EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Tuum Est

By: Andrew Burton-Jones, Editor-in-Chief

This editorial marks the end of my term as *MISQ* editor-in-chief. It's been an immense privilege serving in this role. I've now completed 15 years on the board. I joined as an associate editor in 2009 under Detmar Straub, continued as a senior editor under Paulo Goes, and was appointed to this role at the end of Arun Rai's term. I learned so much from all of them.

I cannot think of a better phrase than "tuum est" to sum up my feelings upon finishing my term at *MISQ*. I learned the phrase at the University of British Columbia where it is the university motto. Latin for "it is up to you" or "it is yours," these two translations aptly capture the two sides of learning: responsibility and opportunity.

Readers of *MISQ* will recall that I had a stakeholder vision for my editorial term: to provide the very best service for authors, external stakeholders (practitioners, policy makers), and science (Burton-Jones, 2021). Tuum est applies to each of them:

- **For authors**: It is up to you to conduct excellent research and submit your best work to us. *MISQ* is nothing without you. This journal is also yours. Our role is to serve you and do everything we can to enhance your scholarship.

- **For external stakeholders:** It is up to you to be willing to learn from science and help us learn. This journal is also yours. We are doing everything we can to serve you and make a positive difference in the world through IS research.

- **For science** (reflected in our reviewers, editors, and publishers): It is up to you to uphold the best scientific ideals. A scientific journal cannot survive without it. This journal is yours too; a home of scientific excellence in the IS field.

Tuum est resonates with me because it connotes a mix of idealism (we are all striving forward), realism (it is up to all of us), and history (we must appreciate the work of those who got us here). Certainly, each editor-in-chief before me took seriously the responsibility and opportunity of leading this incredible journal. The closing editorial of Arun Rai's term (Rai, 2020), for instance, gives an inspiring account of all the initiatives he and the board worked on before my term. During my term, the editorial board and I likewise worked on an ambitious agenda (Burton-Jones, 2023). The board is now changing again, and Sue Brown will take the helm. I am confident that *MISQ* will continue to prosper in the years ahead. Tuum est.

Principles

Tuum est reminds me that *MISQ* is a social construction. That is, it is what it is through the beliefs and actions of individuals, and the principles that underlie them. What principles have driven the editorial board's beliefs and actions during this editorial term? Looking back over the last three years, I believe four principles underpinned our work on the editorial board:

- **Open:** We conducted many activities to show that *MISQ* is not separate from the field or elitist. It is in the field, engaged, and as open as possible to all. We increased the number of online workshops and meetings to share the views of many of our editors on key issues in the review process (e.g., knowledge-sharing sessions), to inform our special issues (e.g., information sessions) and promote special issues upon publication (e.g., showcase events), and to reach out to diverse communities (e.g., our diversity, equity, and inclusion [DEI] listening sessions). Through our editorial appointment process and our editorials, we strove to represent all the diverse research genres in the field. We also started an open reports initiative to be transparent about our review processes.

- **Collaborative:** We took a collaborative approach wherever possible. This can be seen in the development of our research transparency guidelines (Burton-Jones et al., 2021) and our DEI statement (Burton-Jones & Sarker, 2021), both of which involved substantial collaboration across the board and across the field. On a smaller scale, this approach could also be seen in our knowledge-sharing sessions and co-authored editorials, where groups of editors collaborated to share insights on key issues. It can also be seen in broader initiatives that went beyond the board, such as our local language promotion initiative, scholarly development academy, and *MISQ* Insider initiatives (all of which leveraged the efforts of individuals beyond our board) and in our collaboration with *Administrative Science Quarterly* (see Burton-Jones, 2023). In all cases, the idea was to show how *MISQ* can achieve so much more if we work collaboratively.

