EDITOR'S COMMENTS

The *MIS Quarterly* Trifecta: Impact, Range, Speed

By: **Arun Rai**
        Editor-in-Chief, *MIS Quarterly*
        Regents' Professor of the University System of Georgia
        Robinson Chair of IT-Enabled Supply Chains and Process Innovation
        Harkins Chair of Information Sytems
        Robinson College of Business
        Georgia State University
        arunrai@gsu.edu

I am humbled and honored to begin my tenure as the 12th Editor-in-Chief at the *MIS Quarterly* with this issue. I would like to thank the members of the *MISQ* Policy Committee for their confidence in me as well as Georgia State University, and all of my colleagues in the field, for the encouragement and support.

MISQ in many ways is synonymous with the Information Systems discipline, with the inaugural issue published in 1977 and with this issue starting the 40th year of the journal's publication. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to grow as a scholar through my association with *MISQ* in various roles including reader, author, reviewer, associate editor, and senior editor. I am excited about working with the diverse intellectual talent in the IS scholarly community and taking *MISQ* to new heights in service to the knowledge creation and scholarly conversation activities in the IS discipline!

Over the last few months, people have asked me about my vision for *MISQ,* the initiatives that I will undertake as EIC, and what I hope will be my hallmark as EIC. I will devote my first editorial to share my thoughts on these questions.

Let me start by reflecting briefly about the current state of *MISQ,* describe what I refer to as the ***MIS Quarterly* trifecta vision** on which we will focus during my EIC tenure, and outline the initiatives that we will undertake to achieve this vision.

Current State of the MIS Quarterly

Past EICs have crafted and executed visions guided by the opportunities and issues in their tenure. Their visionary leadership of the journal, along with the dedicated work of the scholarly community in roles as authors, editors, and reviewers, has created a coveted position for *MISQ* as the "crown jewel" of the IS discipline.

The current *MISQ* fact sheet is impressive: the impact factors are very strong (2014 impact factor of 5.31; 5-year impact factor of 8.49), the journal is widely regarded as the premier journal of the IS discipline, and publications in *MISQ* are a strong currency in assessments related to promotion and tenure and faculty research performance. Not captured in the fact sheet is the global community's engagement with and commitment to *MISQ,* which I think is the biggest asset of the journal. The community's sense of pride in the journal and engagement with the journal as authors, editors, reviewers, and ambassadors provide a platform of shared ownership, excitement, energy, and intellectual resources to take *MISQ* to greater heights. It is based on this strong platform that we will embark on the *MIS Quarterly* trifecta vision.

The MIS Quarterly Trifecta Vision

The *MIS Quarterly* trifecta vision (Table 1) encompasses three complementary aspects:

1. **Impact,** where *MISQ* influences scholarship and practice as the leading source of novel and accreted IS knowledge that addresses significant problems facing the IS function, organizations, and society.

Table 1. The *MIS Quarterly* Trifecta Vision	
Element	**Description**
Impact	*MISQ* influences scholarship and practice as the leading source of novel and accreted IS knowledge
Range	*MISQ* exhibits range in types of published work with respect to • Problems that are investigated • Perspectives, theories, and methods that are employed • Stakeholders that are influenced
Speed	*MISQ* executes effective editorial processes in a timely manner

2. **Range,** where *MISQ* exhibits range in the types of work that it publishes with respect to problems investigated; perspectives, theories, and methods employed; and stakeholders influenced.

3. **Speed**, where *MISQ* executes effective editorial processes in a timely manner.

The *MIS Quarterly* trifecta vision encompasses outcomes, the types of work published, and the execution of editorial process.

Why the MIS Quarterly Trifecta Vision?

We are at a very exciting time in the history of the IS discipline, where we can have a deeper and broader impact on the IS function, organizations (including but not limited to business), and society. Advances in IS are creating new possibilities for the betterment of the world and are positioning IS to have a pivotal role in addressing the *big* issues of our time—for example, leveraging big data to create new approaches for learning and decision-making, uncovering agile approaches to develop systems, designing peer-to-peer markets, business model innovation, addressing privacy and security of digital assets, early detection and management of chronic diseases, and predicting crime and terrorism, to name just a few.

