EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Continuing and Extending the *MIS Quarterly* Trifecta Vision

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In this first editorial of my term as Editor-in-Chief, I will describe the current status of *MIS Quarterly* and lay out my vision for what I hope to achieve during my term.

Before I begin, I must thank the MISQ Policy Committee for giving me this opportunity. I am humbled by their confidence in me and I promise to give my all. I thank the MISQ Office, particularly Alok Gupta and Jan DeGross, for all the help they have given me. I thank my Dean and my colleagues at the University of Queensland for their support, and my colleagues and mentors in the IS field for their encouragement and advice. I especially thank my family for their support of my work.

I am writing this editorial while the world continues to struggle with COVID-19. The personal, health, and economic consequences of COVID-19 have been dramatic. The effects have also been unequal, magnifying existing inequalities. It has been inspiring seeing the IS community respond in so many ways, in MISQ initiatives and beyond, but personal stories of hardship still abound. At MISQ, we will do all we can to support the field and be sensitive to the difficulties faced by our colleagues around the world.

I am also writing this editorial during a time of rapid growth in our field. Digitalization is affecting every aspect of business, society, and our personal lives. Enrollments in information systems programs continue to grow in many parts of the world, and we are seeing rising interest in the phenomena we study from industry and from many scientific disciplines. The pervasive changes we are seeing in the world and the rising interest in digital phenomena among so many stakeholders brings opportunities and responsibilities for all of us, and for MISQ.

As I take over the EIC position, I am very mindful of these pressures, opportunities, and responsibilities. I am also mindful of my own history with MISQ, and why I feel so motivated to serve the journal. Like many IS academics, I have "grown up" reading MISQ. One of the first decisions I made as a doctoral student was to subscribe to MISQ, and I would eagerly await each new issue. Many of my early views of the field were shaped by reading these issues. Even now, I regularly check the forthcoming list of papers for updates, read each editorial as it comes out, and read old editorials to learn how our field has evolved. In addition to being an avid reader of MISQ, I have interacted with MISQ as an author and reviewer ever since I was a doctoral student. I have also served 12 years on the Editorial Board. At the time of writing, I have written 422 editorial reports as Associate or Senior Editor in addition to co-editing the Special Issue on Next-Generation Information Systems Theories in this issue. Through these roles, I have had a hand in accepting 43 MISQ papers.

Reflecting on all my interactions with MISQ, I cannot think of an entity in our field that I have thought about more during my career, or worked harder for, than this journal. Given this history, I feel pride, trepidation, and inspiration regarding my new role. I feel pride because this journal means so much to the IS field. I feel trepidation because of the work and responsibility involved. And I feel inspired because it is an important time in our history and I have the chance to work with an incredible editorial board to take the journal to greater heights.

IS academics care deeply about MISQ. My conversations with my good colleague (and institutional theorist) April Wright have led me to believe that these feelings come from this journal's unique institutional role. In short, MISQ stands at the very center of the institutional structure of our field. It is not merely a journal. It is a shining light that IS scholars look to for direction, inspiration, and identity. As Editor-in-Chief, I see my role and the role of the editorial board as institutional custodians responsible for nurturing and advancing the finest scholarship in our field.

I have the good fortune of taking over the EIC position from Arun Rai. Arun has served MISQ tremendously. I know this sounds over-the-top, but as I transitioned into this role, my feelings for Arun have been reminiscent of my feelings for my own parents after I had children—I now

realize how much I had simply taken for granted from Arun and all the past EICs. In his usual style, Arun has been extremely open, professional, and thoughtful during the transition period. I have learned so much from Arun and cannot thank him enough.[1]

The Current State of MISQ and Opportunities for Improvement

Each new editor of MISQ tries to continue the work of his/her predecessor and find new ways to improve the journal. My aim is no different.

During his term, Arun Rai established a Trifecta Vision, focusing on
- *Impact*: to influence scholars and practitioners through ground-breaking articles
- *Range*: to expand the range of work we publish, to represent the field as a whole
- *Speed*: to improve the speed of the review process

In his inaugural editorial (Rai 2016a), Arun outlined a set of initiatives to improve each of these dimensions, and in his final editorial (Rai 2020), he reviewed how these and other initiatives fared. I refer readers to his editorial for the details, but in brief, the impact of the journal is strong and our range and speed have improved greatly.

I wholeheartedly agree with Arun's Trifecta vision. The MISQ Editorial Board and I are committed to continuing his vision and the initiatives he undertook. Continuing that work alone will take a lot of effort. Nevertheless, I will view that work as our "business-as-usual" operations during my term. While I am conscious of the level of work involved, I am familiar with it having served as SE throughout Arun Rai's term, and many of our Senior and Associate Editors are very familiar with it as well.

