

Information Systems and Environmental Sustainability

Guest Editors

Arvind Malhotra, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (malhotra@unc.edu)

Nigel P. Melville, University of Michigan (npmelv@umich.edu)

Richard T. Watson, University of Georgia (rwatson@terry.uga.edu)

Submission Deadline: April 3, 2011 – **CHANGE IN SUBMISSION DEADLINE**

As the future of our ecosystem and society is dependent on our ability to reverse or limit the effects of global climate change, sustainability issues have come to the societal and governmental forefront. Organizations, governments, and cross-national bodies are turning their attention to the question of *how we can create a sustainable society*. Sustainability is a complex term that can encompass environmental, economic, and societal issues. In essence, sustainability is conservation, deployment, and reuse of resources in responsible ways—a responsibility that is geared toward the triple bottom line. The triple bottom line—**people, planet, and profit**—view of value creation balances commercial and societal goals in a way that all three Ps are addressed simultaneously rather than being seen as trade-offs or with one goal overriding the other two. Although consultants, vendors, and others have posited that information systems can play a significant role in sustainability, there is a dearth of rigorous research into these issues, which also motivates this special issue.

Several perspectives might be adopted by researchers in guiding their work. First, there is the viewpoint that sustainability issues can be prioritized into three categories: generic, value chain, and competitive context (Porter and Kramer 2006). For example, the competitive context calls for a proactive strategic approach and may offer opportunities to illustrate the transformative power of IS. Second, the four dimensions of the sustainability portfolio (pollution prevention, product stewardship, clean technology, and sustainability vision) (Hart 1997) provide another angle for investigating the role of IS in sustainability. A third approach could be to examine the role of IS in achieving the three eco-goals: eco-efficiency (DeSimone et al. 1997), eco-equity (Gray and Bebbington 2000), and eco-effectiveness (McDonough and Braungart 1998). Moving beyond a general viewpoint on sustainability to take a specific IS direction, researchers could elect to apply the belief–action–outcome model (Melville 2010) or the energy informatics framework (Watson et al. 2010). Of course, other suitable foundations for IS and sustainability research are welcome.

Furthermore, information systems that address sustainability can be conceptualized as fitting two archetypes: responsive green IS and strategic green IS (Porter and Kramer 2006). **Responsive green IS** enables companies to be good citizens by addressing sustainability issues that may not be a direct result of their operations or mitigate the negative impacts of day-to-day value chain activities and operations. **Strategic green IS** allows companies to proactively transform value chain activities to benefit society economically and environmentally. Strategic green IS may also confer upon companies the ability to create and leverage their capabilities to strategically differentiate themselves based on socio-economic and environmental issues.

This call for papers aims to contribute significantly to a first wave of rigorous and relevant research that demonstrates the role that IS—which has been labeled “green IS” (Watson et al. 2008)—plays in the areas of environmental, economic, and societal sustainability issues. This special issue seeks to highlight research that reports developments and analyses that provide solutions to global warming; that explicates theories and frameworks to guide future research in the area of IS and sustainability; and that comprises rigorous empirical analysis of the role of information systems—responsive as well as strategic green IS—in enabling sustainability through efforts like

- Reducing transportation costs
- Supporting team work and meetings of globally distributed employees to limit their air travel
- Tracking environmental information (such as toxicity, energy used, water used, air pollution)
- Monitoring emissions and waste production
- Providing information to encourage green choices by consumers
- Improving decision making by executives by highlighting sustainability issues
- Reducing energy consumption
- Supporting the generation and distribution of renewable energy
- Limiting carbon and other emissions
- Identifying the role of IS in energy policy

Such research might be multi-disciplinary such that it includes economics, sociology, psychology, design, engineering, or other perspectives and could employ multiple methods. It should serve to set the foundation for a continuing program of research on sustainability in not only the IS community but the business research community in general.

The Review and Publishing Process

It is our aim to address the emerging issue of information systems and environmental sustainability in an expedient and rigorous manner. To accomplish this, we will follow two parallel paths: a fast-track process and a workshop development process.

All papers will receive an initial screening by the Guest Editors to determine which of the submissions (as they come in) merit a fast-track process. The Guest Editors are particularly interested in fast tracking those submissions that could contribute to reducing global warming and whose timely publication is thus in the general interests of society. They will work with the authors to revise such manuscripts to get them into a special section on IS & Sustainability (in an *MIS Quarterly* issue before the special issue). **Authors are encouraged to contact the editors before making submissions to discuss the suitability of their paper for the special issue.**

Manuscripts, other than those fast tracked, that are deemed *a priori* to have a reasonable chance of acceptance will be handled by one of the Guest Editors and will be reviewed by two associate editors. Reviewers will be asked to consider the following three questions when providing their reviews:

1. Does the article make a contribution to sustainability practices?
2. Is there evidence that the major contribution of the article is true or verifiable?
3. What do the authors need to do to meet *MIS Quarterly* quality standards prior to publication?

The first round of review will be made available to the authors within six weeks following the submission deadline for the special issue. The authors will be asked to make revisions in eight weeks and present their revised paper at a developmental workshop. The fast-tracked papers will also be presented at the workshop as we hope that they will form the foundation for the papers to be published in the special issue (and be incorporated into the papers of the special issue).

Four weeks after the workshop, the authors will receive a second round of reviews from the AEs. The authors will have four weeks to make satisfactory revisions. The final round of reviews (minor revisions) will be provided by the Guest Editors two weeks after the submission of the second revised manuscript. The authors will have two weeks to submit their final manuscript to be published in the special issue. The special issue will also include opinions and comments related to first set of fast-tracked manuscripts.

Deadlines and Submission Instructions

- Submissions due: April 3, 2011 (*Papers submitted earlier will be considered for fast-track as they are received.*)
- First round reviews: June 12, 2011
- Revised manuscript to be delivered and presented at workshop: August 26, 2011 (*Authors are not required to be present in order to have their manuscript considered. The developmental nature of the workshop, however, should give those attending an excellent sense for how to proceed with their revisions and how to strengthen their papers.*)
- Second round reviews: October 2, 2011
- Comments and critiques invited for fast-tracked papers published earlier in a special section of *MIS Quarterly* on IS & Sustainability (*extended abstracts, comments, and critiques will be included in the special issue*)
- Revised manuscript submission: November 13, 2011
- Target date for acceptance: February 1, 2012

Papers that miss the revision deadlines will not be considered for the special issue. These papers, as well as papers that, through no fault of their own, make slower progress through the review cycle, may be considered for a regular issue of *MIS Quarterly* (at the discretion of the Guest Editors and the Editor-in-Chief).

All submissions must adhere to the formatting guidelines for *MIS Quarterly*. Submissions must be made electronically to <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/misq>.

All submissions will be screened by the Guest Editors for fit the theme of the Special Issue and prospects to successfully negotiate the review process.

- (1) Successful papers will be assigned to an Associate Editor on the Special Issue Editorial Board for full review.
- (2) A publication decision on the paper will be made after no more than two full review cycles.

Special Issue Editorial Board

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