- **Responsible:** Most of our initiatives have linked directly with the "responsible research" movement—focused on the production of "credible knowledge that is ultimately useful for addressing problems important to business and society" (https://www.rrbm.network/). Our work on research transparency, DEI, registered reports, interdisciplinary collaboration, and scholarly impact all tie to that movement. I was delighted that our DEI director, Saonee Sarker, represented *MISQ* at the RRBM Summit at INSEAD in 2023. We have also taken a forward-looking perspective on responsibility by considering changes that our journal and field should consider in the years ahead, e.g., as digital platforms and AI evolve (see the comments of Kai Larsen and Balaji Padmanabhan showcased in Burton-Jones, 2023).

- **Innovative:** I will only mention this briefly because I dedicated an editorial to this topic (Burton-Jones, 2023). Broadly, *MISQ* is not a journal that stands still, resting on its laurels. It is a journal that is responsive, agile, and forward-looking. While we celebrate our history and reinforce important, long-standing values and practices, we also undertake new initiatives to advance the journal and push science forward.

By following these four principles, our aim as an editorial board has been to inspire and promote the production and publication of innovative, impactful work from right across our field. This is important because an inherent risk in academia is that "top journals" will lean too far towards being exclusive (rather than inclusive) and conservative (rather than innovative)—a risk that is only strengthening over time due to the self-reinforcing regimes of evaluation impinging on all of us (Burton-Jones & Stein, 2021, Burton-Jones & Wang, 2023).

Did the board succeed in living out these principles during this editorial term? I will refrain from selling a story of success (as discussed later), but I know that we tried as hard as we could, and we hope we made a positive difference.

Thanks

I have many people to thank for their help during my editorial term. I will refrain from mentioning individual editorial board members in this section because the section would get too long; there are so many to thank.

I will begin with my past and current deans (Michael Bruenig and Brent Ritchie), school manager (Bronwyn Diffey), and my senior colleagues at the University of Queensland (UQ) (Marta Indulska and Stan Karanasios) for providing the resources required for this role. I also thank the entire group at UQ for being such great colleagues. I especially thank Gongtai Wang, Yuan Fang, and Yanpei Lin for their assistance. Yanpei deserves special thanks. She is a terrific Ph.D. student and an equally terrific editorial assistant!

While I cannot name all the IS scholars who helped me during these years, I would like to thank Izak Benbasat, Yolande Chan, Patrick Chau, Zenan "Alan" Chen, Robert Davison, Jane Fedorowicz, Blake Ives, Elena Karahanna, Dorothy Leidner, Natalia Levina, Eleanor Loiacono, Jessica Pye, Arun Rai, Carolina Salge, Suprateek Sarker, Carol Saunders, Priya Seetharaman, Galit Shmueli, Detmar Straub, Ron Weber, and Xue Yang, for meaningful advice, help, or encouragement at key moments. I sincerely thank the *MISQ* Office (Emily Borra, Kaylee Brosius, Alok Gupta) and the Policy Committee (De Liu, Gautam Ray, Jason Thatcher, Rajiv Kohli, and Chee-Wee Tan) too. Beyond the IS field, I benefited from advice and inspiration from Lars Vilhuber and Ben Greiner on research transparency, Kai Li on DEI, Marc-David Seidel, Christine Beckman, and Joan Friedman on interdisciplinarity, and the Data-PASS JEDI discussion group for the whole world of journal editing.

I must also thank my family for their support. It is hard to express the sacrifices that families make in these contexts.

Sorrow

I would not feel right if I did not acknowledge some sad events that occurred during my term. In particular, two of our field's founders passed away during 2022, Gordon Davis and Gary Dickson. Their passing was a reminder of how young our field really is, and how our field and our journal were so greatly shaped by a small number of truly remarkable individuals.

In 2023, young stars tragically passed away too. At the risk of failing to mention others, I will mention two: Jessica Pye and Laia Pujol Priego. Both were exceptional scholars and wonderful people. I am not sure if they knew each other, but they were so alike: vibrant, thoughtful, extremely bright, hard-working, and kind. They were also young mothers. It was heartbreaking to lose them. Please read their papers and benefit from their incredible work (Pye et al., in press; Pujol Priego & Wareham, 2023).

