EDITOR'S COMMENTS ████████████

Thirty Years of Service to the IS Profession: Time for Renewal at MISQ? ██████

I am honored and humbled to begin my tenure as Editor-in-Chief at *MIS Quarterly* with this issue. *MISQ* has one of the most illustrious histories of the many renowned institutions we have in the field of information systems. Being intimately associated with that long tradition can only be described as the high point of my career. It is particularly significant to me that my service coincides with *MISQ* entering its 4th decade of publication, its inaugural issue having been published in 1977.

People have asked me what will be hallmarks of my tenure as EIC. Let me answer this by musing first about where we are, and then about where we can be.

Current Status of MISQ

It hardly needs to be said that *MISQ* enjoys a stellar reputation, one that has been built up by the tireless work of many prior EICs, editors, reviewers, and, of course, authors over the years. It consistently ranks as the first or second ranked journal in the IS field, in the majority of cases as the highest ranked journal. The detailing of this record stretches back to 1984 and continues with the latest study by Lewis et al. (2007)[1] in *Journal of the Association for Information Systems.*

Moreover, this latest study by Lewis et al. offers convincing evidence that the journal quality ratings/rankings are methodologically sound, that is, they are not subject to serious criticism of being artifacts of method or time period.

What is perhaps even more impressive about the status of *MISQ* is its position among journals in the business and information science disciplines.[2] According to Thomson Scientific, *MIS Quarterly* has ranked first in impact factor among all the business and information science journals they list. Table 1 shows this ranking as of June 11, 2007.[3] The impact factor is a measure of scientific influence in that it accounts for the rate of citation of articles in a journal over the previous two years.

Quo Vadis?

Given the high ranking of the journal in the hearts and minds of the IS scientific community as well as in independent measures like citations, what value can a new EIC possibly add, other than, perhaps, to maintain the status quo?

I would argue that all institutions need renewal lest they become self-satisfied and lose their entrepreneurial edge. Those of us who are dedicated to teaching in business, information, or management schools can hardly ignore the examples of strong companies that have fallen on hard times when their vision faded or their capabilities dimmed.   Apple and HP come immediately to mind.

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[1]Other studies include Barnes 2005; Cooper et al. 1993; Doke and Luke 1987; Ferratt et al. 2007a, 2007b; Gillenson and Stutz 1991; Hardgrave and Walstrom 1997; Holsapple et al. 1993, 1994; Katerattanakul et al. 2003; Koong and Weistroffer 1989; Lending and Wetherbe 1992; Lowry et al. 2004; Mylonopoulos and Theoharakis 2001; Nord and Nord 1990, 1995; Peffers and Tang 2003; Rainer and Miller 2005; Swanson et al. 1998; Templeton et al. 2007; Van Over and Nelson 1986; Vogel and Wetherbe 1984; Walczak 1999; Walstrom and Hardgrave 2001; Walstrom et al. 1995; and Whitman et al. 1999.

[2]Please note also that there are numerous IS journals among this elite company of journals including the *Journal of Marketing* and *Administrative Science Quarterly*.

[3]One has to keep in mind that these journal impact factors (JIFs) change over time. Nevertheless, a good showing is highly desirable for a journal.

Rank	Journal Title	Factor
	Table 1. Thomson Scientific's Impact Factors for Business and Information Sciences (Source: Journal Citation Reports, accessed June 11, 2007 [http://scientific.thomson.com]. Categories selected: Business, Information and Library Sciences. Sorted by impact factor. Used with permission.)	
1	*MIS Quarterly*	4.978
2	*Journal of the American Informatics Society*	4.339
3	*Academy of Management Review*	4.254
4	*Journal of Marketing*	4.132
5	*Marketing Science*	3.788
6	*Administrative Science Quarterly*	2.719
7	*Annual Review of Information Sciences*	2.652
8	*Journal of Marketing Research*	2.611
9	*Academy of Management Journal*	2.200
10	*Journal of Consumer Research*	2.161
11	*Information Systems Research*	2.054
12	*Strategic Management Journal*	1.897
13	*Journal of Business Venturing*	1.846
14	*Scientometrics*	1.738
15	*Journal for the American Society of Information Science and Technology*	1.583
16	*International Journal of Geographical Information Science*	1.562
17	*Journal of Information Technology*	1.543
18	*Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*	1.537
19	*Journal of Management*	1.535
20	*Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*	1.529
21	*Information & Management*	1.524
22	*Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*	1.485
23	*Journal of Management Information Systems*	1.406
24	*Harvard Business Review*	1.404
25	*Journal of Management Studies*	1.326
26	*Journal of International Business Studies*	1.250

Renewal of what? Henry David Thoreau spoke in *Walden* about a "busk," the ritual burning practiced by the Mucclasse Indians. Every spring these Indians would set fire to all their belongings. Clearly, most or many of these belongings were still useful so why did they do this? Thoreau reflects on the symbolic value of this renewal as the need for the old to die out so that the new can come into being.

