Editorial for The Australasian Journal of Information Systems 2021: Volume 25

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When I was appointed Editor-in-Chief of the Australasian Journal of Information Systems in late 2020 I was asked by the selection panel to reinstate on a more regular basis an Editorial for the journal. The journal does currently not publish numbered issues, but a yearly volume that consists of regular IS research articles and specific thematic special sections which are published throughout a year.

Thus, as my inaugural year of serving in the position is about to conclude, and with the now available full volume 25, I follow the panel's request and provide my first editorial reflections.

First of all I like to thank the Australasian Information Systems (IS) community for entrusting the journal to me after welcoming and integrating me into its fellowship no longer than 8 years ago when I relocated to Australia. In particular I am grateful to my predessor Dr John Lamp who set a high bar. He transferred the journal into a fully online publication, submitted it to numerous indices and ranking schemes, linked it to the the ORCID author identification, implemented DOIs and added a QR code to each article. He also realized the journal's social media presence on linkedin, Twitter, Facebook, as well as the distribution of relevant journal announcements through major IS related mailing lists. Last but not least he created a viable technical infrastructure within the open source review system OJS (Open Journal Systems) which we use. I inherited well documented processes and John had the generosity to handover the journal in several additional face-to-face sessions at his home office to explain and introduce me to the system's unavoidable idiosyncrasies which are best experienced hands-on beyond any well-written documentation.

AJIS is an open access journal with an inclusive approach to represent the diversity and cultural richness of our region. Naturally my editorship is impacted by my understandig of the IS discipline. Professor Allen Lee has expressed this understanding more elegantly than I am able to do in one of his editorial comments when he served as Editor-in-Chief of *Management Information Systems Quarterly* (*MISQ*); I therefore quote him directly

> "Research in the information systems field examines more than just the technological system, or just the social system, or even the two side by side; in addition, it investigates the phenomena that emerge when the two interact. This embodies both a research perspective and a subject matter that differentiate the academic field of information systems from other disciplines. In this regard, our field's so-called 'reference disciplines' are actually poor models for our own field. They focus on the behavioral or the technological, but not on the emergent sociotechnical phenomena that set our field apart. For this reason, I no longer refer to them as reference disciplines, but as 'contributing disciplines' at best." (Lee, 2001, pg. iii)

I follow this commitment to the sociotechnical perspective as a foundation of the IS discipline by not only synergistically connecting instrumental results such as efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and, I might add, profitability, which usually dominate IS research in business and commercial contexts, with humanistic outcomes such as well-being, equality, empowerment, and freedom as put forward in a recent plea by Sarker, Chatterjee, Xiao, and Elbanna (2019), but by balancing the two types of outcomes, if not privileging humanistic over instrumental outcomes.

On this background, reinforced by the current trend of digitalisation and digital transformation (Vial, 2019; Wessel, Baiyere, Ologeanu-Taddei, Cha, and Jensen, 2021) enabled and driving by the convergence of SMAC – social, mobile, analytics, and cloud computing technology developments (Legner, Eymann, Hess, Matt, Böhmann, Drews, Mädche, Urbach, Ahlemann, 2017) in among others the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, and blockchain to name a few, and in this context a rising need and interest in ethical, privacy, and security issues, Majchrzak, Markus, and Wareham (2016) question the historical view that organisations are the centre of customary IS research. They advocate IS research that transcends organisational boundaries and emphasises concepts like emergence, networks, and ecosystems.

Sørensen (2016) likewise calls for abandoning the traditional focus on individual organisations as stable units of analysis in IS research and promotes a focus on new sociotechnical phenomena that include service ecosystems and service platforms. Sørensen and Landau (2015) challenge conventional wisdom in the IS discipline and require novel academic agility to explore these new horizons rather than stay within conventional boundaries and de Reuver, Sørensen, and Basole (2018) offer an actual agenda for IS research based among others on the concept of digital platforms and the ecosystem metaphor. This is the environment in which I see the AJIS.

Furthermore, of the two foundational concepts of our discipline 'information' and 'system', beyond the sociotechnical perspective I have always been fascinated by the latter which with the ongoing shift from a goods dominant to a service dominant society (Lusch and Vargo, 2019; Kazaman and Chen, 2009) re-emerges in the form of digital (service) ecosystems, but which also merits further attention of IS research in the context of complexity (Benbya, Nan, Tanriverdi, and Yoo, 2020), of complex adaptive systems (Kautz, Bjerknes, Fisher, and Jensen, 2020), and of classical systems thinking in general (Checkland, 1999).

Returning to what has once been qualified as reference disciplines (Baskerville and Myers, 2002), and what Lee (2001) defines as contributing disciplines to clearly demark and provide an identity for the IS discipline, the journal during the year received numerous submissions that fell out of the journal's scope and position as I have described it above. A lot of these submissions with a clear focus on digital and information technology more adequately would have better fitted and were referred to computer science or electrical and electronics engineering outlets. There were also many submitted manuscripts from the marketing discipline which presented consumer studies and concentrated in particular on consumer behaviour with information technology as a mere background but little emphasis on the actual interaction between the social and the technical system as Lee (2001) put it. Also for these manuscripts we provided direction and suggested to submit them to pure marketing journals.

A final group of submissions which caught our particular attention consisted of a large number of conventional adoption and/or intention to use studies based on the widespread and reputable work of Davis (1989) and Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis (2003) who introduced the technology acceptance model (TAM) and unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) into our discipline.

While such research still offers valuable advice to policy makers and practitioners and mirrors an obvious interest and need for such investigations in parts of our region for political or commercial decision making, adoption or intention to use research of a certain technology in a particular sector or part of society in a selected country or region is a long-established scholarly approach and is very well academically studied. The IS literature presenting the orthodox approach of integrating a set of independent variables from one model with another set of variables from other models all derived from previous studies in a resulting conceptual model that mediates or moderates causative relationships as a part of standard model building and a prerequisite of model testing and validation is extensive.

