EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Authorship Trends from 2000 Through 2009

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As we near the end of the year 2010, we would like to take this opportunity to look back on the first decade of the 21st century and assess *MIS Quarterly* publications from the perspective of authorship trends over that 10 year period. Our goal in this editorial is twofold: to evaluate the effects of editorial policies and practices on authorship in *MISQ* and to address a number of concerns and perceptions within the Information Systems community regarding authorship in our top journals, with a particular focus on *MISQ*.

We would like to start by assessing trends related to journal space. Studies have found that the IS community may be disadvantaged in terms of "A" tier journal space (Athey and Plotnicki 2000; Chua et al. 2003; Dennis et al. 2006; Kozar et al. 2006) and there is concern within the community that opportunities for "A" level publications are not keeping pace with the growth in the number of IS researchers looking to publish in those outlets. In an editorial in March of 2008 (Straub 2008), the point was made that *MISQ* had increased its capacity to publish a larger number of articles, but that a high rejection rate by the editorial board has limited opportunities to utilize that additional space. However, while high rejection rates may be hampering our ability to use all of our available capacity, we have experienced a marked increase in the number of authors being published in *MISQ* over the last 10 years. During the 5 year period from 2000 to 2004, *MISQ* published work by 241 authors. During the following 5 years from 2005 to 2009, that number increased to 438 representing an 82 percent increase in the number of authors achieving publication in *MISQ*. Those numbers are encouraging and we are not alone in seeing an increase in the number of authors being published. In fact, in a comparison with *Information Systems Research* and *European Journal of Information Systems*, we fall in the middle with regard to trends in the number of authors achieving publication. Figure 1 shows the comparison between 2000–2004 and 2005–2009 for the number of authors published in *MISQ, ISR*, and *EJIS*. While *MISQ* achieved an 82 percent increase in the number of published authors, *EJIS* experienced a 178 percent increase, and *ISR* saw an 8 percent increase in their authorship.
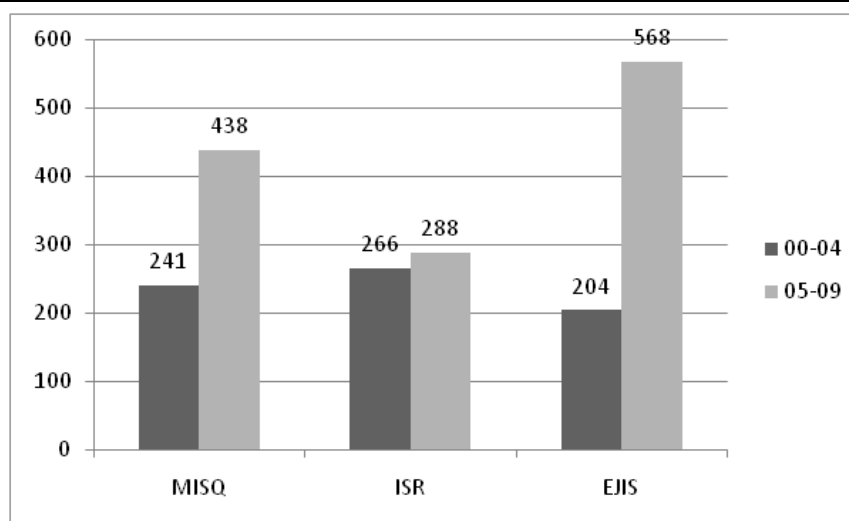