A busk of the entire superstrata of the journal is clearly not what I have in mind, nor what is needed. But we can and should revisit policies and bureaucratic procedures that may need to be changed or eliminated. No matter how well institutions seems to function overall, there is always room for positive change in the particulars that affect everyday life. At a journal, everyday life is measured by factors like (1) paper cycle times, (2) quality and usefulness of the reviewing, (3) readability of the articles, (4) managerial implications of published work, (5) policy constraints, and (6) quality of the papers. I will deal with each of these in future editorials, but, at present, focus only on the last two items.

Constraining Policies

MISQ has implicitly had a policy that the journal would follow the "explanation" research paradigm (Simon 1981), and even within this paradigm, published work would not include research in the economics of IS analytical vein. At one time, within the acceptable paradigm, qualitative research was likewise not publishable in *MISQ*. Certainly the last constraint is long since gone, but the residual constraints have meant that design science favored by the WITS community and much of the IS economics work advanced by the WISE community was not finding a home in *MISQ*.

As of January 1, 2008, this situation has dramatically changed and is the first busk of which I speak. It is, hopefully, a sweeping out of these constraints. Whilst there have certainly been efforts in the past to promote these specific research domains, the appointment of two high level Senior Editors and the bringing on board of world-class teams of Associate Editors means that *MISQ* now has good coverage in these areas. The in-depth qualifications of our new AEs is obvious to anyone in the field and I invite you to scan the cover page of this issue or the *MISQ* home page (**http://www.misg.org**) to see the verity of this statement.

Let me speak briefly about our two new SEs heading up the effort. Taking them alphabetically, Professor Alan Hevner is known for his ground-breaking work in design science. He was the lead author of a seminal *MISQ* paper (Hevner et al. 2004) describing work in the domain and is now finishing up a position as Program Director at the U.S. National Science Foundation. Equally well known as a top scholar is Professor Chris Kemerer, one of the founders of the Workshop in Information Systems Economics, now in its 17th year. Clearly one of Chris' key professional accomplishments was his past leadership as Editor-in-Chief at *Information Systems Research*.

These fine scholars are committed to the goal of making *MISQ* a home for the best work in their respective domains. I am delighted that they both wholeheartedly accepted my offer to come onto the editorial board and to undertake this challenge.

Why this busk of constraints? Dennis et al. (2006) argue, convincingly I think, that *MISQ* needs to open up its doors to the diversity of IS research, not only for reasons of equity, but also to allow all of our junior faculty to compete in the uneven playing field that characterizes business school promotion and tenure decisions (Kozar et al. 2006). With the alteration of this implicit policy, work in *MISQ* should eventually become much more diverse.

A second busk regards the "Types of Research MISQ Does Not Publish," a hyperlink on our website (**http://www.misq.org**). As of January 1, 2008, this page no longer has any items in its list. It has become a null set. In its place is only an explanation of why there are no longer any restrictions on type of paper *MISQ* will consider. The short-and-long of this is that our Senior Editors are delegated the responsibility of determining what is a contribution in the journal and not an *a priori* list that is, in effect, an archive of past editorial preferences.

Publication of Good Papers

The third busk is another sea-change, in this case in the framing that initiates the reviewing of papers. The full explanation of the reason for this busk follows a statement of the principles that underlie any high quality journal. So let us reflect on these principles first.

Journals should not be known for the papers they reject, but rather for the good papers they publish. High rejection rates convey the wrong message, and, in fact, are not significantly correlated with journal rankings. Indeed, Lewis et al. (2007) have found that journal acceptance rates as reported by Cabell and English (2004) did not show a statistical relationship with IS journal rankings.

Journals should be known for the good papers they do publish. The flatteringly high 4.9 impact factor of *MISQ* can be read as an indicator of having published good papers that are subsequently cited a great deal. There is corroborative evidence that these impact factors can be interpreted in this way with some confidence. If one reanalyzes Lowry et al.'s (2007) citation counts of the 100 most cited IS articles, it is also clear that *MISQ* fares well, along with, as one would expect, *Information Systems Research* and *Management Science*, as shown in Table 2. Thus the goal of a great journal is to publish as many good papers as possible.

| Table 2. Reanalysis and Aggregation of Lowry et al.'s (2007) Citation Tables of the Period 1990–2004 ||
Journal	Total Citations
MIS Quarterly	4327
Information Systems Research	2896
Management Science	1810

What is the issue then? The rejection rates at the top-ranked MIS journals have been rising for decades and probably at a higher pace than the net entry of new faculty and doctoral students into the profession, which might otherwise explain why this is occurring, given a fixed amount of journal space (Dennis et al. 2006; Kozar et al. 2006).

