

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

MIS Quarterly's Editorial Policies and Practices

MIS Quarterly's editorial policies and practices have evolved significantly over the past several years. Details of the developments have been announced and recorded in different editor's comments and assorted *MISQ* web pages. In the editor's comments in this issue of the *Quarterly*, I will provide, in one place, a guide (with hyperlinks) indicating the journal's current editorial policies and practices. In the web version of this document (go to www.misq.org/archivist/edstates.html), the hyperlinks are functional.¹

Editorial and Research Mission

At the broadest level of policy, the journal's mission is to publish research "concerning both the management of information technology and the use of information technology for managerial and organizational purposes." Bob Zmud, who preceded me as editor-in-chief, authored these words in his editor's comments in the June 1995 issue (www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no19/issue2/edstat.html). These words are also the first thing that a reader sees when visiting the *MISQ* home page (www.misq.org). However, despite his June 1995 editor's comments, there were still cases where authors submitted papers that were exclusively organizational in focus or technological in focus, hence prompting my addition of the following footnote to the *MISQ* home-page version of Zmud's statement:

Manuscripts focusing on information technology generally need to examine a phenomenon in which the behavioral, the managerial, and/or the organizational also play a substantive and not just incidental role. Similarly, manuscripts focusing on the behavioral, the managerial, and/or the organizational generally need to examine a phenomenon in which information technology also plays a substantive and not just incidental role.

For instance, electronic commerce papers that focus exclusively on marketing and psychological issues, where information technology plays at best a background role, are not appropriate for the *Quarterly*. Likewise, papers that focus exclusively on the technological steps in building a particular system, while valuable and suitable for a technology journal, do not enjoy a fit with the research mission of the *Quarterly*.

Being in agreement with Zmud, I wrote my own inaugural editor's comments (March 1999, www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no23/issue1/edstat.html) to emphasize that research in the information systems field examines more than just the technological system, or just the social system, or even the two side by side; in addition, it investigates the phenomena that emerge when the two interact. This embodies both a research perspective and a subject matter that differentiate the academic field of information systems from other disciplines. In this regard, our field's so-called "reference disciplines" are actually poor models for our own field. They focus on the behavioral or the technological, but not on the emergent socio-technical phenomena that set our field apart. For this reason, I no longer refer to them as reference disciplines, but as "contributing disciplines" at best.

¹The hardcopy print version of this editorial statement displays the URLs of the referenced web pages. In the web version, the URLs are embedded as hypertext links.

Departments of the Journal: What the *Quarterly* Publishes

The *Quarterly* considers and publishes papers in the following departments: Research Articles, Research Notes, Research Essays, Issues & Opinions, and (most recently, involving a change which will be explained below) MISQ Review. One of my past editor's comments provides the details (March 1999, www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no23/issue1/edstat.html), but some brief descriptions follow.

Basically, a **Research Article** is a traditional full-length research paper that generally involves both theory and evidence but can also be "pure theory" (as Zmud explained in his June 1998 editor's comments at www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no22/issue2/edstat.html). A **Research Note** is ideally a shorter paper that is a note on an article already published in the *Quarterly* or, if not a note on an article, then a note of an empirical nature on research topics that frequently appear in the *Quarterly*. A Research Note that examines a methodological issue, but provides a full-length treatment, may be considered as a **Research Essay**. An **Issues & Opinions** paper should open a new area of discourse, close stale areas, and/or offer fresh, insightful views on topics of importance to MIS academicians and executives. Exemplifying the provocative and contemplative tone of an Issues & Opinions article is "Six Myths of Information and Markets: Information Technology Networks, Electronic Commerce, and the Battle for Consumer Surplus" by Varun Grover and Pradipkumar Ramanlal in the December 1999 issue. While long for an Issues & Opinions paper, its excellent in-depth treatment justifies the length.

MISQ Review was originally launched as a publication separate from *MIS Quarterly*. However, the senior editors and I have just agreed to incorporate it as a department within the *Quarterly*. Hence, papers accepted for publication in MISQ Review will be published in the new MISQ Review department of the *Quarterly*. An MISQ Review paper may survey and synthesize prior information systems research and may be longer than a traditional Research Article.

The *Quarterly* has published and will continue to consider research on education. Papers on education must, of course, still demonstrate a fit with the journal's editorial mission. *MISQ* editorial policy has presented its position on education research in the editor's comments of September 1995 and December 1996 (www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no19/issue3/edstat.html and www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no20/issue4/edstat.html).

The *Quarterly* welcomes technically oriented submissions. Again, in line with the journal's editorial mission, a paper focusing on technology alone would not be appropriate for *MISQ*. However, as explained in the June 1997 editor's comments (www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no21/issue2/edstat.html), research on technology in its organizational and business context would be suitable for the *Quarterly*.