We are witnessing unprecedented advances in complementary information technologies and can expect to see acceleration in the scale and pace of technological innovation (Brynjolffson and McAfee 2014). The combination of social media, mobile technologies, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things is increasing the "connectedness" among individuals and devices. These interconnected technologies are generating real-time sensor data streams on states and events pertaining to employees, students, devices, and human subsystems (e.g., the cardiovascular or pulmonary subsystem). They are recording granular actions and interactions of humans and devices enabling us to observe behaviors at granular levels. Now, we are adding a "strong" layer of intelligence, or the "smart machine," to leverage these data streams. The rapid advances in machine learning and symbolic computing that we are witnessing are challenging long-held assumptions about the human–machine relationship in knowledge work and intellectual tasks.

Accompanying the unprecedented technological advances, we are seeing an interesting dynamic in human skills. On the one hand, digital natives, versatile in the use of technologies and adept at coding, are the new generation of employees and consumers. These digital natives are challenging assumptions about needs, roles, and processes for IS development and IS use. On the other hand, fast-changing technologies are leading to a shortage of employees that are skilled to manage complex digital infrastructures, develop applications, and use technologies effectively. These technologies are also displacing knowledge workers across a range of occupations creating concern on how to seize the opportunities of the technological advances while effectively managing change.

The advances in information technologies and dynamics in human skills are creating exciting avenues for impactful IS scholarship pertaining to areas such as

• *The IS function and IT services industry*—for example, the delivery of IT services; the design and governance of IT infrastructures and IT services; the processes to develop and implement systems with agility; and the role of IS in innovating business models and creating and appropriating business value.

- *Emerging digital phenomena affecting organizations and society*—for example, peer-to-peer markets that are propelling the sharing economy; new generation of winners with business models that challenge conventional wisdom about value creation; and the Internet of Things and smart machines that are enabling adaptive global supply chains and are empowering individuals and collectives.

- *Role of IS in addressing enduring organizational and societal problems*—for example, how can IS enable the expansion of healthcare literacy and preventive care to combat chronic disease, infant and maternal mortality, and drive down healthcare costs; how can cities, cars, or the electric grid be made "smart"; and how can structured and unstructured data streams be combined with big data analytics to predict purchasing, crime, or student failure?

- *Role of IS in addressing emergent "digital" problems*—for example, different types of security threats to digital infrastructures, cybercrime and cyberbullying, the dark web, and displacement of knowledge workers by smart machines.

This time in history is a great opportunity for IS scholarship to play a pivotal role and be at the forefront of knowledge creation pertaining to transformative digital phenomena and how IS can address problems and open up possibilities for the IS function, organizations, and society. Seizing this opportunity to lead in knowledge creation requires us to focus on impact of the scholarship; publish a wide range of work with respect to problems, perspectives, theories, and methods; and execute effective editorial processes in a timely manner.

Initiatives to Achieve the MIS Quarterly Trifecta Vision

Table 2 summarizes the initiatives, some new and some ongoing, that we will undertake to achieve the *MIS Quarterly* trifecta vision.

Impact

We will pursue the following initiatives to deepen and broaden *MISQ's* impact.

- *Publish work that introduces novel perspectives that address significant problems and work that advances the accretion of cumulative knowledge.*

  Novel research can contribute tremendously to the intellectual foundations and impact of academic disciplines. This is particularly true in a discipline such as IS where rapid technological innovation can inspire, or require, a fresh research lens into new opportunities and problems. As a scholarly community, we need to embrace and promote such research to move us forward as a vibrant discipline.