At a global level, I am writing this editorial as the world is reeling from terrorism, war, and conflict. We've also just emerged from a once-in-a-generation pandemic. Meanwhile, the climate crisis grows ever larger. With all this sadness, from local to global, it is natural to question sometimes if our work can really make a difference. We strive to ensure that somehow it can.

Joy

A great privilege of serving as EIC is the ability to showcase scholars conducting fantastic work across our field. In Table 1, I list all the winners of *MISQ* awards during my term. I congratulate all of them for their outstanding contributions.

Table 1. *MISQ* Award Winners Over the Past Three Years		
Reviewers of the Year, 2020 Robert Gregory, University of Miami Weiyin Hong, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Xitong Li, HEC Paris	**Reviewers of the Year, 2021** Hilal Atasoy, Rutgers University Gene Moo Lee, University of British Columbia Shachar Reichman, Tel Aviv University	**Reviewers of the Year, 2022** Sarah Lebovitz, University of Virginia Jinchuan Pu, University of Florida Sebastian Schuetz, Florida International University
Outstanding Associate Editors, 2020 Xiao Fang, University of Delaware Min-Seok Pang, Temple University Ali Tafti, University of Illinois Chicago	**Outstanding Associate Editor, 2021** Adela Chen, Colorado State University John Dong, Nanyang Technological University Jing Wang, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	**Outstanding Associate Editor, 2022** Miguel Godinho de Matos, Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics Mari Klara Stein, TalTech Ping Wang, University of Queensland
Paper of the Year, 2020 Brent Kitchens, Steven L. Johnson, and Peter Gray • For Kitchens et al. (2020)	**Paper of the Year, 2021** Sarah Lebovitz, Natalia Levina, and Hila Lifshitz-Assaf • For Lebovitz et al. (2021)	**Paper of the Year, 2022** Carolina Salge, Elena Karahanna, and Jason Thatcher • For Salge et al. (2022).
Impact Award*, 2021 H. Jeff Smith, Tamara Dinev, and Heng Xu • For Smith et al. (2011); see also Xu & Dinev (2022)	**Impact Award, 2022** Paul Leonardi • For Leonardi (2011); see also Leonardi (2023)	**Impact Award, 2023** Ola Henfridsson and Bendik Bygstad • For Henfridsson & Bygstad (2013); for which a guest editorial will be written in 2024.

* Note: Whereas the other awards in this table have been offered for many years, the *MISQ Impact Award* began in 2021. It honors the paper published a decade earlier (in a 3-yr sliding window) deemed to have had: (1) the most significant and sustained scholarly impact, as shown by citations, by how it led to a change in thinking in the field, and by its prescience in identifying an important issue today, and (2) a real or potential impact beyond academia, especially through how it influences the way our field engages in an important real-world domain. Each winner is offered the opportunity to write a guest editorial reflecting on the earlier work and its future implications.

What is MISQ?

The answers that IS scholars give to this question matter greatly because, as a social construction, a journal is a product of how scholars conceive of it. For instance, a fairly dry answer to the question would refer to the core functions of a scientific journal, namely, "registration (i.e., establishing the precedence of an idea for authors), dissemination (i.e., providing access for the intended audience), certification (i.e., ensuring quality control by peer review), and archiving (i.e., maintaining the scientific record)" (Ghasemi et al., 2023, p. 2). But I do not think any IS scholar really sees *MISQ* in such a way.