More about What the *Quarterly* Does and Does Not Publish

Established editorial policy (www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no19/issue4/edstat.html, December 1995, and www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no20/issue1/edstat.html, March 1996) has helpfully identified types of papers that lack a fit with the *Quarterly*'s editorial mission. They include papers that primarily involve descriptions of information systems applications, methodologies, or practices where these descriptions are either atheoretical or purely formal; replications of prior studies; criticisms of prior studies; instrument development; analysis of journals and journal rankings; investigation of tenure and promotion criteria; etc. Whereas any of these topics, alone, would not suffice as the primary element in a submission to the *Quarterly*, a viable submission could possibly include such a topic as long as additional elements in the paper succeed in making the paper fit the *Quarterly*'s editorial policy. For instance, a paper that involves instrument development could be a viable submission if the paper additionally involved a contribution to

theory; in fact, there are conditions specifying this (www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no23/issue3/edstat.html, September 1999). Similarly, a paper criticizing a prior study could be a viable submission if, in addition, it also offered a positive contribution (hence rendering the paper into a Research Note).

A purely descriptive case report of, for example, the implementation of an information system in a particular company is not appropriate for the *Quarterly*. On the other hand, if the paper were also to involve a theoretical contribution, a generalizable framework, an application of prior research, or another element evidencing scholarship (hence transforming the case report into a true case *study*), then it could be appropriate as an example of the sort of academic research contribution that justifies the existence of the *Quarterly*. Excellent examples of this are the annual Society for Information Management (SIM) competition papers, the best ones of which the *Quarterly* publishes after they go through the review process, like any other submissions.

The *Quarterly* welcomes papers originally presented at conferences, but will not consider the original conference versions of these papers (www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no23/issue3/edstat.html, September 1999). The version that authors submit to the *Quarterly* must be a revision of the conference version. If the conference paper has already been copyrighted, the author is responsible for obtaining, in writing, a release of the copyright when submitting the paper to the *Quarterly*. The cover page should mention the name and date of the conference where the paper has been or will be presented.

Writing Up and Submitting a Paper

In general, authors should target one or another journal prior to writing up the results of their research, or even before they commence their research. Papers that are retrofitted to a particular journal's editorial policy and style often fail to achieve this fit and are easily recognizable as such. In a series of helpful editor's comments, Zmud has provided useful pointers on how to write up a research paper (June 1995, www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no19/issue2/edstat.html; December 1995, www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no19/issue4/edstat.html; and March 1996, www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no20/issue1/edstat.html). I have also explained how the past research that our discipline has accumulated, involving what are now "old" information technologies, can provide an indispensable foundation for current research involving "new" information technologies (March 2000, www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no24/issue1/edstat.pdf).

Authors submitting their work to the *Quarterly* should follow the nomination policy whereby authors nominate two senior editors, two associate editors, and up to four reviewers. Every effort will be made to select one of the two nominated SEs, one of the two nominated AEs, and one of the nominated reviewers. The nomination policy (appearing on the *MISQ* web page, "Information for Prospective Authors," www.misq.org/roadmap/standards.html) also explains that there must be no conflict of interest in an author's choices of nominees. When authors nominate no editors, I sometimes e-mail them with the message: "Do you mean to tell me that you believe no member of the *MISQ* editorial board is qualified to handle your manuscript?" As the sample cover letter/e-mail (www.misq.org/roadmap/coverlet.html) indicates, an author should designate the *MISQ* department in which he or she would like the manuscript to be considered. All submissions should be electronic, where the manuscript (including any and all diagrams, figures, and tables) should be contained in a single word processing file attached to an e-mail that is sent both to the *MISQ* review administrator (at misqreviewadm@csom.umn.edu) and to one of the nominated senior editors. There is no need to send a copy to the editor-in-chief.

An initial submission to the Research Articles department should not exceed 15,000 words (excluding diagrams, figures, tables).

The first page of a submitted manuscript should reveal the names of any persons who have commented on it or its earlier versions and whether a prior version of the paper was presented at a conference. Please note that some *MISQ* editors, if asked to comment formally or informally on a manuscript prior to its submission, might feel a loss of objectivity regarding the research in the manuscript—research to which they will then have contributed—and hence might disqualify themselves from serving as the editor for this submission.

At the *Quarterly*, the senior editor who is handling a manuscript has the final say (accept, reject) on the manuscript's disposition. For the purposes of handling manuscripts, the editor-in-chief may act as an SE. Manuscripts that an SE rejects or decides to be inappropriate for the *Quarterly* may not be submitted to another *Quarterly* SE. In the past, the review administrator and the editors have identified such manuscripts through their shared use of the *Quarterly*'s web-based review system.