  Accretion of cumulative knowledge through the systematic pursuit of a problem, phenomenon, or theory can also be a powerful way to develop the intellectual foundations of the field and achieve impact. However, articles that make significant contributions in this manner may become fatalities of the review process *only* because what is studied is not "novel enough." Although novel research can be impactful, we need to heed caution in chasing novelty for novelty's sake. The dogged pursuit of novelty without consideration of purpose can have an important unintended consequence—a disconnected maze of one-off studies.[1]

---

[1]As elegantly noted in a recent editorial in the *Administrative Science Quarterly,* it can result in an incoherent sprawl of work with no useful purpose akin to the Winchester Mystery House where rooms or stairways have appealing features but the stairways go nowhere and end in ceilings, and doors open into walls (Davis 2015).

Table 2. Initiatives to Achieve the *MIS Quarterly* Trifecta Vision	
Element	**Description**
Impact	• Publish work that introduces novel perspectives that address significant problems and work that advances the accretion of cumulative knowledge • Establish *MISQ Research Curations* on selected topics that are go-to sources for scholars in IS and other disciplines • Leverage social media to inform, engage, and promote conversation about *MISQ* publications • Engage in global ambassadorial activities as EIC to broaden and deepen *MISQ's* connection with diverse stakeholders

Range	• Publish a wide range of work that spans
	   ○ Diverse problem domains
	   ○ Diverse IS research traditions
	   ○ The interstices of IS research traditions
	   ○ The interstices of IS with other disciplines
	   ○ Theory articles, including theory-generating literature synthesis
	   ○ Methods articles that are forward-looking
	• Appoint editors across diverse IS research traditions and boundary-spanning editors to attract and process a diverse pool of submissions

Speed	• Process 90% of manuscripts in 90 days
	• Editors' effective orchestration of the editorial process
	   ○ Prescreen manuscripts
	   ○ Reduce number of "full" rounds in the review process through judicious engagement of reviewer resources and timely disposition of publication likelihood
	   ○ Make a holistic assessment and manage the process to provide constructive feedback while striving to preserve the authors' voice
	• Development of editors, reviewers, and authors
	   ○ Establish editor best practices sharing forums
	   ○ Integrate developmental feedback to associate editors and reviewers in the review process
	   ○ Offer reviewer development workshops in all three Association for Information Systems regions
	   ○ Expand reviewer development online resources
	   ○ Offer author development workshops in all three Association for Information Systems regions
	   ○ Expand author development online resources

Achieving impact *both* from introducing novel perspectives as well as from contributing to the systematic accretion of knowledge are not necessarily mutually exclusive pursuits. Uzzi et al.'s (2013) study of the citation impact of 17.9 million research articles in the Web of Science, across 243 fields of science and across time, reveals a powerful insight: articles that draw *both* on novel and conventional combinations of prior work are twice as likely to be "hit" articles than those that rely *solely* on conventional combinations or *solely* on novel combinations.[2] This insight suggests that the pursuit of novelty and systematic accretion of knowledge are *not* opposing factors in producing scientific knowledge—rather, impactful research can be achieved by connecting novelty with established knowledge.

MISQ welcomes articles and will launch selected special issues on novel research that addresses significant problems, impacts scholarship in IS and other disciplines, and opens up stimulating new areas for research. It also welcomes articles that significantly contribute to the coherent accumulation of knowledge around a problem, phenomenon, or theory.

• *Establish MISQ Research Curations on selected topics that are go-to sources for scholars in IS and other disciplines.*

Although *MISQ* has published excellent articles on important topics, we have an opportunity to create bundles of these articles, thereby reducing search costs for scholars in IS and other disciplines and increasing the impact of the work. We are

---

[2]Hit articles are operationalized as those whose total citations, 8-years post-publication, places them in the upper 5th percentile of citations received by papers.

launching the *MISQ* Research Curations initiative to capture this opportunity. The purpose of *MISQ* Research Curations is to identify topics of significant interest to the IS and other disciplines, identify *MISQ* articles that make significant contributions to these topics, and provide researchers with easy access to a bundle of *MISQ* articles on which to further build or extend research. Each curation will include a short summary of the topic and the bundle of *MISQ* articles related to the topic. It will be accessible from the *MISQ* web site and will serve as a living document that is updated as new articles related to the topic are published in *MISQ*.

