

Forums for information systems scholars: III

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Abstract

Three hundred and sixty-four information systems faculty responded to a questionnaire rating 51 journals and 13 conferences associated with the information systems field. In addition to rating the value of the outlets, faculty were asked to state whether a journal was published primarily to disseminate information systems research or not. Relative rankings for each journal and conference were determined. As the third in a series of studies, comparisons were made between these findings and those of previous ones. The overall stability in the rankings of journals and conferences was also identified. A few journals and conferences were rated and ranked for the first time. Furthermore, a significant increase in the ratings of “pure” information systems journals was noted. © 2001 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

Where should I publish my scholarly research findings? The process of answering this question has become more complicated with the arrival of electronic journals, the increase of available journals and the number of general and specialized conferences accessible to the researcher. The plethora of outlets coupled with the pressure on faculty to publish and the rapidly changing information systems (IS) field make this an important question to answer. The purpose of this study is to provide a publication outlet quality indicator that can help researchers formulate their own answer.

Many parties other than IS faculty have an interest in the quality rating of IS publication outlets. These include (1) selection, promotion, and tenure committees seeking to hire, guide, promote, and retain quality faculty members, (2) journal editors and associates seeking to understand external perceptions of their journals, (3) students seeking to understand the IS field, (4) members of the IS field watching the field mature as a discipline and attempting to keep abreast of new advancements in the field, and (5) librarians seeking to invest acquisition funds wisely. Although several previous studies have evaluated the quality of IS publication outlets, “earlier studies addressed the issue of MIS journals in a variety of ways, no two quite the same” [2]. This lack of consistency is a problem to people wishing to determine publication outlet quality. Our study is the third in a series designed to overcome these previous shortcomings by providing a consistent instrument and identify trends over time. The initial

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study collected faculty perceptions in 1991 [6]; a follow-up study collected faculty perceptions in 1995 [3]. By using the same population and the same data collection instrument, a direct comparison could be made. This series is modeled after a series of studies conducted by MacMillan and coworkers [1,4,5] which proved to be helpful for the business policy field. Our hope is that this series will be just as helpful to the IS community.

IS faculty in the US and Canada were asked to rate 51 journals according to their appropriateness as publication outlets and 13 conferences according to their value to the IS field. Over 350 responses were received, similar to the 1995 study — by far the largest sample for this type of study in the IS field. The results of this study not only provide a current picture of publication outlets, but also the change over time.

2. Data collection

Questionnaires were sent to all 2147 IS faculty members in the United States and Canada listed in the Directory of Management Information Systems Faculty available on ISWORLD at the time the survey was conducted. The questionnaire asked respondents to rate 51 journals according to one of the following categories:

- 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.

As in the previous studies, no attempt was made to separate academic and practitioner journals, nor were respondents requested to make such a judgment. However, new in this study, respondents were asked to indicate if they perceived that each journal primarily published IS research. To accommodate journals not on the list, respondents were asked to suggest additional journals and their respective ratings.

The questionnaire also asked respondents to rate 13 conferences 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.

3. Results

3.1. Respondents

A total of 364 usable responses were received (17% usable response rate). This rate is consistent with the previous study in this series, which used a similar methodology. Due to the large number of initial mailings, a sufficient number of responses were received.

A profile of the respondents is provided in Tables 1–3. They were split almost evenly between full, associate, and assistant professors and 95% held a doctoral degree. Respondents of this study were similar to respondents of earlier studies in this series in

Table 1
Highest degree earned

Degree	No. of respondents (%)
Doctorate	345 (95)
ABD	15 (4)
Masters	4 (1)
Bachelors	0 (0)

Table 2
Academic rank

Rank	No. of respondents (%)
Professor	106 (29)
Associate Professor	125 (34)
Assistant Professor	112 (31)
Other	19 (5)