But *MISQ* has dramatically increased its capability to print more articles to help deal with this problem. Rejection rates are so high, though, that we were able to use this extra capacity only once during Carol Saunders' tenure. The executive summary version of this point is that not enough papers are making it through the reviewing process to fill the newly available space.

Why are papers not making it through the process? My personal assessment is that we have a Type II manuscript rejection problem, not only at *MISQ* but in the field as a whole. Table 3 presents a snapshot of what I am arguing.

There are, perhaps, a number of conceptual problems with this table, but the intention here is not to advance a formal logic or scientific analysis of the issue, but to present an interpretation of what I view as the essence of the problem. The IS community's view of "good" papers and "weak" papers may not be known *a priori*, but citations are one way to assess this *post hoc*. The argument would be that stronger papers are cited more by the community than weaker papers, and if the papers in a journal are being well cited, then the journal itself absorbs some of this reflected glory in its reputation.

When there is a Type I problem, the review team has accepted a paper that the IS community as a whole ultimately indicates that it views as a weak paper (through its lower rate of citation). Since the objective of high quality journals is to publish good papers, the publication of weak papers works against this goal, but does not actually hurt the journal as much as a Type II error. Type I errors are self-correcting in that these articles are not cited as much. When a Type II error has occurred, the damage is not assessable because the paper has not been published, in that journal, at least.

In short, we need a busk with respect to how we work with papers. We need to be sensitive to the need to find the good in papers, and to accurately assess whether this potential can be unleashed, even if it takes more work on the part of the review team. While there are certainly some similarities between what I am arguing here and what Carol Saunders has discussed for years as developmental reviewing, I believe that it is time to make a major effort to burn out the old views of how editors approach their work and replace these practices with something different. How shall we accomplish this? I believe it involves reframing our thinking around this Type II problem and finding ways to bring out the exciting ideas that are often buried in our submissions.

| Table 3. Type I and Type II Errors in Manuscript Reviewing ||||
| | | IS community's view ||
		Accept paper!	Reject paper!
Review team's view	Accept paper!	**A good paper is accepted**	**Type I error**
	Reject paper!	**Type II error**	**A weak paper is rejected**

In fact, what I am calling a Type II problem is so important that I would like to take more time exploring it in the June 2008 editorial, so I will conclude the current discussion by simply saying that it serves no one in the IS profession to publish less than 5 percent of the manuscripts submitted when, in the same "A"-level interdisciplinary journal to which I allude, our marketing colleagues are publishing 20 percent of their received manuscripts. It is difficult to believe that the input quality of submitted marketing manuscripts is so vastly superior to that of IS scholars. What is more likely is that their standards are not as stratospheric as IS scholarly standards and that they realize that they would only be hurting themselves by artificially constraining the acceptance of good papers. And as long as a higher proportion of IS articles are not forthcoming in such journals, the marketing department editors are more than willing to fill the gap.

Privilege of Working with Minnesota Faculty and Staff

Before closing, I need to say something briefly about the excellent university support that has been in place and will continue to provide me great assistance in producing the *MIS Quarterly*. This is in the form of University of Minnesota faculty and staff who work directly with and for *MISQ*. I feel fortunate to be able to work with these dedicated professionals.

First, Alok Gupta has done a superb job as publisher of the journal. Alok is constantly seeking new ways to strengthen the financial base and to maintain the close connections of the journal to the University of Minnesota. Former department chairman Rob Kaufman was always supportive of new initiatives at *MISQ* while still scrupulously guarding the reputation of the journal. Jan DeGross is ever helpful in her work as head of production as is Jennifer Syverson in her role as review coordinator. Jan and Jennifer as well as the editorial team will have their hands full with the implementation of Manuscript Central this year. I thank them in advance for their dedication to the journal.

Carol Saunders' Accomplishments

It is fitting that this, my inaugural editorial, close with a note of deep personal appreciation for everything that Carol Saunders has accomplished during her tenure as EIC of the *MISQ*. Carol made significant efforts in promulgating the view of journal editors as diamond-cutters rather than gatekeepers. (In fact, it was Carol's emphasis in this issue that has moved me to conceptualize this as a Type II problem.) She spoke often and articulately about editorial diamond-cutting whenever she could and this developmental approach to reviewing is starting to gain a real foothold in the IS academic culture. She has also markedly increased the number of papers that could be printed, were papers only to be accepted. As I note above, the papers that make it through the *MISQ* reviewing process do not yet equal the number of papers that could be printed, but there has been decided progress. Finally, she made strong editorial appointments which were instrumental in carrying on the legacy of excellence at *MISQ*. I trust I am speaking for the entire IS community when I say that her achievements are both valuable and valued and thank her for her years of exemplary service.

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