
Editor's Comments

I address three topics in this issue's editor's statement. First, I conclude my series of commentaries on the nature of manuscripts to be submitted to the *MIS Quarterly* by describing how to craft a manuscript's "Discussion" section. In prior segments of this series, I have addressed the nature of the *Quarterly's* four sections (March 1995); the *Quarterly's* editorial mission as well as guidelines on crafting a manuscript's "Introduction" and "Conclusion" sections (June 1995); the role of theory (September 1995); and the types of articles not to submit to the *Quarterly* as well as how to craft a manuscript's "Methodology" section (December 1995). Second, I wish to explain why the *MIS Quarterly* does **not** publish manuscripts presenting data on issues such as journal rankings and promotion/tenure criteria. Third, as usual, this statement concludes with some announcements.

A Manuscript's "Discussion" Section

The purpose of a manuscript's "Discussion" section is to clearly describe the results of analyses performed on collected data and to convincingly interpret the meaning of these results for the reader. Generally, for ease of understanding, these discussions of a study's "results" and "implications" should be separated, not intertwined; and both should be organized to follow the structure of the study's conceptual or research model.

The primary objective in communicating a study's results is to be as objective and straightforward as possible. A reader wishes to easily and quickly grasp what the author has found and only what he/she has found. This can occur most readily through the effective use of tables (or related exhibits) rather than through dense textual descriptions. Another suggestion is to move analytical-type discussions to appendices. Textual materials should be used to introduce and frame tabular materials or to emphasize particularly significant observations. As a general rule, do not repeat any data that are presented in a table or an exhibit. Finally, it is very helpful to the reader to conclude a study's results with a table summarizing the findings as they specifically relate to the study's research hypotheses, propositions, or questions.

In interpreting a study's findings, the salience of results to both theory and practice must be considered. How do the findings impact theory? More specifically, how do they impact the research model articulated in the manuscript's theory section? Are the findings fully consistent with the postulated research model? For the issues that were supported, what does this imply for future research? Were any insights obtained that might "push" the theory forward? If the results were not fully supportive, it is expected that either necessary revisions to the original research model will be proposed (and explained) or that the problematic issues that arise will be surfaced (and described). Whenever describing relationships among two or more variables, the effective use of figures can greatly enhance a reader's understanding of the phenomenon being described. How do the findings impact practice? More specifically, is it possible to recommend to readers "best practices" or managerial guidelines? Further, what contingencies apply to such recommendations? Whenever describing management practices, the effective use of anecdotes or examples can greatly enhance a reader's understanding of the behaviors or actions being advocated.

Finally, when interpreting a study's findings, be very careful not to "go beyond the data" or to overstate your findings. When numerous instances of such errors of interpretation are found in a manuscript, a reviewer is likely to begin to doubt both the rigor of the analysis and the capabilities of the author.

The Inappropriateness of Submitting Manuscripts Addressing Topics Such as Journal Rankings and Promotion/Tenure Criteria

There is considerable interest in any academic field, including those associated with information systems, for empirical studies that examine issues important to the professional careers of academicians,

such as rankings of scholarly journals, rankings of departmental or individual research productivity, and promotion and tenure criteria. While such articles may have appeared in the *MIS Quarterly* in the past, the *Quarterly's* senior editors have decided that such manuscripts are inconsistent with the journal's editorial mission, and thus, they will not be considered for review but instead, when received, will be directly returned to the author(s).

Such studies can serve a very valuable role for our profession. It would be highly desirable if the results of these studies were published in a respected and readily accessible archive and if the administrators of such an archive were able to assure the profession that the methodologies applied and resultant interpretations were reliable and valid. I personally can think of few "services" that are of greater current need by the information systems academic community, and such a service would be a very meaningful activity for one of the professional societies serving the community.

Announcements

I am happy to announce that the Editorial Board has selected Wynne Chin (University of Calgary) as the *MIS Quarterly* 1995 Reviewer of the Year. The *Quarterly's* scholarly reputation is fully dependent on the contributions of its board members and its reviewers. We sincerely appreciate the continued support received from Wynne (through his consistently excellent referee reports) and from all of our reviewers.

I am also pleased to announce that three current associate editors — Joey George (Florida State University), Kalle Lyytinen (University of Jyväskylä) and Ron Tarro (Ernst & Young) — have accepted two-year reappointments to the Editorial Board. The *Quarterly* is fortunate to continue to benefit from each of their talents. And, it is with great pleasure that I introduce Ellen Hufnagel (University of South Florida), Tor Larsen (Norwegian School of Management), and Mark Silver (New York University) as the newest members of the Editorial Board. Welcome!

— **Bob Zmud**
Editor-in-Chief