Check for updates

An increase in MIS publication outlets and changing journal management inspire this update and reassessment.

Forums for MIS Scholars

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Where should I publish my scholarly research? is a question often heard in academic circles. On the surface this appears to be a trivial question. However, when one considers the vast number of journals available, the pressure on faculty to publish, and the impact of publishing on promotion and tenure, the question no longer seems trivial. As early as 1983, Hamilton and Ives [6] noted that the abundance of journals and long publication lead times made it important to identify journal quality so researchers know where to submit their work.

Many parties other than MIS faculty have an interest in the quality ratings of MIS publication outlets: (1) selection, promotion, and tenure committees seeking to secure and retain the best faculty [3, 7]; (2) journal editors and associates seeking to raise the quality of their journals [12]; (3) students of the discipline seeking to gain an understanding of the field [6, 11]; (4) members of the MIS field as it continues to mature as a discipline [6, 11]; and (5) librarians seeking to invest wisely their ever-decreasing funds [12]. Overall, the determination of journal quality helps to further the MIS discipline.

Several studies have evaluated the quality of MIS publication outlets. However, as Gillenson and Stutz [5] note: "earlier studies addressed the issue of MIS journals in a variety of ways, no two quite the same." An assortment of methods has been used to assess journal quality. Some have used a numeric scale to assign ratings to various journals [5, 6, 12]. Others have asked respondents to rank the journals in some fashion [3, 7]. Most of the studies asked a cross-section of MIS faculty to evaluate the journals [3, 6, 7, 12]; although at least one polled specific members of the MIS faculty such as department chairs or senior faculty [5]. The only thing these studies have in common is that they all attempt to do the same thing—identify the quality of journals.

The study described in this article is a follow-up and update to the 1991 study[1] by Walstrom et al. [12], using the same population and data collection instrument; thus allowing a direct comparison to be made between the findings in this study and those of the 1991 study.

MIS faculty in the U.S. and Canada were asked to rate 53 journals according to their appropriateness as publication outlets and 11 conferences according to their value to the MIS field. Over 350 responses were received—by far the largest sample for this type of

[1] Data for this study was collected in 1991.

study in the MIS field. The results of this study not only provide a current picture of publication quality, but also the change in quality since 1991.

Data Collection

Questionnaires were sent to all 2,070 MIS faculty members in the U.S. and Canada listed in the *1995 Directory of Management Information Systems Faculty* [2]. The questionnaire asked respondents to rate[2] 53 journals[3] according to one of the following categories (adopted from [8]):

1 = Not appropriate as publication outlet
2 = Appropriate as an outlet for publication
3 = Significant as an outlet for publication
4 = Outstanding as an outlet for publication

No attempt was made to separate academic and practitioner journals; thus removing researcher bias and allowing respondents to determine the value of each journal as a publication outlet [8]. As in the previous Walstrom et al. [12] study, respondents were asked to suggest additional journals and their respective ratings.

The questionnaire also asked respondents to rate 11 conferences[4] according to one of the following categories:

1 = No value to the MIS field
2 = Little value to the MIS field
3 = Valuable to the MIS field
4 = Very valuable to the MIS field

Results

Respondents. A total of 370 responses were received (18% response rate). Of those, 352 contained usable information (17% usable response rate). Although the response rate was disappointing, it was not surprising. To maintain respondents' anonymity, questionnaires were not coded. Subsequently, the issuance of follow-up questionnaires directed specifically to non-respondents was not possible, which hindered the overall response rate [4, 10]. In this case, due to the large initial mailing, a sufficient number of responses was received. In comparison, the largest response reported in previous studies of journal rankings was 139 [7].

A profile of the respondents is provided in Table 1. Overall, the respondents are split almost evenly between full, associate, and assistant professors, and the majority of respondents hold a Ph.D. (97%) in MIS (65%).

Journal Ratings. A summary of the responses for each journal appears in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 provides a ranking of the journals based on mean; Table 3 groups the journals by median and mode. Mean ratings facilitate the ranking of journals, whereas median and mode are more appropriate for grouping the journals. Past related research has used all of these methods (or a subset of them) to present their values.

According to the mean score, the top four journals are *MIS Quarterly (MISQ), Information Systems Research (ISR), Management Science (MS),* and *Communications of the ACM (CACM*). This group is statistically distinct ($p<0.10$)[5] from the remaining set of journals, and could be considered the "top tier" of journals.