The *MISQ* Research Curations initiative will be managed by a Research Curations Editor in close collaboration with the EIC. The Research Curations Editor and the EIC will invite a team of researchers who collectively represent different perspectives related to a topic to develop a curation. I will share more about our kick-off of the Research Curations initiative later in this editorial.

• *Leverage social media to inform, engage, and promote conversation with the IS scholarly community about MISQ articles.*

We are planning social media initiatives to inform the community about accepted work and to promote conversations about published work (including Research Curations). You can expect to see *MISQ* and your work published in it featured and spreading through social media! I will discuss our social media initiatives in greater detail in a future editorial.

• *Engage in global ambassadorial activities.*

As EIC, I will actively promote *MISQ's* positioning to publish impactful work across IS research traditions as well as work that breaks new ground and opens up avenues for scholarship. I will use these ambassadorial activities to showcase the impact of the work that is published in *MISQ*.

Range

With the rich diversity of IS research traditions, scholarly contributions can be achieved through different types of work. *MISQ* seeks to reflect the rich diversity of IS scholarship by publishing a range of work as described next.

• *Publish work across diverse problem domains.*

As discussed earlier in this editorial, discrete IT capability shifts and transformative digital phenomena are creating opportunities to understand how enduring and emergent problems in organizations and society can be effectively addressed through IS solutions. Transformative digital phenomena are also introducing new problems for organizations and society that need to be understood and addressed. *MISQ* welcomes work that significantly expands our understanding about the role of IS across diverse problems in organizations and society and how IS can be leveraged to address these problems.

• *Publish work across diverse IS research traditions, intradisciplinary work, and interdisciplinary work.*

Looking at problems and phenomena from diverse perspectives—behavioral, design science, economics, or organizational—enables us to develop a much richer understanding about IS and strengthen the intellectual foundations of the discipline. Over the years, *MISQ* has taken initiatives to attract and publish work across diverse IS research traditions (Goes 2013; Straub 2008). In addition, the nature of many problems and digital phenomena requires us to create knowledge through *intradisciplinary* research at the interstices of siloed IS research traditions, where there are important questions about the interdependencies among elements of design, economics, behavior, and organization (Goes 2013). Finally, as an expanding number of digital phenomena as well as complex problems that can be addressed through IS reside at the knowledge boundaries of IS with other disciplines (e.g., computer science, economics, marketing, medicine, psychology, sociology, and statistics), there is also a need for *interdisciplinary* research that creates knowledge at the interstices of IS with other disciplines. The breakthroughs that can be achieved from interdisciplinary approaches are exemplified in Williamson's (2009) Nobel Prize in Economics acceptance speech, where he describes how his Nobel-winning work on transaction cost economics resulted from combining economics, organization theory, and contract law.

As a "big tent" journal, *MISQ* welcomes work from all IS research traditions, intradisciplinary work that creates knowledge at the interstices of largely siloed IS research traditions, and interdisciplinary work that elaborates our understanding of IS and catalyzes breakthrough research at the interstices of IS and other disciplines.

•   *Publish theory articles*.

MISQ has a history of welcoming and publishing impactful theory papers (Rivard 2014; Webster and Watson 2002; Zmud 1998). It welcomes theory articles that significantly advance our theoretical understanding about IS through theory-generating literature synthesis or through other approaches to theory development (e.g., conceiving novel theories, combining theoretical perspectives, problematization of assumptions). With the increasing diversity in the domains of IS and the cross-disciplinary nature of digital phenomena, we are at an exciting point in our history as a discipline where IS theory can have a significant impact not only in the IS discipline but also in a range of other disciplines that are interested in and are being affected by digital phenomena. Given this increasing diversity in the domains of IS theories and the breadth of domain expertise among senior editors, we will now process theory papers by assigning the article to a senior editor with the relevant domain expertise.