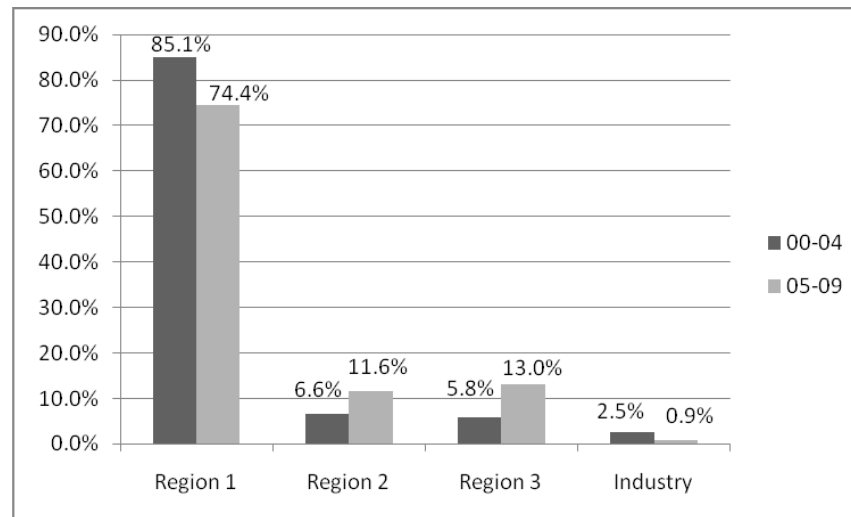**Figure 1. Number of Published Authors from 2000–2004 and 2005–2009**

Figure 2. *MISQ* **Author Affiliations by Region from 2000–2004 and 2005–2009**

Where is this increase coming from? Does this represent an increase in the number of articles being published or an increase in the number of authors per article or both? Growth due to a shift toward authorship patterns found in fields where authorship on a single article can be in the double digits is probably not the growth we are looking for. In fact, for *MISQ* this growth is due almost entirely to an increase in the number of articles being published. From 2000–2004, *MISQ* published 101 refereed articles with an average of 2.39 authors per article, while from 20005–2009, we published 174 refereed articles with an average of 2.52 authors per article. These statistics are encouraging and demonstrate that we have improved our ability to get papers through the editorial process at *MISQ*. Of course one might argue that we could always do better, but it is clear that *MISQ* is headed in the right direction.

A second issue regarding authorship in *MISQ* and other top IS journals is related to affiliation region. The Association for Information Systems groups IS institutions and researchers into three geographic regions. Region 1 includes North and South America, Region 2 includes Europe and Africa, and Region 3 includes Asia and Australia. The concern regarding regions and journal authorship is that there has been a tendency for authors from Region 1 to publish primarily in Region 1 outlets (*MISQ*, *ISR*, *JMIS*) with limited publication by authors from Regions 2 and 3 in those journals. Figure 2 shows author affiliation by region for *MISQ* from 2000–2004 and 2005–2009. Region status is determined by the author's affiliation at the time of publication. While authors from Region 1 are still in the clear majority, we are seeing noticeable gains (roughly doubling) in the percentage of authors from both Regions 2 and 3 over the last 5 years which we see as a hopeful trend in moving toward greater parity of regional representation in our leading journals.

Student authorship is also of interest to the IS community. At issue here is the ability of our IS researchers-in-training to achieve publication in our top outlets. This has particular relevance to the tenure process for IS academics as the requirements for tenure tend to increase over time, making it increasingly important for doctoral students to begin building their publication record as early as possible. Figure 3 shows the percentage of student authors published in *MISQ*, *ISR*, and *EJIS* from 2000–2004 and 2005–2009. All three journals show an increase in the percentage of student authors over the last 5 years. Student authorship is determined by the author's status at the time of publication so given that the review process in these journals is typically lengthy it is likely that the percentage of authors who start the review process as students is even higher. We see this as another hopeful sign for authorship trends in our leading journals.

Another trend in authorship is that of the solo author. Figure 4 shows the percentage of solo authors published in *MISQ*, *ISR*, and *EJIS* from 2000–2004 and 2005–2009. Here the trend is markedly downward for all three journals. Whether this trend is positive or negative is more debatable than some of the other trends we have presented. It does, however, directly relate to the issue of the number of authors achieving publication, as fewer solo-authored papers translates into additional authors achieving publication in our top journals, all else being equal.