Although the mean score provides a good indication of quality relative to all other journals and may be used to identify significant groupings, the median and mode could also be used. Therefore, median and mode are provided for the benefit of delineating groups of journals. Overall, four publications are set apart as "outstanding as an outlet for publication" when grouped by median: *MISQ, ISR, MS,* and *CACM* (coincidentally, these are the top four journals identified earlier according to mean score). Several additional journals are identified as "outstanding" based upon mode: *Journal of MIS, Decision Sciences, IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering, Organization Science, Harvard Business Review, Academy of Management Journal, Administrative Science Quarterly, Operations Research,* and *Academy of Management Review*. Groups receiving a median or mode of three would be considered "significant as an outlet for publication." The remaining two groups that received a median or mode of 2 or 1 would be interpreted as "appropriate as an outlet for publication" and "not appropriate as publication outlet," respectively. In this case, only two journals—*Quality Progress* and *PC World*—do not appear to be appropriate as outlets for publication.

The concept of applying labels to journal group-

Table 1. Respondents' profile

Rank		Underlying Discipline		Degree	
Full Professor	31%	MIS	65%	Ph.D.	97%
Associate Professor	36%	MS/POM	11%	A.B.D.	1%
Assistant Professor	32%	Management	5%	Master's	2%
Other	2%	Computer Science	5%	Bachelor's	0%
		Other	15%		

[2]Due to the number of publication outlets, respondents were asked to rate, rather than rank, the outlets. Rating allows the outlets to be evaluated one at a time rather than requiring simultaneous consideration of all outlets [9].
[3]The current list was compiled from the original list (27 journals) used in [12] and the additions suggested by respondents in that study. Self-selection of journals can bias the results. Thus, this study built the list of journals from previous studies only.
[4]The list of conferences was also compiled from [12].

[5]Significance determined by Duncan's Multiple Range test on the means. This test lists the meanings in descending order and indicates significant groups ($p \leq 0.10$).

Table 2. Journal ratings by mean

	N	Mean	Previous Mean	First Published
1. MIS Quarterly	316	3.72	3.82	1977
2. Information Systems Research	265	3.71	3.60	1990
3. Management Science	285	3.58	3.54	1954
4. Communications of ACM	318	3.49	3.77	1958
5. Journal of MIS	268	3.32	3.18	1984
6. Decision Sciences	283	3.28	3.16	1970
7. IEEE Trans on Software Engineering	217	3.19	3.26	1975
8. Organization Science	181	3.14		1990
9. Harvard Business Review	314	3.12	3.09	1922
10. Decision Support Systems	241	3.06	2.94	1985
11. ACM Trans on Database Systems	228	3.04	3.25	1976
12. Any IEEE publication	177	3.02		----
13. Sloan Management Review	270	3.01	2.85	1959
14. ACM Computing Surveys	260	2.97	3.07	1969
15. Academy of Management Journal	249	2.96	2.70	1958
16. Administrative Science Quarterly	232	2.94		1956
17. Any ACM publication	175	2.94		----
18. Operations Research	179	2.92	2.56	1953
19. Academy of Management Review	240	2.88	2.63	1976
20. Information and Management	242	2.87	2.88	1977
21. Org'l Behavior and Human Decision	141	2.79		1966
22. Int'l Journal of Human-Computer Studies	122	2.78		1969
23. Human-Computer Interaction	148	2.74		1985
24. OMEGA	164	2.70	2.66	1973
25. Journal of Strategic Info Systems	157	2.66		1992
26. Journal of Database Management	127	2.66		1990
27. Journal of Computer Information Systems	173	2.58	2.29	1960
28. Interfaces (INFORMS)	226	2.57	2.55	1970
29. DATA BASE	254	2.56	2.55	1969
30. Journal of Information Systems Mgmt	171	2.55	2.58	1984
31. Knowledge Based Systems	83	2.52		1987
32. Journal of Operations Research	145	2.52		1980
33. Journal of Systems and Software	116	2.50		1979
34. Expert Systems with Applications	121	2.47		1990
35. Information Resources Mgmt Journal	187	2.47		1988
36. Behavior and Information Technology	115	2.44		1987
37. INFOR	125	2.40		1963
38. Expert Systems Review	112	2.39		1988
39. Journal of Information Systems (Acct)	116	2.39		1986
40. Journal of Systems Management	173	2.38	2.45	1948
41. Journal of Information Systems (Educ)	127	2.37		1988
42. Computers in Human Behavior	97	2.32		1985
43. Communication Research	111	2.27		1941
44. Journal of End-User Computing	116	2.23		1989
45. Simulation	100	2.23		1963
46. AI Expert	194	2.23		1987
47. Journal of Software Maintenance	90	2.19		1989
48. Interface (the Education Journal)	158	2.12		1969
49. Computers and Automation	87	2.11		1953
50. IBSCUG Quarterly	111	1.96		1990
51. Datamation	283	1.84	2.00	1956
52. Quality Progress	78	1.62		1968
53. PC World	242	1.41		1983

[5]. Because of the subjectivity involved, the process of applying labels to the groups is left to the reader.

Tables 2 and 3 also show the number of respondents who rated the journal (N), and the rating (mean, median, or mode) received in the previous Walstrom et al. [12] study. A blank "previous" column indicates the journal was not included in the previous study.

