
Editor's Comments

I am delighted to announce that Bob Zmud of Florida State University has agreed to serve as the *MIS Quarterly's* new editor-in-chief. He takes over as of January 1st. Bob is an extremely well-regarded scholar with a long and distinguished publication record, and considerable previous editorial experience. He serves as the Society for Information Management's (SIM's) new vice president for Academic Affairs, as liaison to SIM's Curriculum Committee, and as research director of SIM's Advanced Practices Council. He therefore strengthens the bridge between university and industry that has always been central to the *MIS Quarterly's* mission.

Bob will be supported by our fine editorial board, including an expanded set of senior editors: Izak Benbasat of the University of British Columbia, a past *MIS Quarterly* senior editor for theory and research; Gerardine DeSanctis of Duke University, our most recent current senior editor for theory and research; Allen Lee of the University of Cincinnati, and myself. I will oversee our initiatives in electronic publishing (described in the last issue). There will be no senior editor specifically assigned to "Application" or "Theory and Research" papers. Rather, authors will select the senior editor of their choice (or the editor-in-chief), who will then have the option of sending the paper on to another member of the senior board. "Issues and Opinions" articles should be submitted to the editor-in-chief. Senior editors will have complete authority to accept papers. Mandatory use of electronic mail for policy discussions ensures that members of the board develop and retain a shared vision for the journal.

The last three years have provided me with wonderful learning and growing opportunities. Although this experience has been personally rewarding, I also hope that my learning and growing has resulted in an *MIS Quarterly* that is a better journal than it was three years ago. That has been a demanding challenge as my predecessor, Jim Emery, passed on a journal with an excellent reputation for publishing high-quality information systems scholarship. Many people have assisted me during these three years. First is our excellent editorial board. With very few exceptions they have met or exceeded our high expectations for them. In the past three years there has been a marked improvement in the quality and timeliness of the reports from the editorial board. The same holds for the work of our many dedicated reviewers. They have responded with enthusiasm to editorial statements calling for improvements in cycle time and quality management for the review process.

Our offices in Minnesota, headed up by Jim Wetherbe and Susan Scanlan, have given me strong support, and I am particularly indebted to Mark Saarinen, our assistant managing editor, who has accomplished his day-to-day responsibilities while serving, sometimes with frustration but never without patience, as a key change agent. At Southern Methodist University, a similar role has been played by Denise Langione, and I am also indebted to our dean, David Blake and my colleagues Dick Mason, Cynthia Beath, and Mimi Alciatore for their encouragement and advice.

I also appreciate the continuing support at the Society for Information Management International of Dick Dooley, Henry Givray, Warren Harkness, Ed Mills, Harvey Schrednick, John Stevenson, and particularly, Bob Rubin. I also relied on my "kitchen cabinet" including Izak Benbasat, Gordon Davis, Mike Ginzberg, Ken Kozar, and Bob Zmud as well as, from time to time, past senior editors of the *MIS Quarterly* (Gary Dickson, Bill King, Warren McFarlan, Jim Emery) for counsel on sensitive matters. Rick Watson has also helped to spur our activities in electronic scholarship. My good friend Sirkka Jarvenpaa has provided me with considerable assistance over these three years including last-minute reviews, help in identifying reviewers, and providing clarity to editorial statements. Finally, it has been my considerable pleasure to have had this opportunity to work closely with Gerry DeSanctis, a wonderfully talented and hardworking scholar, skilled diplomat, and friend who has given so much to the *MIS Quarterly* and been so helpful to me. I am also pleased to announce two new appointments to our editorial board—Helmut Krcmar of the Universität Hohenheim and Joe Valacich of Indiana University.

Finally, in the following essay, incoming Editor-in-Chief Bob Zmud and I announce the founding of *ISWorld Net*, a proposed infrastructure for information systems scholarship and learning.

—Blake Ives

ISWorld Net: Scholarly Infrastructure for Information Systems

As he worked in the middle of October drafting an editor's statement that you might not be reading in paper-form until the middle of January, an event occurred to one of its authors that highlighted the absurdity of our traditional approaches to knowledge dissemination given today's technological possibilities. His writing was interrupted by the arrival, via electronic mail, of notification of a "special edition" of an electronic journal. By return mail he ordered up the full text of the article, which was delivered to his workstation a few seconds later. The article described a new World Wide Web browser available free of charge via the file transfer protocol. Another mail message followed, this time from a colleague in Europe who had downloaded this same software earlier that day and now was raving about it. So your editor downloaded the software, tried it out and, 30 minutes later sent a message to 28 people around the world who would likely want to know about this new browser. Within the next few hours several of them, having now downloaded the software to their machines, wrote back with their individual evaluations.

Thus, within 12 hours a product was publically introduced, marketed (admittedly enhanced by the price), distributed, implemented, tested, and integrated into a working environment. That same story was probably repeated tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of times on that day for that particular piece of software. And yet, you must wait for three months to read, in paper form, this simple essay—an essay that, if we wished, we could distribute to perhaps half of our readership moments after we complete writing it.

The issue is not just one of timeliness—it is also about productivity and effectiveness. As faculty members, we work long and hard on our teaching, usually quite independently from faculty at other institutions. When we do meet at conferences, teaching issues only occasionally enter into our conversations. We value this "networking" time very highly . . . during which research, institutional (e.g., recruiting), and social issues tend to dominate our discussions. As a result, in our teaching, we constantly find ourselves reinventing variations on the same wheel—each in our own institution and in our own classes. There can be a better way. Faculty, located throughout the world, could work together on the design and delivery of courses and curricula. An international team of students could work together on a net-resident project—perhaps supervised by a mentor from industry who could observe their work as it was created online. Case studies could be distributed throughout the world moments after being approved, and bulletin boards could be established to aid in the teaching of those cases. Faculty could access sample chapters from potential text books or market their own books without relying on a publisher.