•   *Publish forward-looking methods articles.*

MISQ welcomes methods articles that are forward-looking and open up new ways for the IS research community to conduct research. *MISQ* is particularly interested in methodological advances that will enable scholars to better understand IS and complex digital phenomena. For example, when, where, and how can recent advances in computational approaches to analyze large qualitative data sets be combined with other qualitative methods to generate insights about IS that may not have been possible earlier? How can novel forms of digital traces—structured or unstructured—about IS use be captured, collated, validated, and analyzed to learn more about the effectiveness of IS design interventions? Articles that are relevant *only* to methodologists or are of an incremental debate nature pertaining to refinements of well-established methods are not well suited for *MISQ*.

•   *Breadth of editorial appointments*.

Given the range of work that *MISQ* seeks to publish, we will continue to make editorial appointments across IS research traditions and of boundary spanners to attract and process a diverse pool of submissions.

Speed

We will pursue a set of practices that will enable us to execute effective editorial processes in a timely manner. Our target is to process 90% of manuscripts in 90 days and to reduce the number of "full" rounds in the review process. The set of practices reflect an editorial philosophy that editors' effective orchestration of the editorial process, coupled with the development of stakeholders—specifically, editors, reviewers, and authors—to execute their roles, can improve the speed of the editorial process.

•   *Effective orchestration of the editorial process*.

    ○   Prescreening by senior and associate editors: Senior editors, potentially in conjunction with associate editors, will pre-screen manuscripts to make an early assessment of the potential contribution of the work and the nature of the issues. In cases where they identify significant issues, they may either return the manuscript to the authors for remediation before further peer review or reject the manuscript.

    ○   Reduction in number of full rounds of review through judicious engagement of reviewer resources and timely disposition of publication likelihood: Senior and associate editors will collaborate in establishing a panel of reviewers with the required expertise to assess the work and in engaging reviewer resources judiciously at each stage in the process. They will consider the role of a reviewer in meaningfully contributing to the review process at each stage in the process. For example, reviewers with theoretical or methodological expertise in an area may be requested to focus their assessments

on specific issues that correspond to their expertise. Additionally, selective, or no, reviewer engagement may be warranted as the review process progresses into advanced rounds. Ideally, the senior editor will make a disposition on the publication likelihood of a manuscript by the end of the second full round—that is, after reviewers have assessed the manuscript twice.

o   Editors make a holistic assessment and manage the process to provide constructive feedback to authors while striving to preserve the authors' voice: Senior and associate editors will make a holistic assessment about a manuscript, with a focus on contributions and addressability of issues. Editors and reviewers providing constructive suggestions on how authors may be able to address issues and improve the manuscript is clearly one of the most important virtues of the peer review process. However, there is need for caution in going overboard as overzealous editors and reviewers may stretch their role into an authorial role and drown the voice of the author (Miller and Van de Ven 2015). Strong editors can play a pivotal role in managing the process so the virtues of constructive feedback are achieved in a way that preserves the voice of the authors.

• *Development of editors, reviewers, and authors*

We plan to promote the development of editors and reviewers by (1) establishing best practices sharing forums for editors, (2) providing developmental feedback to associate editors and reviewers based on their performance in the review process, (3) offering reviewer development workshops in all three Association for Information Systems regions, and (4) expanding online resources for reviewer development.

In addition, we plan to offer author development workshops in all three Association for Information Systems regions and expand author development online resources. Manuscripts that are better developed are easier and faster to review and result in better feedback for the authors. Through author development initiatives, we seek to positively impact the quality of initial submissions and of revised work submitted by the authors, thereby making the editorial processing of work expedient.

New Senior Editor and Associate Editor Appointments

I am delighted to welcome three senior editors, in alphabetical order by last name: Hsinchun Chen (University of Arizona) who brings significant expertise in design science and analytics and in the domains of security and health; Omar El Sawy (University of Southern California) who brings significant expertise in digital strategy, digital transformation, and digital innovation; and Sean Xin Xu (Tsinghua University) who brings significant expertise in the business value of IT and the interstice of economics and organizational perspectives.

