. Margi Olson and Norm Chervany studied 43 business organizations to generate their findings. They found that the organizational environment does have an effect on the level of decentralization of information services.

I would like to call the readers' attention to the letters "From Our Readers." After Gordon Davis' letter concerning Jack Rockart's *Harvard Business Review* article on "Critical Success Factors," substantial discussion has taken place between the CISR (MIT) and MISRC (Minnesota) staffs. The letter from Davis printed in this issue is after much discussion with Jack Rockart and Peter Keen at the planning meeting for the Conference on Information Systems which was held in late May in Los Angeles. I think the dust has settled — but is anyone in for MIS vs. DSS?

Finally, I would like to call attention to our masthead which indicates several new Consulting and Associate Editors. Welcome to:

 Jim Scott, Procter & Gamble, Co., Consulting Editor — Application
 Ralph Sprague, University of Hawaii, Associate Editor — Application
 Jim Wetherbe, University of Houston, Associate Editor — Application
 Izak Benbasat, University of British Columbia, Associate Editor — Theory and Research
 Benn Konsynski, University of Arizona, Associate Editor — Theory and Research

**GARY W. DICKSON
SENIOR EDITOR**