In all cases, because the copyright of all papers published in *MIS Quarterly* must be assigned to the *Quarterly*, authors of submissions must make sure, at the beginning of the review process, either that their submissions are not copyrighted or that they have obtained copyright clearance for their submissions to be published by the *Quarterly*.

Review Process

The mean time for the first review cycle of a submission is 45 days, which is remarkably short. (I thank my predecessors, Blake Ives and Bob Zmud, for instituting the electronic and other operational infrastructure that has made this efficiency possible.) Because some manuscripts are removed from the review process almost immediately after their being submitted (for instance, owing to a lack of fit with the *Quarterly*'s editorial policies), an equal number of manuscripts require, for their initial review cycle, an amount of time that is located an equal distance on the other side of the mean of 45 days; still, this amount of time is reasonable. As I have explained (September 1999, www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no23/issue3/edstat.html), a lead time of a year or even two to the publication of an article can, depending on the circumstances, be necessary and justifiable.

At the *Quarterly*, the review process does not involve an editor's seeking a majority by counting up the reviewers' assessments as if they were votes (the review process is not a democracy), but rather, involves weighing the substance of the expert judgments. An editor can (and occasionally does) go against the majority of the reviewers (which, by the way, can be favorable to the author!). Because of the care and attention that go into this, I have said (www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no23/issue4/edstat.html, December 1999) that "the manuscript review process" is actually a misnomer and a more accurate term would be "the research development process" or even "the researcher development process."

My past editor's comments have offered an insider's view of the nuts-and-bolts mechanics of the review process at the *Quarterly* (June 2000, www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no24/issue2/edstat.pdf) and a blow-by-blow case description of each and every decision and communication involved in the actual review process of a manuscript submission (December 1999, www.misq.org/archivist/vol/no23/issue4/edstat.html).

Finally, "Information for Prospective Authors" (www.misq.org/roadmap/standards.html#Link8), which describes the procedures that an author should follow when submitting a manuscript to *MISQ*, already mentions the following, but it is worth repeating: "Please note that all submissions received in the month of December will be logged upon receipt, but the processing of such a submission (involving the selection of senior and associate editors for the submission, the screening of the submission, the selection of

reviewers, and so forth) will officially commence only in January. Similarly, *MIS Quarterly* will not impose its standard three-week deadline on reviewers during the month of December. This is to acknowledge the reality of the time constraints imposed by the end-of-the-semester responsibilities, the International Conference on Information Systems, and the holidays on most members of the Editorial Board and the scholars on whom *MIS Quarterly* relies to serve as reviewers." Actually, the Thanksgiving holiday in the United States (owing to the number of *MISQ* editors and reviewers based in the U.S.) effectively serves as the beginning date of this period. Also, as the same web page mentions, there is a similar but milder version of this period during the northern hemisphere's summer months. In general, if reviewers and editors (who are all volunteers) do find time to process manuscripts during these periods, they are doing so not because they are obligated, but because they care and want to make a contribution. Indeed, I have been able to observe much of this spirit in the review process throughout the year.

Changes in the Editorial Board

I am pleased to announce the appointments of eight new associate editors at *MIS Quarterly*. They are Fran Ackermann (University of Strathclyde), Ben M. Bensaou (INSEAD), Carol Brown (Indiana University), Elena Karahanna (University of Georgia), Ann Majchrzak (University of Southern California), Lars Mathiassen (Aalborg University), Al Segars (University of North Carolina), and Viswanath Venkatesh (University of Maryland). In consultation with the senior editors, I appointed these eight individuals on the basis of their excellence in scholarship and their excellence in service as reviewers to *MIS Quarterly*. Their terms as associate editors will last from January 2001 through December 2003. I am also pleased to announce the reappointment of Ritu Agarwal (University of Maryland), who completed three years as an associate editor in December 2000. In consultation with the senior editors, I have granted her a two-year extension as associate editor in recognition of her exceptional work.

I would like to thank the following eight associate editors who have just completed their three year terms: Richard Baskerville (Georgia State University), Gerry DeSanctis (Duke University), Dennis Galletta (University of Pittsburgh), Len Jessup (Washington State University), Michael Myers (University of Auckland), Jeanne Ross (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), V. Sambamurthy (University of Maryland), and Maung Sein (Agder University College). As announced previously, Michael Myers and V. Sambamurthy are continuing as senior editors with the *Quarterly*.

Allen S. Lee
Editor-in-Chief