Table 3
Discipline

Discipline	No. of respondents (%)
Management Information Systems	291 (80)
Management Science/Production	22 (6)
Operations Management/Operations Research	
Management/Organizational Behavior/Strategy	8 (2)
Computer Science	9 (2)
Other	34 (9)

Table 4
Journal mean ratings

Journal	Mean	1995 mean	1991 mean
MIS Quarterly	3.76	3.72	3.82
Information Systems Research	3.71	3.71	3.60
Communications of the ACM	3.44	3.49	3.77
Journal of Management Information Systems	3.42	3.32	3.18
Management Science	3.41	3.58	3.54
Decision Sciences	3.16	3.28	3.16
ACM Transactions on Information Systems	3.08	nr ^a	nr
IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering	3.06	3.19	3.26
ACM Transactions on Database Systems	3.04	3.04	3.25
Decision Support Systems	3.03	3.06	2.94
Organization Science	3.03	3.14	nr
Harvard Business Review	3.02	3.12	3.09
Academy of Management Journal	2.96	2.96	2.70
Sloan Management Review	2.95	3.01	2.85
ACM Computing Surveys	2.93	2.97	3.07
IEEE Transactions on Knowledge and Data Engineering	2.92	nr	nr
Information and Management	2.92	2.87	2.88
Academy of Management Review	2.90	2.88	2.63
Administrative Science Quarterly	2.84	2.94	nr
European Journal of Information Systems	2.79	nr	nr
Human-Computer Interaction	2.71	2.74	nr
International Journal of Human-Computer Studies	2.71	2.78	nr
Journal of Strategic Information Systems	2.70	2.66	nr
Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes	2.70	2.79	nr
Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce	2.70	nr	nr
Information Systems	2.68	nr	nr
Operations Research	2.67	2.92	2.56
Information Systems Management	2.66	2.55	2.58
Journal of Computer Information Systems	2.66	2.58	2.29
Journal of Database Management	2.65	2.66	nr
DATA BASE for Advances in Information Systems	2.64	2.56	2.55
INFORMS Journal on Computing	2.63	nr	nr
Information Resources Management Journal	2.60	2.47	nr
Journal of End-User Computing	2.58	2.23	nr
Expert Systems with Applications	2.54	2.47	nr
Journal of Global Information Management	2.52	nr	nr
Interfaces	2.51	2.57	2.55
OMEGA	2.50	2.70	2.66
Journal of Information Technology Management	2.46	nr	nr
Journal of Systems and Software	2.43	2.50	nr
Knowledge-Based Systems	2.41	2.52	nr
Journal of Information Systems (Accounting)	2.40	2.39	nr
INFOR	2.39	2.40	nr
Behaviour & Information Technology	2.35	2.44	nr
Computers in Human Behavior	2.32	2.32	nr
Journal of Information Systems Education	2.31	2.37	nr
Journal of Software Maintenance	2.30	2.19	nr
Communication Research	2.23	2.27	nr
Simulation	2.21	2.23	nr
IBSCUG Quarterly	1.92	1.96	nr
Datamation	1.81	1.84	2.00

^a nr: Not rated.

rank and degree. Table 3 shows the one measured dimension, underlying discipline, where there has been a decided, yet, not unexpected, shift. The percentage of respondents with an MIS degree has grown from 50% in 1991 to 80% in 1998. The percentage of respondents in most other underlying disciplines has decreased significantly over the years.

3.2. Journal ratings

A summary of the mean ratings for each journal appears in Table 4, which also provides mean ratings, when available, from the previous studies in this series, for comparison. According to the most recent ratings, the top two journals are *MIS Quarterly (MISQ)* and *Information Systems Research (ISR)*. These journals are rated more than a quarter of a point higher than the next three journals (*Communications of the ACM (CACM)*, *Journal of Management Information Systems (JMIS)* and *Management Science (MS)*). Together, this group of five journals could be considered the “top tier”. Because of the subjectivity involved, the process of applying labels to the groups is left to the reader.