There are similar exciting opportunities in research, allowing us to interact with distant colleagues in real-time rather than in "conference-time" or even "mail-time." Well-designed instruments and related measurement tools, such as coding schemes for process or event-based studies, could be made accessible online, as could data from past studies, working papers, tables of contents, and abstracts from archival journals such as the *MIS Quarterly*.

What this all means, and how it might unfold, is yet to be seen. All we can say today is that we—as academicians in the late 20th century—are participants in a truly revolutionary change in the manner in which knowledge is created and disseminated. We have the rare opportunity to witness the "birth" of a worldwide, virtual learning organization, focused on knowledge about information systems. The birth

will be accompanied by all the beauty, excitement, nervous anticipation, and uncertainty of the birth of a new child. The emerging electronic infrastructure will change the way we do our business and, both by example and by the tools we create and organize, serve as a model for other disciplines. In our September issue, Rick Watson¹ called for a new intellectual infrastructure to support a global community of scholars. In that same issue we described *MISQ Central*, the *MIS Quarterly*'s new home on the World Wide Web, and *MISQ Discovery*, a new electronic journal focused on innovation in knowledge creation and dissemination.² Together they constitute our first steps toward formally meeting the challenge of both creating and living within this new scholarly infrastructure. But we must also provide an infrastructure for less formalized and less research-oriented knowledge sharing. Thus, *MIS Quarterly* has taken a leadership role in the founding, along with five other information systems organizations,³ of *ISWorld Net*—a new entity on the World Wide Web.

ISWorld Net's mission is to: (1) provide information management scholars and practitioners with a single entry point to resources related to information systems technology, practice, and knowledge; and (2) promote the development of a global platform to dramatically improve the world's ability to use information technology in creating, disseminating, and applying knowledge.

This requires that we become:

Builders of the Future—Applying action research principles at the forefront of the effort to design a networked world; helping to build this global infrastructure requires that we help create it, but also enables us to learn from the process of creating it.

Theory-Based—Seeking to find or formulate theories that will permit generalization of our experiences and research.

Evaluators of Our Enterprise—Testing through use and systematic experimentation the systems and knowledge repositories we design and build.

Open in Our Operations—Providing open access to information about, and governance of, *ISWorld Net*.

Distributed in Our Management—Providing common goals, structure, and tools, while leaving implementation in the hands of individuals or institutions.

Recognizers of Entrepreneurial Accomplishment—Promoting designs that capture and disseminate the innovative contributions of individuals and institutions.

Linked to Practice and Policy—Drawing universities, governments, and the private sector more closely together.

A Distribution Channel—Providing controlled (pull versus push) access to the information systems academic marketplace throughout the world.

Advocates for Universal Access—Striving for equal access to information.

Committed to Freedom—Embracing the importance for freedom and democracy of the unfettered access to information and to information channels.

The only thing we know for sure is that *ISWorld Net* will take us into uncharted waters. We will make mistakes, we will learn from those mistakes, and we will learn to quickly share both these mistakes and our successes with each other and with those who observe us. But, in order for *ISWorld Net* to succeed as the engine of change for the global information systems community, it must be viewed as a significant aspect of the fabric of our discipline and, hence, our careers as academicians. If we are to avoid

¹ Watson, R. "Creating and Sustaining a Global Community of Scholars," *MIS Quarterly* (18:3), September 1994, pp. 225-231.

² Ives, B. "MISQ Central: Creating a New Intellectual Infrastructure," *MIS Quarterly* (18:3), September 1994, pp. xxxv-xxxix.

³ The five other organizations are ACM Special Interest Group on Business Information Technology (SIGBIT); Association for Information Systems (AIS); International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS); International Federation for Information Processing Technical Committee 8 (Information Systems); and *Information Systems Research*.

creating a "tragedy of the commons," the professional reward system must change to meet this new opportunity. Part of that change will occur gradually, as the traditional journals—including *MIS Quarterly*—transition to an electronic format. But we must begin to expect prospective faculty and candidates for promotion and tenure to have played at least a modest role in helping to create and sustain this new infrastructure. Therefore, we ask that the next time you update your vita, or your annual performance report, you include a heading for *ISWorld Net* and document your involvement.

We anticipate that, within the next two years, institutions will be asked to consider individuals' contributions to *ISWorld Net*, or related learning vehicles, when evaluating promotion and tenure cases or information systems programs. The ambiguities that will undoubtedly arise will certainly reflect the evolving nature of joint enterprise. These contributions can be modest, but their absence must be noted and their presence applauded. We ourselves expect to be called upon to make such evaluations and look forward to doing so, knowing in advance such evaluations will represent "uncharted waters" for our institutions. We call upon other senior faculty in our discipline to do the same. We are presented today with a rare challenge—the opportunity to create a new intellectual infrastructure. It is also an opportunity to play a significant leadership role within the university and society. Moreover, it is an exciting new research environment—a living experiment in creating a worldwide, virtual learning organization. We need people to think creatively about the possibilities, and we need theorists to apply and develop theories appropriate for this exciting new enterprise.

This is the new great frontier. Come join us, and come to explore. The World Wide Web address for *ISWorld Net* is: <http://www.cox.smu.edu/mis/iswnet/home.html>.

—Blake Ives, Editor-in-Chief
—Bob Zmud, Editor-in-Chief (designate)