In addition to the gains that will come from applying and refining the Trifecta Vision, further gains are possible. Arun's Trifecta Vision focused on improving the *capabilities* of the journal: our capabilities to create impact, handle range, and work fast. My strategy to look for improvements is to couple this *capability* perspective with a *stakeholder* perspective. Both perspectives are important and, ultimately, complementary.

Just as Arun focused on improving our capabilities in three areas (impact, range, and speed), I plan to focus on making improvements for three main stakeholders (authors, external stakeholders, and science). While our stakeholders could be viewed in various ways, the view I have taken is that scientific journals serve as a mediator between the supply-side and demand-side of a marketplace of ideas. This gives us three groups: the supply side (authors), the demand side (our external stakeholders), and science itself (the mediating process).

Following the above reasoning, my goals during my term are

1. To continue Arun's Trifecta Vision focusing on range, speed, and impact
2. To add a new Trifecta Vision focusing on our authors, external stakeholders, and science

MISQ Vision for 2021-2023: A Stakeholder Perspective

My points below are structured in line with my vision that MISQ's role is to provide the most outstanding service possible for our *authors*, our *external stakeholders*, and *science*. For each stakeholder, I provide a vision statement, our current status, and my goal and initiatives for the current term. Before doing so, I briefly clarify what I mean when I refer to each stakeholder, because there are subtleties involved with each one.

On the supply side, we have our actual and potential authors. The former group is known to us. The latter group is large and somewhat undefined. They could include IS scholars who have never submitted to MISQ. They also include scholars in other fields, or even in industry, who are researching technology-related phenomena and who could or should consider MISQ for their work. This is, of course, how our field began, when scholars from other fields started our field (Hirschheim and Klein 2012). In short, MISQ represents the IS field while also having a forward-looking and open perspective of our field. We are open to all authors engaging in IS research, wherever they are.

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[1]For those who do not know Arun, I hope he will not mind me sharing an example with you to convey his character. After the conclusion of our editorial board meeting in December 2020, one of our Senior Editors asked Arun what his plans were for the New Year. We expected him to talk about well-earned holidays or future projects. Arun's reply was that he wanted us to succeed and he would be happy to review papers for us if we had difficulty finding reviewers during the holidays. Talk about commitment!

On the demand side, I use the term "external stakeholders" to refer to practitioners of all types, such as executives, consultants, policymakers, and society at large (including the media). Some might argue that the main consumers of MISQ research are not practitioners but rather IS researchers (and perhaps deans and promotion and tenure committees). I see the merit in that view, and we have advice from that view in MISQ already (Straub and Ang 2008). Nevertheless, scholars do not enter scholarly life purely to talk to each other. Ultimately, we have an obligation to society. We have something to say to our external stakeholders and our journals provide us a means to say it (Alvesson et al. 2017).

On the supply and demand sides, we can think of individual actors with specific concerns, such as IS researchers wanting their articles published and executives wanting insights on challenging issues. When I refer to science as a stakeholder, I am thinking of a social structure rather than an individual. Social structures have effects through the work of individuals whose work goes on to recreate and change those structures (Giddens 1984). These structures then come to have effects on our identities and the identities we attribute to others, allowing us to determine what it means to do science and to be a scientific journal (Hogg et al. 1995; Thornton et al. 2012). Our third stakeholder group, therefore, can comprise any and all individuals who have a view on what science is, and what it should be. I am especially focused here on those individuals working in the mediating process (between the supply and demand sides), as reviewers and editors. As we know, science evolves as our views of it change (Chalmers 1976; Nowotny et al. 2001). Therefore, what I mean by having science as a stakeholder is that MISQ has an obligation as a scientific journal to represent the best of what science involves and even to help push science forward, in the best way we know how.

With these clarifications in hand, I will focus the remainder of this editorial on outlining what I hope to achieve with the stakeholder perspective and what initiatives we will undertake.

Vision Statement 1: Serving Authors: *All authors studying information systems phenomena, whether inside or outside our field, must feel they can send us their best work and that our review process will respect, empower, and celebrate them.*

Evaluation of the current state of the journal: MISQ performs well on this dimension. In its early years, MISQ was known more for publishing particular genres of IS research, but that time has long since passed (see Rai 2016b; Weber 2002). Through our papers, editorial statements, author- and reviewer-development workshops around the world, and our board appointments, MISQ has proven that it is a "big tent" journal open to all IS topics, genres, and regions. We are also constantly expanding our boundaries. From 2016–2020, we published papers by authors in 31 countries, with 54% of authors being first-time MISQ authors.