3.3. Journal emphasis

In an effort to assist the IS field in differentiating itself from other disciplines, respondents were asked to indicate (YES or NO) whether a journal published primarily IS research or not. A “YES” response was coded as 1 and a “NO” as 0. All responses were then averaged together to arrive at a single number between 1 and 0. A score close to “1” indicates the journal primarily publishes IS research (as perceived by respondents). A score of 0.5 would mean an equal number of respondents indicated “YES” and “NO”. Table 5 shows the journal emphasis as indicated by mean ratings. Thirty-six of the 51 journals were perceived to primarily publish IS research by 50% or more of the respondents.

3.4. Conference ratings

The ratings of the 13 conferences are shown in Table 6. Consistent with previous studies in this series, the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) is the top ranked conference. The conference hosted by the Association for Information Systems

Table 5
Journal emphasis^a

Journal	Score
Information Systems Research	1.00
Journal of Management Information Systems	1.00
MIS Quarterly	1.00
Information and Management	0.98
European Journal of Information Systems	0.97
Journal of Global Information Management	0.97
Information Systems Management	0.96
Journal of End-User Computing	0.96
Information Resources Management Journal	0.95
Journal of Strategic Information Systems	0.95
Information Systems	0.94
Journal of Computer Information Systems	0.94
Journal of Information Technology Management	0.94
DATA BASE for Advances in Information Systems	0.92
Decision Support Systems	0.92
Journal of Database Management	0.89
ACM Transactions on Information Systems	0.87
Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce	0.86
Journal of Information Systems Education	0.80
Expert Systems with Applications	0.73
Communications of the ACM	0.72
ACM Transactions on Database Systems	0.71
International Journal of Human-Computer Studies	0.71
Journal of Information Systems (Accounting)	0.70
Human-Computer Interaction	0.69
Journal of Systems and Software	0.68
Knowledge-Based Systems	0.68
Behaviour & Information Technology	0.67
Computers in Human Behavior	0.64
IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering	0.64
INFORMS Journal on Computing	0.64
Journal of Software Maintenance	0.64
IBSCUG Quarterly	0.61
IEEE Transactions on Knowledge and Data Engineering	0.61
Datamation	0.60
ACM Computing Surveys	0.59
INFOR	0.48
Interfaces	0.41
Decision Sciences	0.31
OMEGA	0.20
Simulation	0.15
Communication Research	0.13
Management Science	0.13
Organization Science	0.11
Sloan Management Review	0.10
Harvard Business Review	0.09
Operations Research	0.07
Administrative Science Quarterly	0.06
Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes	0.06
Academy of Management Review	0.04
Academy of Management Journal	0.03

^a “YES” was coded as 1 and “NO” was coded as 0.

Table 6
Conference mean ratings

Conference	Average rating
International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS)	3.71
Association of Information Systems (AMCIS)	3.41
Hawaii International Conference on Systems Science (HICSS)	3.36
International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP)	3.00
Decision Sciences Institute — National (DSI)	2.85
Society for Information Management (SIM)	2.82
International Association of Computer Information Systems (IACIS)	2.72
Information Resources Management Association (IRMA)	2.65
Institute for Operations Research and Management Science (INFORMS)	2.61
Information Systems Education Conference (ISECON)	2.58
International Academy for Information Management (IAIM)	2.51
Academy of Management	2.39
Decision Sciences Institute — Regional	2.25

(AIS), was unranked in previous studies due to its brief history. It has now entered into the rankings at the number two spot. The order of the remaining conferences changed very little from previous studies.

4. Discussion

4.1. Journal ratings

The top rated journals are *MISQ*, *ISR*, *CACM*, *JMIS*, and *MS*. This group continues to show relative stability since 1991. However, there is movement within the group. *Management Science* moved down two spots while the *Journal of Management Information Systems* moved up. The stability among the top journals may be an indication that a consensus is continuing to form.