A concern for some in the IS community is that *MIS Quarterly* and other top IS journals are "closed-shops" or an "old boy network." Is there a bias against new authors in our top journals? Is the editorial structure of our top journals designed to give preference to a select group of
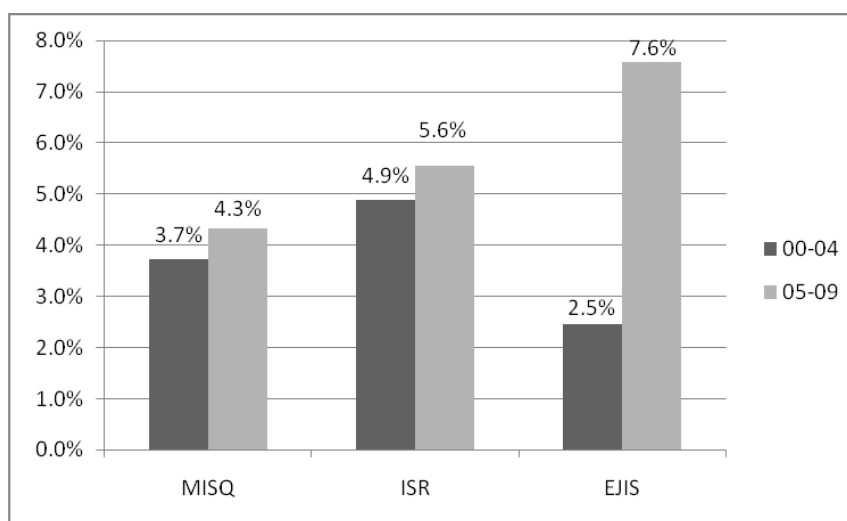
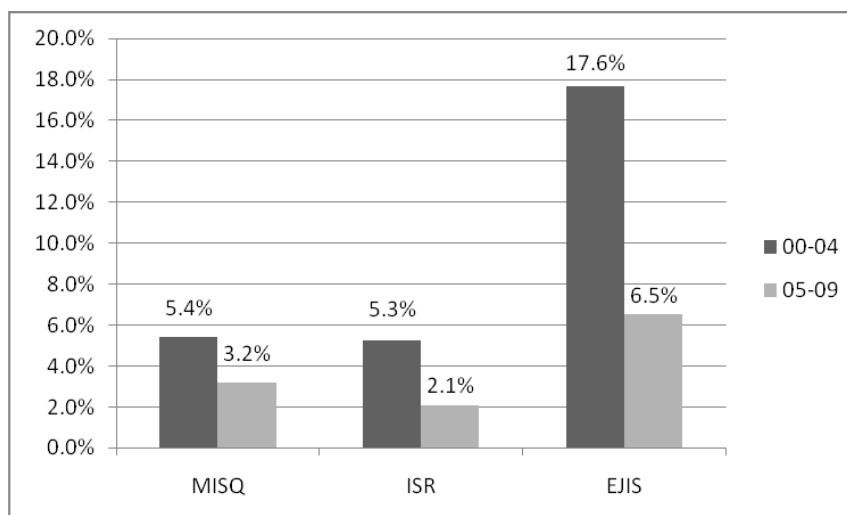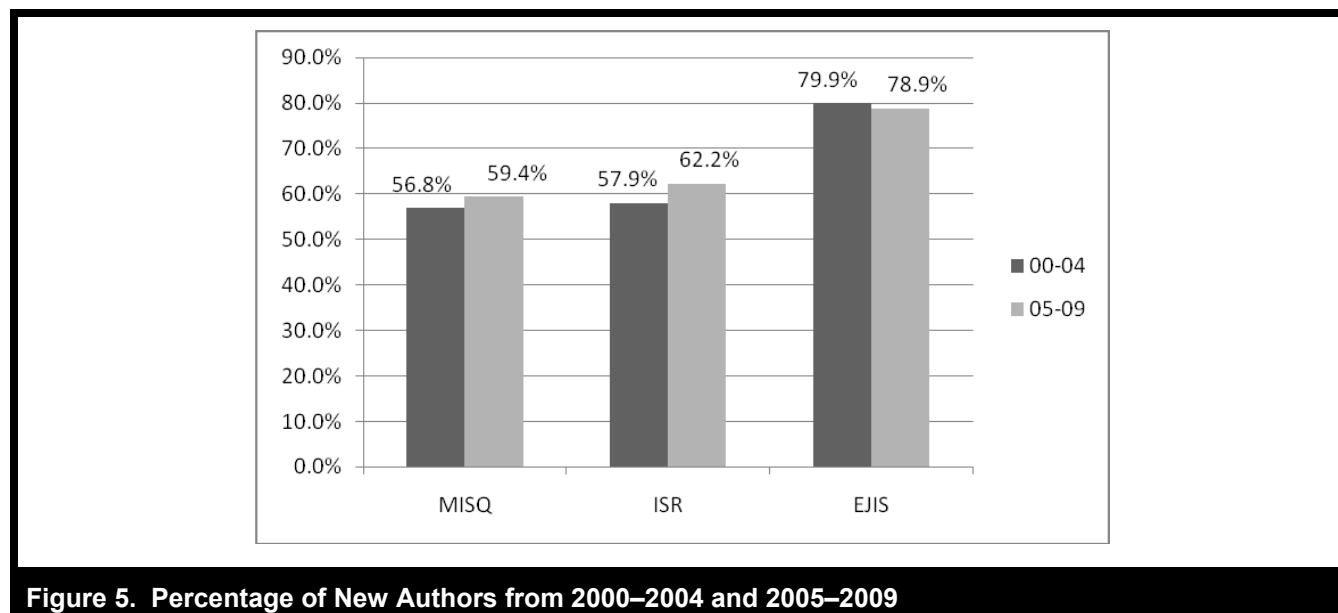**Figure 3. Percentage of Student Authors from 2000–2004 and 2005–2009**