Six years ago, I remember when I first heard Arun Rai describe *MISQ* as a "platform for engagement" (Rai, 2017). I found it such a compelling lens. What other lenses can we use? Personally, I have found several metaphors helpful for describing *MISQ*:

- *MISQ is a lighthouse:* This metaphor conveys permanence and identity. If we want to know what/where IS research is, we can look to *MISQ*. Others outside the field can look to *MISQ* too as a stable source of knowledge of the IS field.
- *MISQ is a mountain peak*: This metaphor conveys aspiration and irrationality. Authors aspire to *MISQ* not because it is easy but because it is hard. It is the tallest peak. Climbing it is a trial of intellect and effort. The views are great!
- *MISQ is a collective quilt*: This metaphor conveys collective storytelling and craftwork. Authors submit patterns that are improved by the review process and sewn into the great fabric of *MISQ* publications telling the story of IS research.
- *MISQ is a jazz festival in a many-spired tent*: I take this metaphor from Mary Van Sell's poem in Weick (1995). The metaphor conveys passion and verve. *MISQ* is a spirited community publishing ideas that move hearts and minds.

While I believe in these positive views, we also need negative ones to account for science's imperfections. One negative lens I find useful, drawing on Cohen et al. (1972), is to view a published paper as potentially the outcome of a garbage-can model of scholarly choice. That is, a paper need not reflect the endpoint of a logical sequence of rational choices (starting with the identification of an important problem in the world and ending in the final publication) but instead the outcome of a chaotic mix of simultaneous processes and events such as the availability of energy/data/funding, decisions of co-authors, changes in academic incentives, new job offers/grants, announcements of special issues, rotations of editors, family events, changes of luck, the recent publication of competing or favorable papers, an editor's or reviewer's mood or bias on a given day, recent rejections, etc. A scientific journal may simply be the final resting place of all the papers produced from that process repeated over time. Overall, I find this metaphor to be helpful because it reminds me not to be naive when viewing papers and journals. I also found this metaphor helpful when screening every paper submitted to the journal. I would ask myself: "Why are we receiving so many papers of type X" or "from place Y" or "in month Z"? This account eased my confusion.

Another lens I have found helpful, which can have both positive and negative connotations, is to view a journal as a simulacrum. From this perspective, a scientific journal can be viewed as a source of high-quality maps or inspiring images of the world— something helpful. But simulacra can also be unhelpful. They can provide distorted views of reality or may bear no relation to reality at all. I find this lens helpful because it reminds me to be willing to question if the papers we are receiving and publishing, and if the changes made to papers in the review process, are really helping readers to understand the world more effectively, or if all this effort is working more in the service of the image and less in the service of the world.

So, how do you view *MISQ*? How should we?

Trends

As EIC, I have often been asked what trends I am seeing at *MISQ*, e.g., in terms of topics, methods, and theories. These questions are sometimes asked by those who want to follow a trend. Other times, they are asked by those who are against a trend and hoping the EIC will correct it. Either way, I have always found it difficult to answer these questions because I think we should prioritize the future (rather than past/current trends) and chart new courses whenever needed.

Nevertheless, because I am asked to talk about trends quite frequently, I thought I would include some reflections on trends in this closing editorial. Overall, I believe *MISQ* has exhibited two long-term trends:

1. a move from being a journal that sought to serve academia and industry equally to one that primarily serves academia (e.g., see Blake Ives's comments in Burton-Jones, 2023)
2. a move from a journal that primarily published quantitative research on organizational and behavioral topics, to a "big tent" journal that publishes research on all topics and methods (Rai, 2018).

To my knowledge, the first trend largely occurred during the 1980s and 1990s (stabilizing thereafter, particularly after the founding of *MIS Quarterly Executive*), while the second trend began in the mid-1990s and continues today (such that now I believe it is well understood by members of the IS field that *MISQ* is open to the best scholarship of *any* genre in the IS field).

I make three observations about these trends.

First, neither of these trends is fixed. For instance, while *MISQ* has increased its relative focus on scholarship (over practice) over many years, the "responsible research movement" has led to a renewed focus on real-world impact over the last decade. I believe this trend will continue and I hope our nudges will add to this momentum (Burton-Jones et al., 2023).