In addition to having a very inclusive view of our author community, we support authors by providing high quality reviews and by keeping cycle times low. Over the last 2 years, our average cycle time from submission to decision across all submissions has been 59 days. Reducing cycle times is a topic in every editorial board meeting. In addition to being fast, MISQ has long led discussions in the IS field regarding high-quality reviewing, as shown by the comments of all of our past EICs (see Rai 2016b). It is not surprising, therefore, that MISQ regularly tops multiple dimensions of the AIS Senior Scholars Journal Review Quality Survey. We also celebrate authors in many ways, such as through our social media initiatives, for which Arun Rai and Carolina Salge deserve great credit (see, for example, https://misquarterly.github.io).

I will continue these efforts.

Our goal and initiatives for authors: My goal is for *MISQ to be known as the most author-focused journal publishing IS-related research*. I will seek to achieve this goal by continuing the above efforts while also addressing two issues:

- *Increasing the number and breadth of top submissions:* While submission rates are strong, I believe two groups of authors are not sending us their best work: (1) researchers doing really novel work who believe top journals like MISQ are too conservative, take too long, and straightjacket them; (2) authors studying IS-related topics from an interdisciplinary view or in other fields and who currently send their papers to other fields' journals when they could have sent them to an IS journal.

- *Improving the impact of our publications:* While we have a virtuous reviewing culture and an active social media channel, we are still not helping some authors as well as we could. We still sometimes take too many rounds to accept papers, fail to draw out the impact of work sufficiently in the review process, and fail to celebrate authors' work enough post-publication. Even though our Journal Impact Factor (JIF) remains strong (Rai 2020), other journals have seen rises in their JIFs that may stem from their ability to support authors in these ways.

I will undertake the following initiatives to address these issues:

- Emphasizing in board meetings, workshops, and editorial statements that we must preserve the author's voice in papers. We will do so by encouraging authors to write openly (not defensively) and to highlight problems in their work (not feeling forced to hide them). We

will encourage reviewers and editors to identify and champion imperfect-but-important papers. I will stress such issues when we select award-winning papers, reviewers, and AEs.

• Committing myself and my SE team to engaging in talks and events in the borders of our field and in sister fields so that scholars pursuing IS topics in those fields can learn more about MISQ and understand the benefits of sending their best work to us.

• Reducing rounds and improving impact by
    – Providing guidelines to reviewers to keep their reviews concise
    – Requiring AEs and SEs to focus advanced rounds of review on helping authors to extend the paper's impact rather than belabouring micro issues
    – Holding one-on-one talks with SEs who have papers in very advanced rounds to get to acceptance quickly
    – Reporting statistics on our performance so that authors can see our commitment to improving our cycle times on each round and from submission to final acceptance

• Improving how we celebrate authors' work by
    – Expanding our social media presence
    – Improving the MISQ digital platform so that it showcases authors' work more effectively

Vision Statement 2: Serving External Stakeholders: *MISQ must work across disciplines to tackle society's grand challenges and offer path-breaking insights for our practitioner stakeholders.*

Evaluation of the current state of the journal: MISQ performs well on this dimension too. Board members are selected and motivated to assess and improve papers' insights for research and practice. MISQ has special issues on important multidisciplinary topics. MISQ's partnership with *Sloan Management Review* has allowed us to magnify the practical impact of our work. And the MISQ Curation initiative enables bundling of insights from entire programs of work.

I will continue all these efforts.

Our goal and initiatives for external stakeholders: My vision is for *MISQ to be the most impactful IS journal*. By impactful, I mean both long-term academic impact as well as impact in industry and society. I will take four actions to meet this goal:

• *Impact statements, practical implications, and the platform*: I will require all MISQ submissions to include an impact statement that discusses impact beyond academia. In workshops and Board meetings, I will stress the need to improve the impact of our work, as communicated in these statements and in our papers' practical implications sections, while still celebrating pure scholarship. Senior Editors will ensure that the desired practical impact is kept in mind (and sharpened and improved) during each step of the review process rather than getting lost amidst other matters. We will use the final version of the impact statement to spread the impact of papers widely (e.g., via our digital platform). We will engage in these efforts with an appreciation of the difficulty of communicating scientific findings beyond academia and the need to be sensitive to the issues involved (Fischhoff and Scheufele 2019).

• *MISQ Impact Award*: I will create a new annual MISQ award for impact. It will combine a focus on long-term academic impact as well as impact beyond academia. It will be offered for a paper published in MISQ in the last 5–10 years that has had a significant impact in academia and in our stakeholder community (e.g., as reflected in changes in business practice or policy). We will call for nominations later this year. Stay tuned!