I am also delighted to welcome nine associate editors (in alphabetical order by last name) who bring a diverse range of expertise to the editorial board: Anne Beaudry (Concordia University), Hasan Cavusoglu (University of British Columbia), Panos Constantinides (University of Warwick), Steven Johnson (University of Virginia), Xinxin Li (University of Connecticut), Abhay Mishra, (Georgia State University), Balaji Padmanabhan (University of South Florida), Chuan Hoo Tan (National University of Singapore), and Anthony Vance (Brigham Young University).

I invite you to learn more about the outstanding qualifications and the range of expertise of our team of senior and associate editors by visiting the *MISQ* web site.

Launch of MISQ Research Curations

I am pleased to welcome Ashley Bush (Florida State University) as the inaugural Research Curations Editor. Ashley has been working with me to launch the initiative. Our first curation is themed *Securing Digital Assets*. We have created a team of three scholars, who bring complementary perspectives and have conducted significant research in this area, to develop this curation— Kai-Lung Hui (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology) who brings economics and policy perspectives, Anthony

Vance (Brigham Young University) who brings a behavioral perspective, and Dmitry Zhdanov (University of Connecticut) who brings a design science perspective. We will inform the community once this curation is developed.

A Vote of Thanks to Paulo Goes' Outstanding Service as EIC

I would like to close my inaugural editorial with a note of deep appreciation for everything that Paulo Goes has accomplished during his tenure as EIC of *MISQ*. Paulo has been an articulate ambassador for the journal and its positioning as a big tent journal that is the face of the IS discipline. He has served as a centripetal force that has attracted the best talent and work from the different IS research traditions to *MISQ*, has promoted conversations among scholars from different IS research traditions, and has been a proponent of breaking down silos within the discipline. I am excited to build on the strong platform that Paulo has established during his tenure and look forward to doing so through the initiatives outlined in this editorial.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the excellent support at the University of Minnesota for *MISQ's* editorial and production processes. Alok Gupta, as Publisher of *MISQ*, has done an outstanding job in strategically managing the publishing process and the resource base of the journal. I appreciate his enthusiastic support for the range of initiatives that we plan to undertake. Jan DeGross has served as Managing Editor since 2000 and has ensured the smooth production process of the journal. Jennifer Syverson, as Review Coordinator, has ably managed the submission and review processes through ScholarOne Manuscripts even with dramatic increases in submissions. I am fortunate to work with these outstanding individuals at Minnesota who are strongly dedicated to *MISQ*. I appreciate all their help during the transition period and look forward to working with them to take *MISQ* to new heights!

References

Brynjolfsson, E., and McAfee, A. 2014. *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

Davis, G. F. 2015. "Editorial Essay: What Is Organizational Research For?," *Administrative Science Quarterly* (60:2), pp. 179-188.

Goes, P. B. 2013. "Editor's Comments: Commonalities Across IS Silos and Intradisciplinary Information Systems Research," *MIS Quarterly* (37:2), pp. iii-viii.

Miller, C. C., and Van de Ven, A. 2015. "Peer Review, Root Canals, and Other Amazing Life Events," *Academy of Management Discoveries*, (1:2), pp. 117-123.

Rivard, S. "Editor's Comments: The Ions of Theory Construction," *MIS Quarterly* (38:2), pp. iii-xiii.

Straub, D. W. 2008. "Editor's Comments: Thirty Years of Service to the IS Profession: Time for Renewal at MISQ?," *MIS Quarterly* (32:1), pp. iii-viii.

Uzzi, B., Mukherjee, S., Stringer, M., and Jones, B. 2013. "Atypical Combinations and Scientific Impact," *Science* (342:6157), pp. 468-472.

Webster, J., and Watson, R. 2002. "Analyzing the Past to Prepare for the Future: Writing a Literature Review," *MIS Quarterly* (26:2), pp. xiii-xxiii.

Williamson, O. E. 2009. "Transaction Cost Economics: The Natural Progression," Nobel Prize in Economics Lecture delivered on December 8, 2009 (http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economic-sciences/laureates/2009/williamson_lecture.pdf, Accessed on January 4, 2016).

Zmud, R. W. 1998. "Editor's Comments," *MIS Quarterly* (22:2), pp. xxx-xxxii.