Figure 4. Percentage of Solo Authors from 2000–2004 and 2005–2009

established researchers? Preference can be a hard phenomenon to confirm or refute but one thing we can look at is the number of new authors being published. From 2000–2004, 137 of our 241 authors (57 percent) published for the first time in *MISQ*. From 2005–2009, 260 of the 438 authors (59 percent) were first-time authors. From this we can say that, over the last 10 years, more than half of our authors were new to *MISQ* and, although the increase is modest, we are seeing an increase in the percentage of new authors in recent years. If we compare these numbers with *ISR* and *EJIS*, we actually find *MISQ* is very close to *ISR* with regard to new authors. Figure 5 shows the comparison between 2000–2004 and 2005–2009 for the percentage of new authors published in *MISQ*, *ISR*, and *EJIS*. These statistics can be interpreted to mean that new authors are certainly being vetted and their work developed into publishable articles by these three journals, led by *EJIS* and with minor differences between *ISR* and *MISQ*.

As with the number of published authors, there is potentially more to the story than just the percentage of new authors. In this case there is a question of how many of these new authors coauthored with someone already published in the journal. In other words, do you have to be

Figure 5. Percentage of New Authors from 2000–2004 and 2005–2009

associated with a member of the club to join? In *MISQ*, from 2000–2004 the percentage of articles with *all new authors* was 29 percent, and while that percentage dropped a bit to 27 percent from 2005–2009, this is still a hopeful statistic that we believe demonstrates the potential for new authors to attain publication in *MISQ*, even if the authors are not coauthoring with more established researchers.

Conclusion

The evidence we have presented in this editorial represents in our view a set of positive trends for authorship in *MISQ* that we hope will continue into the foreseeable future. We would be happy to analyze other trends that the readership sees as important. Please e-mail suggestions to **dstraub@gsu.edu**. There are only two caveats to this open invitation for suggestions. First, we need to have ready access to the information. We do not have unlimited resources with respect to time dedicated to this type of analysis. Second, we will not pursue topics that call for calculations of rejection rates (or the inverse, acceptance rates). The logic behind this can be found in numerous editorials over the past 3 years, but the bottom line is that, first, rejection rates are not statistically correlated with journal quality (Lewis et al. 2007) and, second, a focus on these rates distracts the community, we believe, from the criteria that lead to a paper being accepted for publication.

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