Conference Ratings. The ratings for the 11 conferences are shown in Table 4. This table reflects a ranking of the conferences based upon mean, median, and mode. In this case the order of the conferences did not change among the statistics. Clearly, the top-rated conference is the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS), as demonstrated by mean, median, and mode. The Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS), International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP), Decision Support Systems (DSS), and National Decision Sciences Institute (DSI) are also highly rated.

Discussion

Journal Ratings. The top-rated journals appear to be *MISQ, ISR, MS,* and *CACM*, according to mean and median. Classification by mode adds several more journals to the list of top journals, although *MISQ, ISR, MS,* and *CACM* are still in the top group. Further investigation of the journal ratings yields several interesting observations.

The "top 10" journal rankings have shown relative stability since 1991. With the exception of *Organization Science*, which was not included in the previous study, no journal in the top 10 moved more than two

ings, such as "A-level journals," "B-level journals," and so on, can be arbitrary. For example, the top four journals in this study are considered "outstanding as an outlet for publication" and may be labeled "A-level journals"; others may consider these "A+ journals"

positions. The stability among the top journals may be an indication that a consensus is forming concerning the "top MIS journals."

Table 3. Journal ratings by median and mode

	N	Median	Previous Median	Mode	Previous Mode
MIS Quarterly	316	4	4	4	4
Information Systems Research	265	4	4	4	4
Management Science	285	4	4	4	4
Communications of ACM	318	4	4	4	4
Journal of MIS	268	3	3	4	3
Decision Sciences	283	3	3	4	3
IEEE Trans on Software Engineering	217	3	3	4	3
Organization Science	181	3		4	
Harvard Business Review	314	3	3	4	4
Academy of Management Journal	249	3	2	4	2
Administrative Science Quarterly	232	3		4	
Operations Research	179	3	3	4	3
Academy of Management Review	240	3	3	4	2
Decision Support Systems	241	3	3	3	3
ACM Trans on Database Systems	228	3	3	3	3
Any IEEE publication	177	3		3	
Sloan Management Review	270	3	3	3	2
ACM Computing Surveys	260	3	3	3	3
Any ACM publication	175	3		3	
Information and Management	242	3	3	3	3
Org'l Behavior and Human Decision	141	3		3	
Int'l Journal of Human-Computer Studies	122	3		3	
Human-Computer Interaction	148	3		3	
OMEGA	164	3	3	3	3
Journal of Strategic Info Systems	157	3		3	
Journal of Database Management	127	3		3	
Journal of Operations Research	145	3		3	
Journal of Computer Information Systems	173	3	2	2	2
Interfaces (INFORMS)	226	3	2	2	2
DATA BASE	254	3	2.5	2	2
Knowledge Based Systems	83	3		2	
Journal of Information Systems Mgmt	171	2	2	2	2
Journal of Systems and Software	116	2		2	
Expert Systems with Applications	121	2		2	
Information Resources Mgmt Journal	187	2		2	
Behavior and Information Technology	115	2		2	
INFOR	125	2		2	
Expert Systems Review	112	2		2	
Journal of Information Systems (Acct)	116	2		2	
Journal of Systems Management	173	2	2	2	2
Journal of Information Systems (Educ)	127	2		2	
Computers in Human Behavior	97	2		2	
Communication Research	111	2		2	
Journal of End-User Computing	116	2		2	
Simulation	100	2		2	
AI Expert	194	2		2	
Journal of Software Maintenance	90	2		2	
Interface (the Education Journal)	158	2		2	
Computers and Automation	87	2		2	
IBSCUG Quarterly	111	2		2	
Datamation	283	2	2	2	2
Quality Progress	78	1		1	
PC World	242	1		1	

As suggested by Culnan and Swanson [1], MIS continues to progress as a scholarly field of study that has emerged from the foundational disciplines of management science, computer science, and organizational science. An examination of the top 10 journals lends support to these assertions. For the first time, two "pure" MIS journals have been rated the top two journals (*MISQ* and *ISR*). Four of the top 10 are pure MIS journals (*MISQ, ISR, Journal of MIS,* and *Decision Support Systems*). Of the remaining six journals, there are two each from management science (*Management Science, Decision Science*), computer science (*CACM, IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*), and organizational science (*Harvard Business Review, Organization Science*). The journal ratings suggest MIS is emerging as a separate and distinct field of study, yet is still very much dependent on the reference disciplines, which would account for the high value placed upon journals of the reference disciplines.

Several journals enjoyed noticeable improvements in mean rating since the last study. *Academy of Management Journal, Operations Research, Academy of Management Review,* and *Journal of Computer Information Systems* all increased their mean ratings by at least 10%. Although several journals decreased slightly in mean rating since the last study, no journal decreased notice-

ably (more than 10%).

