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# Editorial: Continuing on an Inclusive Path to Scholarly Excellence with Renewed Vigor

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I would like to start this editorial by expressing my sincere appreciation to the information systems (IS) community for the opportunity to serve as the Editor-in-Chief (EiC) of *Information Systems Research (ISR)*. As we are all aware, *ISR* is one of the most prestigious journals for business schools globally, and it is an invaluable asset to our IS discipline. On receiving the email regarding my appointment, I first experienced disbelief, closely followed by trepidation. Once the news settled, my initial shock was replaced with a realization of the immense responsibility associated with the position and the opportunity to have a positive impact on the journal and our discipline's scholarship. At the same time, I felt a deep sense of gratitude not only to all the mentors and colleagues who have had an influence on my values as a scholar and editor but also, to those who have contributed to making *ISR* what it is today.

*ISR* owes its stature to the vision and dedication of its past Editors-in-Chief; the expertise and commitment of members of the editorial board that have made it possible for the journal to publish the very best papers our community has to offer; the brilliance and perseverance of the authors; the support of INFORMS; and most importantly, the loyalty of all members of the global IS community who have offered intellectual contributions to *ISR*, reviewed submissions, engaged with papers, and disseminated knowledge published in the journal. I am hopeful that together we will be able to build on the journal's past achievements to further strengthen *ISR*'s position as an intellectual "beacon" (Gupta 2022) within, and beyond, the IS discipline.

## Four Guiding Objectives

Although many topics merit discussion by a new EiC, I will keep this first editorial simple and focus on four objectives that I believe will guide *ISR* operations in the next three years.

## Encouraging and Celebrating Inclusive Excellence

Since its inception, *ISR* has sought to be inclusive in terms of the topics its published articles address, the traditions of research it welcomes, and the editorial board members it appoints (e.g., Gupta 2022). Although a recent commentary by Tarafdar et al. (2022) notes that the journal "exhibits less diversity in terms of methods, with a preponderance of analytical methods, especially econometrics" at this time, it is clear that my predecessor worked hard to ensure that the journal serves the global IS research community and faithfully represents different subcommunities and research traditions (Gupta 2022). The journal will continue on this inclusive path, with renewed vigor. I believe that the current editorial board, with the recent round of appointments, has unmatched breadth and depth of expertise and has the capability to evaluate and develop work from the different IS research traditions and on established as well as emergent topics.

There is a structural change in the editorial board that I would like to highlight. In addition to Senior Editors and Associate Editors, *ISR* will now have editorial review board (ERB) members. The ERB consists of a pool of experts who will serve as reviewers of submissions (where the set of reviewers for a submission can also include ad hoc reviewers). The backgrounds of ERB members encompass a diverse set of topics, theoretical perspectives, and methodologies. This addition to the editorial board also allows us to be more inclusive with respect to the demographics and career stage of those involved in the editorial process. As can be seen in our ERB list, there are early-career, midcareer, and even very senior researchers on the ERB. Many have served as Associate Editors, and some have been Senior Editors of leading IS journals. These experienced ERB members have also agreed to act as Guest Associate Editors if and when needed. Here is the link to the entire editorial board (<https://pubsonline.informs.org/page/isre/editorial-board>).

There are several reasons for initiating this addition to the editorial board structure. First, it allows the journal to recognize colleagues, including those relatively early in their careers, who are exceptional contributors to the journal review process—both in terms of the number of reviews and the quality of reviews. Second, it provides an additional way for *ISR* to bring expertise in house to the journal in areas that have traditionally not been seen as its strengths. I hope this change signals to the community that *ISR* is seriously committed to ensuring that manuscripts from different research traditions will receive a fair review from appropriately qualified individuals. Third, the ERB will serve as an inclusive pipeline for recruiting Associate Editors from those who have not been considered to be in the “*ISR* network” in the past but prove to be valuable in their role as ERB members and as Guest Associate Editors. Finally, the added capacity on the editorial board can be expected to contribute to the reduction of review cycle time.

### Emphasizing Contributions

The review process in leading journals such as *ISR* tends to focus a great deal on methodological rigor, which is necessary to ensure that the knowledge presented to the readers is trustworthy. Yet, this preoccupation with rigor among authors as well as the review teams sometimes results in papers that do not offer the extent of useful knowledge expected in a leading outlet. The tension between the “novel ideas” or the “core message” and the “quality of execution” in the review process has been discussed in past editorials, and tactics for addressing the issue have been suggested (e.g., Gupta 2018). Nevertheless, many IS scholars do hold the opinion that a good proportion of published papers are merely survivors of the strict methodological policing process that privileges excellence in execution at the expense of the novelty and value of the knowledge contributed.