Several journals received marked increases in mean ratings since the last study: *JMIS*, *Information Systems Management*, *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, *Information Resources Management Journal*, *Journal of End User Computing*, and *Journal of Software Maintenance*. Among these, *JMIS* and *Journal of Computer Information Systems* have notably increased for the entire series of studies. On the other hand, some journal ratings noticeably decreased: *Decision Sciences*, *IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering*, *Organization Science*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Operations Research*, *OMEGA*, and *Knowledge-Based Systems*.

Eight new journals entered the ratings for the first time (in order by mean rating): *ACM Transactions on Information Systems* (mean = 3.08), *IEEE Transactions on Knowledge and Data Engineering* (2.92), *European Journal of Information Systems* (2.79), *Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce* (2.70), *Information Systems* (2.68), *INFORMS Journal on Computing* (2.63), *Journal of Global Information Management* (2.52), and *Journal of Information Technology Management* (2.46).

4.2. Number of journals

In addition to rating the 51 specified journals, respondents suggested over 95 different journals as additions to the list of journals for rating. Interestingly, this number is about one-half the number (180) of journals suggested by respondents in the previous study from this series. This may indicate that the field is continuing to converge around some common paradigms. Consistent with the previous study in this series, journals receiving eight or more write-in votes (ratings) were identified and will be included in the next study. They are *IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man & Cybernetics* (12), *Information Technology & People* (12), *International Journal of Electronic Commerce* (12), *Accounting Management & (Information) Technology* (11), *European Journal of Operations Research* (9), *Journal of Global Information Technology Management* (9), *IEEE Computer* (8), and *Information Society* (8).

4.3. Journal emphasis

While it is not easy to label every journal as either “an IS journal” or “not,” some natural breaks do occur. The first is at 0.75, meaning that 75% of the respondents felt that the journal primarily published IS research. Nineteen journals were included in this group and a case could be made that these journals are “Pure” IS journals. The next break occurs at 0.5; 17 journals were in this group and a case could also be made that these journals are “Hybrid” IS journals. Interestingly enough the next break, at 0.25, has only three journals in it. A review of these journals reveals

that they are only “Partial” IS journals. This makes it easier to develop a case that the remaining 12 journals, below 0.25, would indeed be labeled “Non-IS” journals. These four categories of journal emphasis should not be confused with typical journal quality rating categories of “A” and “B” journals, for example.

Some interesting findings surface, however, when looking at both a journal quality rating over time and respective emphasis. Of the 19 journals categorized as “Pure” IS journals, the ratings of nine increased from the previous study in this series (circa 1995), one remained the same, and three decreased (see Table 7). Six journals appeared for the first time and, therefore,

Table 7
Journal emphasis related to change in overall mean rating since 1995 study^a

Journal	Score	Change in mean rating since 1995 study
Pure IS journals		
Information Systems Research	1.00	Even
Journal of Management Information Systems	1.00	+0.10
MIS Quarterly	1.00	+0.04
Information and Management	0.98	+0.05
European Journal of Information Systems	0.97	nr ^b
Journal of Global Information Management	0.97	nr
Information Systems Management	0.96	+0.11
Journal of End-User Computing	0.96	+0.35
Information Resources Management Journal	0.95	+0.13
Journal of Strategic Information Systems	0.95	+0.04
Information Systems	0.94	nr
Journal of Computer Information Systems	0.94	+0.08
Journal of Information Technology Management	0.94	nr
DATA BASE for Advances in Information Systems	0.92	+0.08
Decision Support Systems	0.92	-0.03
Journal of Database Management	0.89	-0.01
ACM Transactions on Information Systems	0.87	nr
Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce	0.86	nr
Journal of Information Systems Education	0.80	-0.06
Hybrid IS journals		
Expert Systems with Applications	0.73	+0.07
Communications of the ACM	0.72	-0.05
ACM Transactions on Database Systems	0.71	Even
International Journal of Human-Computer Studies	0.71	-0.07
Journal of Information Systems (Accounting)	0.70	+0.01
Human-Computer Interaction	0.69	-0.03
Journal of Systems and Software	0.68	-0.07
Knowledge-Based Systems	0.68	-0.11
Behaviour & Information Technology	0.67	-0.09
Computers in Human Behavior	0.64	Even
IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering	0.64	-0.13
INFORMS Journal on Computing	0.64	nr
Journal of Software Maintenance	0.64	+0.11