Number of Journals. In addition to rating the 53 specified journals, respondents suggested over 180 different journals as additions to the list of journals. Journals receiving eight or more write-in votes (ratings) include: *Journal of Organizational Computing* (23), *Information Systems* (11), *ACM Transactions on Information Systems* (9), *Journal of Information Technology* (9), *ORSA Journal on Computing* (9), *European Journal of Information Systems* (8), *IEEE Transactions on Data and Knowledge Engineering* (8), and *Journal of Global Information Systems* (8). It is interesting to note that the aforementioned journals receiving write-in votes are, for the most part, "pure" MIS journals, which supports the earlier suggestion that MIS is continuing to define itself as a separate discipline.

Table 4. Conference ratings by mean, median, and mode

	N	Mean	Median	Mode
1. ICIS	314	3.69	4	4
2. HICSS	249	3.33	3	3
3. IFIP	170	3.14	3	3
4. DSS	164	2.94	3	3
5. DSI -National	256	2.93	3	3
6. SIM	165	2.75	3	3
7. IACIS	116	2.74	3	3
8. INFORMS	242	2.62	3	3
9. IRMA	169	2.53	3	3
10. Academy of Mgmt	227	2.48	3	3
11. DSI - Regional	204	2.35	2	2

When one considers the suggested additions, it appears that there are over 200 appropriate publishing outlets for MIS research. Of course, many of these journals are only known by small groups of people. This realization is one reason for including the number of respondents that rated each of the 53 journals listed on the survey. Generally, those journals that are well known are also highly ranked. For example, *MISQ* and *CACM*, two of the top journals, were also rated more often than any other publications. With the plethora of journals available as outlets, it is important that MIS researchers be made aware of the various publishing opportunities. The high number of people unfamiliar with many of the journals should send a message to the respective editors to "get the word out" about their journals.

Age of Journals. An analysis of the "birth year" of each journal, as listed in the right column of Table 2, provides some interesting observations. First, the top two journals are less than 20 years old. In fact, all four of the pure MIS journals in the top 10 are less than 20 years old. This, of course, is intuitively obvious due to the relative young age of MIS as a separate field of study. *ISR* (circa 1990) has garnered tremendous respect from the MIS academic community as reflected by its high ranking. Second, three of the top 25 journals—*Organization Science, Journal of Strategic Information Systems,* and *Journal of Database Management*—are all less than 10 years old and did not appear in the previous study. This represents an impressive introduction of these journals in a field with a plethora of existing publication outlets. Some new journals to watch in the future, based upon the number of write-in votes, include *Journal of Organizational Computing* and *Journal of Global Information Systems*.

Conferences. The top-rated conference, ICIS, is rated significantly higher ($p<0.10$)[6] than the other conferences. It is also ranked number one according to median and mode. Much like the journal ratings, this implies that MIS faculty are identifying themselves as a separate discipline by rating a "pure" MIS conference at the top. In fact, the top four conferences are "pure" MIS. Interestingly, the DSS conference has been defunct since 1992, yet was ranked fourth overall and was rated by 164 people.

The findings presented here are consistent with the 1991 study. According to the number of times indicated (via an open-ended question in the 1991 study), ICIS was ranked number one, followed in order by National DSI, HICSS, DSS, and INFORMS (formerly ORSA/TIMS). In comparison, the top conferences in this study are ICIS, HICSS, IFIPS, DSS, and National DSI. Similar to the journals reported earlier, "pure" MIS conferences occupy the top positions and continue to grow in value to the field, whereas multidisciplinary conferences, such as DSI and INFORMS, have declined in rank.

In addition to the choices provided, respondents suggested 43 other conferences that were of value to the MIS field. The newly formed Association for Information Systems (AIS) conference (circa 1995) received 28 write-in votes, which indicates that in the near future AIS may be a highly valued conference for MIS faculty. (At the time of this study, AIS had yet to have its first meeting!) Of the suggested additions, the International Academy of Information Management (IAIM) and the Information Systems Education Conference (ISECON) received eight and five write-in votes, respectively.

Conclusion

This study, a follow-up to a 1991 study, was undertaken to determine the perceptions of MIS faculty

[6]This was determined using Duncan's Multiple Range test.

regarding the quality of journals and conferences as publication outlets. MIS faculty were asked to rate journals with regard to their appropriateness for MIS publication and rate conferences based upon their value to the MIS field. Overall results indicate that the top four journals in MIS are *MIS Quarterly, Information Systems Research, Management Science,* and *Communications of the ACM*; the top conference is the International Conference on Information Systems. This follow-up study has provided results to compare with those of the previous study: Comparison with the results from 1991 reveals relative stability of the ranking of the top-10 journals, although the top two journals now appear to be two "pure" MIS journals—*MISQ* and *ISR*. C

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