A related issue is that even when a paper does offer meaningful contributions, it is often addressed to, and noticed by, only a small subcommunity of specialists and not the broader audience. For example, I doubt if the economics-of-IS research community is aware of the findings that have been offered by the qualitative research community on topics of common interest or vice versa. Similarly, I wonder if practitioners involved in systems design are aware of the latest findings that have been published by our design science research community.

To address these issues, *ISR* will introduce two changes.

1. Starting June 1, 2023, *ISR* will require a “contribution statement” in the cover letter of every submission. In fewer than 500 words, authors will need to clearly explain (a) how the paper adds to the existing literature

on the topic and/or can transform scholarship in this area and (b) how the paper can potentially influence practice, policy, or societal outcomes and when applicable, inform the broader discourse on the topic it addresses.

The Senior Editor and the Associate Editor will consider this statement as part of the screening process. Obviously, we do not expect that each manuscript will have all types of contributions. For example, a research note describing a methodological innovation may contribute more directly to scholarship (impact area (a)), with indirect impacts on other outcomes (impact area (b)).

2. Although the details are being worked out, I wanted to mention that *ISR* will likely ask the authors to develop an *impact supplement* of about 1,000 words to be published online with their accepted paper. An ERB member will work closely with the authors as they prepare the supplement after the formal acceptance of their paper. We expect to implement this change for papers accepted after December 31, 2023 after careful consideration of the relationship between the envisioned impact supplement and the “Research Spotlights” feature that *ISR* currently publishes. The impact supplement will be a summary of the paper and its implications especially written for the broader audience, including scholars who are not familiar with the specific literature on the topic, scholars who come from very different research traditions, practitioners and policy makers who may find the work of interest, and of course, our students.

Through these two changes, we anticipate a broader dissemination of knowledge and a higher impact of papers published in *ISR*.

### Reducing Review Cycle Time and Time to Final Decision

Authors expect to hear back from journals regarding their manuscripts submitted for publication consideration within a reasonable amount of time. Unfortunately, authors at *ISR* and at most other journals experience delays in the review process, sometimes waiting well over 180 days for feedback. At *ISR*, we are making it our top priority to keep the review cycle time to less than 120 days. We are implementing (a) tighter deadlines for each individual involved in the review process, (b) reminders that are progressively escalated to higher levels, (c) active monitoring for delays, and (d) swift action to replace reviewers whose personal circumstances at a given time may hold up the review process. In fact, with the new procedures being introduced, my hope is that the cycle time will be closer to 90 days than to 120 days. Obviously, there will be situations such as illnesses and unanticipated personal circumstances of the reviewers, the Associate Editor, or the Senior Editor, because of which the goal of 120 days will sometimes not be met, but the current Senior Editors and I are committed to keeping the number of manuscripts with review cycle times greater than 120 days to a very small proportion. Please

do not hesitate to write to me if your manuscript has been in the review process for more than 120 days, and I will make every effort to expedite the process.

We also want to address the relatively long time taken to reach the final decision, which is dependent on not only review cycle times but also, the time that authors take to revise manuscripts. Authors are generally given six months to submit their revised manuscripts. Yet, because of a variety of reasons, authors ask for multiple extensions, which tends to stretch the time between the submission of a manuscript and the final decision, whether positive or negative. Going forward, Senior Editors will not routinely approve extensions, and unless there are extenuating circumstances, they will extend the original submission deadline in a given review cycle by three months just once. Additional extensions in a given review cycle will require approval from the EiC. Furthermore, the current Senior Editors will no longer be offering the reject and resubmit option, which tends to stretch the life cycle of a manuscript for many years without any certainty of a positive outcome.

The preceding discussion is concerned with the *efficiency* (and primarily, the quantitatively measurable aspects) of the review process. No less important is the *effectiveness* (and primarily, the qualitatively observable aspects) of the review process. I will be convening members of the editorial board to discuss and act on the latter as well.

### Engaging with the Global IS Community

As a leading journal in the discipline, *ISR* understands the importance of being closely involved with the global IS community to nurture novel research from different traditions and geographical locations. To this end, *ISR* will be organizing paper development workshops targeted toward developing specific kinds of papers that we would like to publish. We will start with workshops related to design science and innovative mixed-methods research. *ISR* will also have reviewer workshops at prominent information systems conferences in different geographical regions, in collaboration with other journals when appropriate. The schedule for the workshops will be available on the *ISR* website.

### Other Issues

Beyond the four key objectives discussed, I would like to briefly mention a few other issues that may be of interest to the community. The first issue is related to the current submission process, whereas the others pertain to policies related to the appeals process, generative artificial intelligence systems, and data transparency considerations that will be formulated over the next few months.