Table 7 (Continued)

Journal	Score	Change in mean rating since 1995 study
IBSCUG Quarterly	0.61	−0.04
IEEE Transactions on Knowledge and Data Engineering	0.61	nr
Datamation	0.60	−0.03
ACM Computing Surveys	0.59	−0.04
Partial IS journals		
INFOR	0.48	−0.01
Interfaces	0.41	−0.06
Decision Sciences	0.31	−0.12
Non-IS journals		
OMEGA	0.20	−0.20
Simulation	0.15	−0.02
Communication Research	0.13	−0.04
Management Science	0.13	−0.17
Organization Science	0.11	−0.11
Sloan Management Review	0.10	−0.06
Harvard Business Review	0.09	−0.10
Operations Research	0.07	−0.25
Administrative Science Quarterly	0.06	−0.10
Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes	0.06	−0.09
Academy of Management Review	0.04	+0.02
Academy of Management Journal	0.03	Even

^a “YES” was coded as 1 and “NO” was coded as 0.

^b nr: Not rated in previous study.

could not be compared with the previous study. The average increase in journal rating for this group of journals is 0.07. The “Hybrid” IS journals consists of 15 journals. The journal rating for this group decreased an average of 0.03. The “Partial” IS journals (three journals) decreased by an average of 0.06; the “Non-IS” journals (12 journals) decreased by an average of 0.09! Table 8 summarizes the change in journal ratings by journal emphasis category. This finding seems to indicate that “Pure IS” journals are improving in perceived quality while “Hybrid,” “Partial,” and “Non-IS” journals are decreasing.

Table 8
Change in journal rating by journal emphasis category

Emphasis category	Average change in rating since 1995 study
Pure IS journals	+0.07
Hybrid IS journals	−0.03
Partial IS journals	−0.06
Non-IS journals	−0.09

4.4. Conferences

The ICIS continued to be perceived as the top-rated conference significantly higher than other conferences. The AIS conference (or The Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS)) made its debut showing at number 2. The HICSS conference rounded out the top three conferences, which did show some separation from the rest of the conferences listed. There was no change in order for the remaining conferences with the exception that the IRMA conference and the INFORMS conference switched places.

Respondents suggested that 21 different conferences be added to the list of conferences. Of these, only two — European Conference on Information Systems (5) and SIG CPR (3) — received multiple votes.

5. Conclusion

This study was a follow-up to two similar ones: the first was conducted in 1991 and the second in 1995.

This series of studies was undertaken to determine the perceptions of IS faculty regarding the quality of journals and conferences as publication outlets for IS research. Overall, results indicate that the top five journals from this study are *MIS Quarterly*, *Information Systems Research*, *Communications of the ACM*, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, and *Management Science*. However, a case could be made that the top journals in IS are those which publish only IS related research findings: *Information Systems Research*, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, *MIS Quarterly*, *Information & Management*, and (tied) *European Journal of Information Systems* and *Journal of Global Information Management*. The top conference is ICIS followed by the Americas Conference on Information Systems and the Hawaii International Conference on Systems Science.

Results of this study were compared with those from previous studies. Findings suggest that we are seeing an increasing convergence and identification of a smaller set of journals which primarily publish IS research and which are considered to be outstanding or significant outlets for publication by IS researchers. Identifying journals as primarily publishing IS research or not shows that, in general, journals which primarily publish IS research (i.e., “Pure” IS journals) are being perceived as increasing in importance as significant publication outlets while journals publishing other types of research, as well as IS research, are being perceived as decreasing in importance as significant.

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