

Editor's Comment

It is with great enthusiasm that I pick up the senior editorship of the *MIS Quarterly* as Bill King steps down after a highly successful three-year term. Under his capable leadership, the journal has achieved a high standard of academic excellence while serving the needs of the practitioner community. Testimony to his effectiveness is the burgeoning files of high quality papers which I have inherited, many of which will appear in this and subsequent issues.

In 1986 the need for a journal such as the *MIS Quarterly* has never been greater. The quickening pace of technological change has presented a vastly greater array of application options than were available a decade ago. Many of these applications pose greater competitive opportunities and risks to the firm than did those of the past generation, raising the stakes for all concerned. A technology which has always been central to the firm has become even more so, intensifying the need for good research to guide practitioners. An important mission of the *MIS Quarterly* is the dissemination of research articles to shed light on the nature of these new applications and how they can help the firm.

At the same time, the development and management of these new applications require very different management approaches than those which were appropriate to the world of batch/transaction oriented systems. Examination of new tools and approaches and the communication of sound, research-based insights and how they can be used, is an important editorial goal of the *Quarterly*. We want to:

- Better identify appropriate application areas.
- Provide guidance on appropriate technologies to select in different situations.
- Identify better techniques for managing the technology.

The words *sound research-based* are not idly chosen ones. They are, in fact, at the very core of the journal's editorial philosophy. The world is filled with seemingly plausible rules of thumb which all too frequently provide a false crutch to the practitioner in the hour of his/her greatest need. Highly prized are those insights painfully wrung from well-executed, methodologically sound, time-consuming investigations. The situation is complicated by MIS being an *applied discipline* in a messy and complex world. While laboratory experiments done with young MBA students are neat, convenient, and relatively cheap to execute, the very simplicity of those environments means that for many problems the insights are highly suspect if one seeks to generalize from them to administrative practice. There is a major role for the messy, expensive, time-consuming field investigations whose conclusions may not be made apparent by statistical scrutiny but may open new avenues to thinking about problems. The commitment to appropriate, methodologically sound research has been and will remain the hallmark of this journal.

At the same time, however, business is an applied discipline where theory development should eventually translate into improved practice. The acid test of a piece of research is "Does it ultimately (often over many years and stages of refinement) translate into help for the practitioner and thereby the business."

The *Quarterly* has historically performed this mission well, but I will devote even greater efforts to ensure that the relevance of articles are made clear to practitioner readers. Beginning with this issue, each article will be preceded by a one-page summary examining the relevance of the article to practitioners and the key message it presents. Hopefully, this will make a remarkable journal even more focused and relevant.

Finally, there is a role in such a journal for long-term societal agenda setting. What are the broad public policy issues implicit in the type of work we undertake? Papers like Dick Mason's "Four Ethical Issues of the Information Age" should and will continue to command space in these pages. For both the practitioners and academicians, they form the backdrop of our field. Both groups need to be able to understand the full dimensions of the tapestry they are creating.

To help me with this task, I am pleased to announce the appointment of the following four new associate editors to 3-year terms:

Brandt Allen	Professor	University of Virginia
Blake Ives	Associate Professor	Dartmouth College
Richard Mason	Professor	Southern Methodist University
Burt Swanson	Associate Professor	UCLA

I also extend a very warm note of thanks to Izak Benbasat, Gerald Hoffman, Robert Zmud, and Margi Olsen who have finished their terms.

F. Warren McFarlan