1. It is important to ensure the integrity of the review process while being participative. Authors submitting

work to *ISR* need to nominate at least two Senior Editors, two Associate Editors, and two ERB members. Authors can also nominate other ad hoc reviewers. These nominations are a required component of the cover letter. Although we are pleased to consider authors' nominations for the review panel, it is absolutely critical that there be no conflict of interest between any member of the author team and those nominated. As noted in the *ISR* submission guidelines, "an author has a conflict of interest with (a) their major professor and students for whom an author has served as major professor, (b) people working at the same institution, and (c) coauthors on work completed or in progress during the previous four years". Furthermore, authors serving in editorial roles at *ISR* or at other journals must also not nominate colleagues whose manuscripts they are currently managing as Associate Editor or Senior Editor. When in doubt, please mention potential conflicts of interest in the cover letter. This policy will be followed strictly going forward.

2. *ISR* will implement a policy for handling appeals that is transparent and consistent. This is a priority for the Vice President (Publications) of INFORMS. I will be working with Advisory Senior Editors to finalize this policy soon.

3. We have all heard of generative artificial intelligence systems such as ChatGPT, sometimes with awe and, at other times, with skepticism. Commentaries highlight the many potential pitfalls and promises of systems based on Large Language Models. I will be consulting with the members of the editorial board to figure out how best to harness the benefits of such systems for our research endeavors and to develop guidelines for *ISR*; until then, I ask that authors submitting work to *ISR* either not use systems such as ChatGPT to develop their manuscripts or clearly disclose, in their cover letter and in the appropriate sections of their manuscript, how they have used such systems. Over the next few months, I expect that we will have a better understanding of how to move forward on this front.

4. Data transparency in the spirit of open science is also a priority. It is important for *ISR* to review what other journals have done regarding open science and possibly, to coordinate with them. Given the diversity of research published at *ISR*, I expect this initiative to define the data transparency policies to be complex, and we must proceed thoughtfully. Until we publish specific guidelines, please refer to the *Management Science* Policy for Data and Code Disclosure.

### Editorial Transitions

There are a number of Senior Editors and Associate Editors who retired from the board in December 2022. Many of them have served the journal over multiple terms. We are very grateful for their outstanding service to the journal and to the community.

**Retiring Senior Editors**

Manju Ahuja  
*University of Louisville*

Yulin Fang  
*University of Hong Kong*

Kai-Lung Hui  
*Hong Kong University of Science and Technology*

Paul Pavlou  
*University of Houston*

Sam Ransbotham  
*Boston College*

Yong Tan  
*University of Washington*

Giri Kumar Tayi  
*University at Albany State University of New York*

Michael Zhang  
*Chinese University of Hong Kong*

Eric Zheng  
*University of Texas at Dallas*

**Retiring Associate Editors**

Martin Bichler  
*Technical University of Munich*

Wendy Duan  
*George Washington University*

Yan Huang  
*Carnegie Mellon University*

Mingfeng Lin  
*Georgia Institute of Technology*

Huaxia Rui  
*University of Rochester*

Oliver Salge  
*RWTH Aachen University*

Choon Ling Sia  
*City University of Hong Kong*

Mingdi Xin  
*University of California, Irvine*

We are delighted to welcome the following members to the editorial board.

**Incoming Senior Editors**

Ravi Bapna  
*University of Minnesota*

Indranil Bardhan  
*University of Texas at Austin*

Martin Bichler  
*Technical University of Munich*

Sue Brown  
*University of Arizona*

Hsing Kenneth Cheng  
*University of Florida*

Alok Gupta (Advisory Senior Editor)  
*University of Minnesota*

Elena Karahanna (Advisory Senior Editor)  
*University of Georgia*

Eivor Oborn  
*The University of Warwick*

Jeffrey Parsons  
*University of Newfoundland*

Sundeep Sahay  
*University of Oslo*

Choon Ling Sia  
*City University of Hong Kong*

Sean Xin Xu  
*Tsinghua University*

Youngjin Yoo  
*Case Western Reserve University*

**Incoming Associate Editors**

Christy Cheung  
*Hong Kong Baptist University*

Steven L. Johnson  
*University of Virginia*

Paul Benjamin Lowry  
*Virginia Tech*

Abhay Mishra  
*Iowa State University*

Ning Nan  
*University of British Columbia*

Shirish Srivastava  
*HEC Paris*

Anjana Susarla  
*Michigan State University*

Chuan Hoo Tan  
*National University of Singapore*

I am especially excited to welcome members of our new ERB. Thank you all for agreeing to serve the *ISR* community.

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the *ISR* Editorial Search Committee for finding me suitable from among many highly qualified candidates and to Professor Alok Gupta, my immediate predecessor, who has led the journal with distinction for two terms. I am indebted for his support and guidance during the transition and wish him the best in his post-EiC endeavors. Fortunately for us, his post-EiC life includes serving as an Advisory Senior Editor for *ISR*.

Enjoy the issue!  
Suprateek Sarker, Editor-in-Chief

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