• *Expanding complementary channels*: Our partnership with *Sloan Management Review* has offered numerous benefits for our joint external stakeholders (Rai 2017). I will seek to build on this approach to create additional opportunities for our practitioner colleagues around the world to learn from our research. We will use the MISQ digital platform to help showcase our partnerships and the impact of our articles.

• *Using Commentaries to open new multidisciplinary and engaged pathways for impact*: I will use the MISQ Commentary category to invite a series of future-oriented commentaries on "Digital Futures" that lay out how researchers can partner across fields and with external stakeholders to chart our shared future. Currently, MISQ commentaries tend to be written by and for IS scholars alone. I believe they will have even more impact if they are written from a more engaged and interdisciplinary perspective, for example, co-authored by senior scholars from other fields and leading executives or policy makers. These themed commentaries will offer boundary-breaking ideas that excite readers inside and outside our field.

Vision Statement 3: *Serving Science: MISQ must continue to take a leadership role in our field's scientific process and maintain and celebrate the very best scientific ideals.*

Evaluation of the current state of the journal: MISQ performs well on this dimension. Our review process focuses intensely on conceptual and methodological excellence. Board members are chosen for their leadership in our scientific process and their ability to overcome paradigmatic silos to do better science. MISQ also collaborated with *AIS Transactions on Replication Research* in its replication project and in offering replication badges.

I will continue these efforts.

Our goal and initiatives for science: My vision is for *MISQ to lead our field in responsible research*, such as in our engagement with the open science movement, and our willingness to tackle structural biases in our field, such as with diversity and inclusion. These issues are important and, interestingly, interrelated (Murphy et al. 2020).

I will address some matters on an ongoing basis. For instance,

• I will collaborate on initiatives that arise with the Association for Information Systems and the Responsible Research in Business and Management (RRBM) network.

• I will charge SEs and AEs with addressing the dimensions of responsible research in each paper they handle (e.g., considering diversity and inclusion issues when selecting reviewers).

• We will weigh responsible research issues (such as rigor and transparency) when nominating papers for our prizes.

• We will also conduct knowledge-sharing initiatives to improve our ability as a board to handle a diversity of papers, and to handle papers that use novel approaches.

• We will continue our efforts to ensure that we have a diverse board, because diversity will improve the quality of our culture and our decisions (Hofstra et al. 2020; Nielsen et al. 2018).

I will address two other matters as partially intertwined projects:

• First, I will work with the editorial board and the MISQ Office to create an infrastructure for research transparency, available via our digital platform, with suitable policies for supporting open science, sensitive to the various traditions of our field. This type of infra-structure and such policies are commonplace in some other fields (e.g., regarding open data, open code, etc.) but we currently do not have the infrastructure or policies required. We need to work on this thoughtfully so that all of our stakeholders (both inside and outside our field) will understand what we review and what we do not review, what we make available for future readers and what we do not, and how and why we make these determinations.

• Once we have made sufficient progress on the infrastructure for research transparency, I will work with the editorial board to explore innovations in the review process. Journals need to innovate just like any other organization (Weick 1985). It is clear from the open science and responsible research literatures that many innovations in the review process could be made, but it is less clear which ones to implement (Linkov et al. 2006; Rennie and Flanagin 2018). Working with the editorial board, we will identify a number of promising innovations to trial, sensitive to and reflective of the different traditions in our field. We will then offer authors the opportunity to opt-in to these trials. We will see what we learn, discuss our findings with the field, and if the innovations are successful, embed them into our routine practices.

Concluding Thoughts

I hope the vision I have laid out will be compelling to members of the IS field. We have an extremely talented and dedicated editorial board. I am extremely fortunate to have the privilege to work with them. We have discussed the vision extensively and I believe we are well placed to achieve it.

What will success look like in three years? We will have made even more improvements on Arun Rai's Trifecta of impact, range, and speed. And we will have made great strides on our new Trifecta. We will be known as the most author-focused IS journal, the most impactful IS

journal, and leading our field in responsible research. Finally, we will be a wiser editorial board, more adept at recognizing and managing the tensions that can arise among these goals and the resources we need to achieve them.

If you go back through the journal archives, you will see that the first sentence ever printed in this journal is "With this issue, the MIS Quarterly attempts to break new ground in the information systems field" (Dickson 1977). That very first sentence continues to be our aim. We aim to break new ground in the information systems field in each article, in each issue, in each year. With digitization affecting every aspect of life and business, there has never been a more important time to make such breakthroughs, and there has never been a more important time for *MIS Quarterly*.

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