Second, *MISQ's* performance in relation to these trends is not entirely under our control and requires ongoing effort. For instance, while *MISQ* is proud of its "big tent" philosophy, our ability to enact it is not simply a product of what we support (through our editorial board composition and review practices) but also a product of what gets submitted, and the latter is heavily influenced by incentive structures and training differences around the world. As a simple example, we now receive many papers using difference-in-difference (DiD) designs but barely any using action research designs. Why? Neither is inherently more rigorous or useful than the other. Nor do we prefer one over the other. A major reason is that many U.S.-based schools ramped up their Ph.D. training in DiD designs (and not action research designs) and many of these schools have strong incentives to submit their work to "top journals," whereas countries where action research is more commonly taught have less incentive to send their work to top journals. If *MISQ* were simply a reactive journal, we wouldn't need to care about this issue; we might even double down on supporting DiD research. But *MISQ* is proactive. We engage in extensive ambassadorial work around the world to ensure that everyone knows that *MISQ* simply wants the best IS research from *anywhere in the field using any method*. We run knowledge-sharing sessions and author-development workshops to help authors around the world too. During 2021-2023, the editorial board members and I collectively ran 106 outward-facing talks, panels, keynotes, and workshops, or roughly 1 per 1.5 weeks. We also ran many internal workshops as an editorial board to learn how to be as inclusive as possible (e.g., running a workshop just a few weeks ago with the American Psychological Association to learn from their efforts). It's an ongoing effort.

Third, because of the two prior points, please do not assume that you need to follow the trends. Editorial board members at *MISQ* are recruited because they are open-minded, creative, and supportive (among other characteristics). Thus, even if a genre is rarely published in *MISQ*, it does not necessarily mean that *MISQ* does not value it. It could be that the journal has not received many papers from that genre. If you have not seen a paper like yours in *MISQ* but you think it is of high quality, then please keep *MISQ* in mind—the editors may be delighted to receive it![1] *MISQ* EICs are always trying to ensure that the editorial board can cover *all* topics/theories/methods in the field. Moreover, if you believe there is a major hole in the board's capability to handle a specific type of IS research, you can always let the EIC know.

Work Remaining

I recently laid out the status of the initiatives we worked on as an editorial board over the last few years (Burton-Jones, 2023). As mentioned in that editorial, two of those initiatives (research transparency and DEI) will require some ongoing attention.

Regarding research transparency, one ongoing question will be whether the transparency editor (TE) role should remain as is or absorbed or staffed separately. At present, the TE role is staffed by existing AEs and SEs. One alternative is to *absorb* the TE functions back into the AE/SE role, such that the TE role disappears and is covered by the AE/SE roles. This could be a reasonable decision because science might increasingly expect all editors to be up-to-speed on research transparency. A

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[1] While I could list many papers to illustrate the point, two relatively recent papers like this that I handled are Kane et al. (2021) and Hovorka & Peter (2021). It was refreshing to receive papers that were so different from the norm.

counterargument is that the AE/SE role is already busy, and the skills required for research transparency differ (e.g., editors vary in their knowledge of code/data/material management and the functionality of research transparency platforms). A different approach would be to keep the TE role as is and staff it separately, i.e., with additional individuals. This could be a reasonable decision because it would allow the EIC to choose individuals with unique skills in research transparency (e.g., managing data, materials, code, and staying up-to-date on the latest changes in research transparency platforms and policies). On the other hand, it could also add to the coordination costs for the EIC to bring in a new raft of editors.

Another question regarding research transparency is how best to support the initiative from a digital platform perspective. For instance, should the transparency materials be hosted on any one of several approved external research repositories (as it is now), or should *MISQ* rely on just one repository? The former option provides flexibility for researchers (e.g., due to differences in functionality across repositories) while the latter would facilitate searching for repository content. Likewise, how should *MISQ* support transparency tags on research publications to support subsequent searching? These questions will require ongoing attention as *MISQ* evolves its digital platform (Burton-Jones et al, 2021, p. xii).

Regarding DEI, one question that will continue over time is how best to report on DEI issues to the community (see Section 2.2 of the board's position statement, Burton-Jones & Sarker, 2021). As EIC, I followed two approaches, both problematic. One approach is to report high-level demographics, such as gender or location data on authors/editors. For instance, as I write this, we have 72 board members (AEs, SEs, EIC). Of these, 43% are female and 46% are located outside the USA. A benefit of tracking and reporting such numbers is that it signals that we care about diversity. Other journals also report such data, so reporting it might satisfy community expectations/norms. However, a disadvantage of reporting such information is that the data is often not very meaningful, evidence-based, or actionable. For instance, what percentages are best, and what should we expect, causally, from a change in these percentages? Many studies talk about the issues in general terms, but when you look for specifics about what to track and report and why, there is scant evidence to act on.

Rather than focusing on reporting high-level demographics, an alternative approach is to perform (as EIC) or invite/encourage others to perform more detailed investigations on specific issues. I have followed this approach to examine one DEI issue (with the hope that it would lead to a published paper in due course), but the data collection and analysis have taken almost three years and are still ongoing. The advantage of this approach is that it is rigorous and evidence-based; the downside is that it is time-consuming (in my case, taking longer than the duration of my EIC term), and the results may still not be entirely actionable.

Other than these issues, another major piece of work remaining involves redeveloping *MISQ's* digital platform and streamlining the post-acceptance process. While the *MISQ* website was updated during this editorial term, further updates are needed. Access to accepted *MISQ* publications is also not as seamless and quick on the *MISQ* website compared to some other journals. The *MISQ* Office is working hard on these issues, so please stay tuned.

Board Rotations

It is customary for board retirements and appointments to be mentioned in the closing editorial of the year, or the opening editorial of the next year. Following tradition, the board decisions for next year are being made by the incoming EIC, and these decisions are still being finalized as I write this editorial. As a result, the retirements in December 2023 and the appointments in January 2024 will be announced in the March 2024 editorial rather than here. Nonetheless, I will take this opportunity to thank all the editors who will retire from the board with me this December. Your service to the journal and the field has been immense. I also offer congratulations to all the incoming editors, and I wish them well.

Final Thoughts

It is tempting in a final editorial to lay out a case for one's success. I can choose what data to report and what to say. I'll never have a better chance! Nevertheless, while I am proud of our efforts as an editorial board, I have tried to avoid writing them up as a success story in any way. If we made progress, it was in the name of service. I'm also painfully aware of failings along the way. As a simple example, I am sorry to say that I personally transitioned from being one of the quickest editors on the board

at processing papers to one of the slowest. Also, I had my own share of papers for which I had to make some very difficult decisions. While I tried to make the best decisions I could, I wish I had been able to handle some of those cases more effectively.

It is also tempting in a final editorial to offer words of advice for the next editorial term or for the field in general. I will also avoid this temptation. I have full confidence in Sue Brown's upcoming leadership. I will be cheering everyone on.

When I was on the job market near the end of my Ph.D., I was lucky to have an interview with the University of Arizona. The best comment during any of my interviews (before or since) was made by the incomparable Sudha Ram on that occasion. I asked the group what kind of faculty member they wanted to recruit, and Sudha replied: "Someone who will make us laugh." As I type this editorial, I'm looking at my tattered copy of Chalmers (1976) on my desk which begins with the quote (from Clea, Lawrence Durrell): "Like all young men I set out to be a genius, but mercifully laughter intervened." I thank my colleagues on the editorial board for their esprit de corps and some much-appreciated laughter along the way.

Near the start of my term, I wrote that I had a lot of uncertainties about the IS field and science in general (Burton-Jones & Stein, 2021). I am glad to report that my uncertainties have dissipated. Having the chance to see all corners of our field during this editorial term has given me strong confidence in the field. The opportunities and responsibilities are immense. Tuum est!

Acknowledgments

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