In a world where digital and information technologies are ubiquitous, hence it is difficult to make a new theoretical contribution with such an approach without fully and in depth appreciating and taking the socio-economic and cultural context of the adoption situation – I referred to the richness and diversity of our region above – into account. Only few, newly submitted adoption studies have therefore been included in a review cycle. Thus, abandoning or replacing the customary concept of (IT) adoption with more advanced concepts such as the concept of (IT) appropriation and/or applying different research approaches – as examples from our region, see Plumb and Kautz (2014) or Riemer and Johnston (2012, 2015) – might be more favourable and lead to new and interesting insights.

Throughout this year the journal has published 14 regular research articles and 17 articles in four special sections with accomanying editorials, which were all submitted before 2021; with more than 225 submissions during the year the journal – although not mirroring the actual calendar year – can be said to have had an acceptance rate of approximately 14% and has a healthy pipeline of manuscripts. The published articles represent a mixture of quantitative and qualitive, positivist and interpretive, and even critical research approaches in line with the methodological pluralist positioning of the journal.

With traditional, quantitative, causal logic, factor and survey based (adoption) research embedded in a substantialist ontology still dominating the journal's submissions and publications, I strongly encourage the submission of more daring manuscripts and contributions, in the words of Alvesson and Sandberg (2011, 2013, 2014), research that is assumption-challenging and deals with surprising phenomena instead of being confirmatory and founded on mere gap-spotting. Such research can advantageously be grounded in alternative genres and be based on alternative research methods (Avital, Mathiassen, and Schultze, 2017) such as process research (Riemer and Johnston, 2016) and an unconventional ontology, such as a relational ontology (Riemer and Johnston, 2012, 2015; Cecez-Kecmanovic, Galliers, Henfridsson, Newell, and Vidgen, 2014). Action research (Avison, Davison, and Malaurant, 2018) and advanced design science studies (Gregor and Hevner, 2013) are other approaches which deserve more representation in the journal.

This is what the statement

> "AJIS publishes high quality contributions to theory and practice in the global Information Systems (IS) discipline based on innovative and novel approaches and topics."

that can be found on the journal website section 'about the journal' means.

As for volume 25, the continuously published regular research articles in 8 manuscripts covered established topics such as an – applaudable, because of its clear commitment to the foundations of our discipline – explicit sociotechnical perspective on enterprise system implementation and a study of IT governance, current subjects such as digital ecosystems, digital divide, and cybersecuity in our region, in Iran, India, and Vietnam, respectively, as well as the themes of customer use of self-service technologies in Australia, social influence on social media, and the rising global utilization of humanized robots in marketing.

The just published, latest collection of research articles comprises six articles that represent the above discussed classical IS/IT adoption research and had been under review for quite some time. Mostly based on the technology acceptance model or related derivates of this model these works investigate the adoption and/or intention to use of healthcare information systems or apps in Australia, Bangladesh, and India, as well m-payment adoption in Malaysia and Vietnam, the former with specific consideraton of convenience, security and gamification.

Gamification and adoption issues are also prevaling in the special section on consumer evaluation of mobile apps with a specific focus on interactivity. Gamification here is the lems for researching customer loyality and customers' connection with a specific brand, which in another study was examined by taking the impact of e-word-to-mouth into consideration. Research on the adoption, respectively the resistance to adoption of m-payment in India was part of this special section as well.

We also published a special section on the bright and dark side of stakeholder engagement on social media covering topics such as policy makers use of social media in India, addiction to online platforms, counteracting excessive use of social networking sites through mindfulness, attrition of gig work on digital platforms, customer engagement in retailing, and the promotion of wildlife conservation on online wildlife trading sites.

Finally, beyond the customary special section on Selected Papers from the Australasian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS) , this volume covering the year 2020 with current contributions on digital transformation, cybersecurity, the application of filters in social media, and artificial intelligence in warehouse management, we published a most noteworthy and especially in our region important special section on indigenious use of information and communication technologies which argued the self-determination of indigenous people with regard to information systems and presented approaches to the design of archival information systems through partnerships with indigenous communities, and to knowledge elicitation with indigenous people. A last contribution in this section underlined the role of information systems and IS research methodologies for indengenious people in their pursuit of care and transformation of their communities. Beyond the just published collection of articles you thus might find it interesting to revisit the entire volume 25.

While operating under the management of the Australasian Assocation for Information Systems (AAIS), a chaper of the Association for Information Systems (AIS), the Australian

Council of Professors and Heads of Information Systems (ACPHIS, and the Professors and Heads of Information Systems, New Zealand (PHISNZ), it is important to keep in mind that AJIS is a community based journal that is run on a voluntary basis with limited institutional support and without a commercial publisher that could offer further professional services such as expert proof reading or copy editing.

Currently the journal works with a review process that fully relies on what we call – partly imposed by the digital review system – section editors. Section editors are on a need basis appointed out of a large, regularly reviewed, pool of regional and overseas scholars.They serve in this role comparable to the established nomenclature and mandate of senior or associate editors for an individual submission to the research article section or for entire topic-specific special sections which fall into their area of competence and for which they recruit qualified reviewers. The year 2021 has been a challenging year in many respects. Without the section editors and the reviewers whom they involve, the journal would not exist. While the section editors thank their reviewers at the end of each review process through our review system I therefore like to use this end-of-the-year editorial to show my gratitude and acknowledge those members of the community who have volunteered their time and expertise as section editors. There names are listed below after this editorial's reference list.

I am looking forward to all further engagement with the AJIS in the coming year.

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AJIS Section Editors in 2021: