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Communications of the Association for Information Systems

CAIS 

Three Years as Editor-in-Chief of *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*

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CAIS Editor-in-Chief, January 2006 – February 2009

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Abstract:

This editorial presents an overview of the three years at *Communications of the Association for Information Systems* (CAIS) during the term of its second editor-in-chief. Highlights of the three years include an ever-increasing submissions rate, fast turnaround times from submission to publication, and an increase in the proportion of authors preferring peer review to editorial board review. Statistics for submission and disposal for 2006-2008 are included in the editorial, as is commentary on three major changes at CAIS that occurred during those years: 1) the move to a new electronic submissions system; 2) the introduction of a new article format; and 3) the migration to a new e-library system.

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I. INTRODUCTION

I was selected to be the second Editor-in-Chief (EIC) of *Communications of the Association for Information Systems* (CAIS) in the fall of 2005. The founding Editor-in-Chief, Paul Gray, was involved in the search process, as part of a committee chaired by Detmar Staub and peopled by representatives of every region in AIS. My term was supposed to run from January 2006 through December 2008, but because the search for my successor got off to a late start, I actually will serve as EIC until February 28, 2009. The new EIC is Ilze Zigurs, of the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Paul Gray was involved in that search process too, with the search committee this time chaired by Guy Fitzgerald. I am confident Ilze will do a great job at the journal.

The purpose of this short editorial is to recount the major events of my time as EIC at CAIS. The first part of the article reviews statistics from my term. The second part reviews the major changes that occurred at CAIS during that time. The final part is a series of brief observations about things that happened at the journal from 2006 through early 2009.

II. STATISTICS, 2006-2008

The number of submissions to CAIS has grown each year that I have been the EIC. In this section, numbers of submissions and the final dispositions of the submissions are contained in a series of tables, one for each calendar year of my term. Table 1 shows the numbers for 2006. There were 169 total submissions, including both unsolicited and solicited submissions. Papers that are solicited include the regular columns by Jim McKeen and Heather Smith, in the "Developments in Practice" series, and panel reports from the Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS) and the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS). It is worth pointing out that all of the papers submitted during 2006 have been processed and their status finalized¹.

Submissions	
Unsolicited	159
Solicited	10
Disposition	
In process (after initial decision)	0
Withdrawn	26
Declined	54
Accepted	89

As shown in Table 2, the number of submissions overall increased by 28 to a total of 197. The number of solicited papers that were actually submitted² increased from 10 to 16, adding to the increase in the year-to-year total. As of January 17, 2009, there are only seven papers that had been submitted in 2007 that had not yet been finally disposed of. All seven remaining manuscripts received revise and resubmit decisions, so at the time of this writing, they are either with their authors for another revision, or they are with the reviewers for another round.

Submissions	
Unsolicited	181
Solicited	16
Disposition	
In process (after initial decision)	7
Withdrawn	21
Declined	69
Accepted	100

¹ If you are concerned about acceptance rates, dividing the number of papers accepted by the total number of submissions will give you the overall rate. To get the rate for unsolicited submissions, use the number of unsolicited papers as the denominator and the number of accepted papers, less the number of solicited papers, as the numerator. For 2006, these numbers are 52.6% and 49.7% respectively.

² Not all solicited papers are actually submitted. My experience has been that only about half of solicitations result in a submitted manuscript.

Table 3 shows the statistics for 2008³, when there was another increase in the total number of submissions. For the first time during this three-year period, the total number of submissions exceeded 200. The number of solicited papers declined by three compared to 2007. Note in Table 3 the large number of papers that either have no decision yet or that are still in process after their initial revise and resubmit decisions. This is normal, given that many manuscripts were submitted in the last half of 2008, and, as I am writing this, there has not yet been enough time for their review processes to have been completed. However, more than half of the papers submitted during 2008 have already been disposed of, which indicates a good productivity level on the part of the journal's editors and reviewers. Also note the small number of withdrawn manuscripts to date for papers submitted in 2008, compared to the prior two years. That number will increase as the 99 still outstanding papers are processed.

Table 3. Submission and Disposition Numbers for 2008	
Submissions	
Unsolicited	196
Solicited	13
Disposition	
No decision (as of 1/17/09)	29
In process (after initial decision)	70
Withdrawn	5
Declined	69
Accepted	36

These numbers all show that we process a relatively large number of papers relatively quickly. While I do not have precise numbers on turnaround times for 2006 and 2007, in 2008 we changed to a new submission system (more on this later), from which it is relatively easy to access statistics on many aspects of the journal's operations. In terms of turnaround, for 2008, the average number of days from initial submission of a manuscript to a final decision is 71 days. The time to an initial decision is 52 days, with an average reviewer turnaround time of 25 days. These are very short durations, and with turnaround times like this, the content of *CAIS* can be current and fresh, especially since publication in *CAIS* is electronic. Even with electronic publishing, there are still some delays, as accepted manuscripts are copyedited and go back to the author for review (twice!) before actual publication. Altogether, taking the time to publish into account, a typical article accepted for publication in *CAIS* appears "in print" only about 100 days after it is first submitted.

CAIS does not publish in issues but instead publishes two volumes per year. Since I took over as EIC, we have published seven volumes. The extra volume was a special volume, Number 21, devoted to information systems in the Asia Pacific region. These volumes contain a total of 267 papers. The breakdown by volume is in Figure 1.

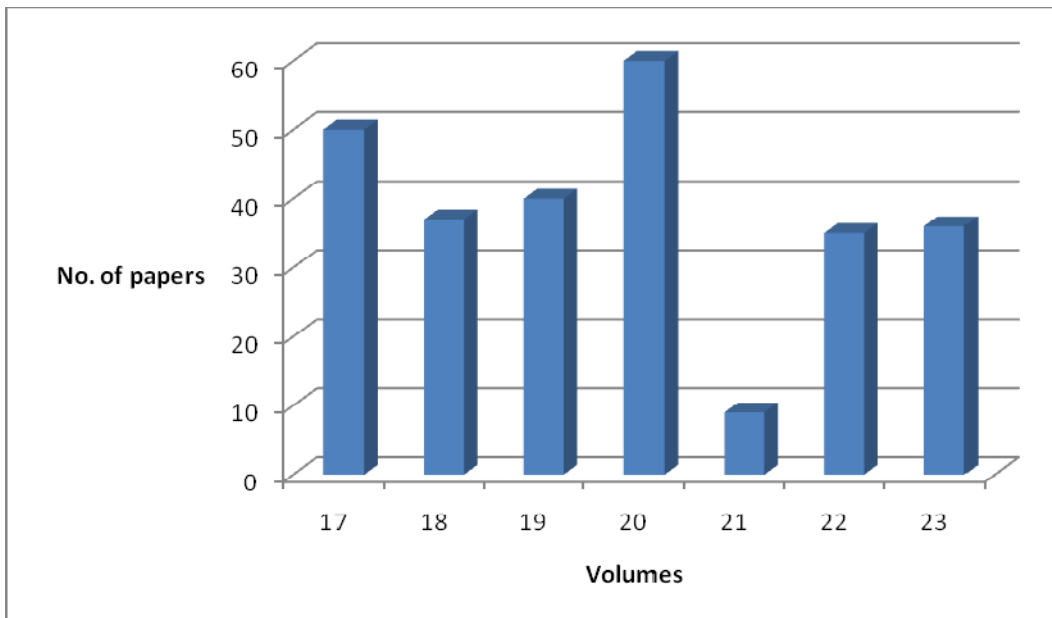


Figure 1. Number of Papers Published in CAIS, 2006-2008

³ As of January 17, 2009.

In addition to the special Volume 21, we published two special sections in these volumes. Typically, these would have been special issues, but since *CAIS* does not publish issues, they became special sections. The first was a special section devoted to the doctoral student mentoring of Professor Gary Dickson, consisting of articles 1–11 in Volume 20. The second was a special section on RFID, consisting of articles 11–18 in Volume 23. Two more special sections are scheduled for later volumes, one on e-government and the other on persuasive technologies.

III. MAJOR CHANGES AT CAIS

There were three major changes in how *CAIS* operates that took place during my tenure as EIC: a new format for articles, a new submissions system, and a new AIS electronic library. Although there was much planning for each change, they all came to fruition in 2008.

The new format for *CAIS* articles, the one in which this article appears, premiered in January 2008, with the publication of Volume 22. The design is much like that of our sister AIS publication, the *Journal of the Association for Information Systems (JAIS)*, edited by Kalle Lyytinen. Kalle spearheaded the redesign effort, and the result was what you see here. The format replaces the one that had been used for many years. At *CAIS*, we also moved from two versions of each published article (“article” and “journal”) to a single version.

At the same time the new format was being revealed, we went live with our new electronic submissions system, the de facto industry standard ScholarOne by Manuscript Central. Starting in January 2008, all manuscripts submitted to *CAIS* had to be submitted through ScholarOne. Previously, all manuscripts had been submitted through e-mail, and my managing editor at the journal constructed an Access database to keep track of all the submissions. Even though the database worked well, ScholarOne is a great improvement. In general, the transition to ScholarOne was relatively smooth, at least from my perspective, and things have worked well since.

The other big change, and one that was long overdue, was the migration to a new AIS e-library system. This replaced an outdated website where all of our papers once resided. In contrast to the move to ScholarOne, the migration to the new e-library platform, Digital Commons from bepress, was long and arduous, but it was worth the wait. The e-library looks clean and modern, the search facility works well, and it provides functionality the old website simply did not have.

IV. SOME OBSERVATIONS

One thing I hope this brief report has shown is that *CAIS* is unique among MIS journals. Taken together, the number of papers we publish (an average of 89 per year, or just a little shy of two per week) and the speed with which we process manuscripts (submission to publication in 100 days) are simply amazing accomplishments. There are few journals in MIS or elsewhere that do what we do. We can do this because we have dedicated and talented editorial board members and reviewers, and because we can afford to balance relevance and novelty and currency with methodological rigor. In fact, this is the journal’s mandate, “... to foster the free flow of ideas within the IS community; its emphasis is on originality, importance, and cogency of ideas.”

What we do, however, is not universally recognized. A few years ago, we applied to be recognized by Thomson ISI. We were turned down, although we were invited to apply again once a certain amount of time had passed. Although the reasons for being turned down were never stated specifically, one reason is that the papers we publish are not cited enough, especially in light of the large number of papers we publish. I do not see that aspect of *CAIS* changing, so acquiring Thomson ISI approval will continue to be a challenge for Ilze and subsequent editors. However, it may help in the next application if readers cite more of the articles published in *CAIS* in their own work and if they use the complete name of the journal in their citations, *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*.

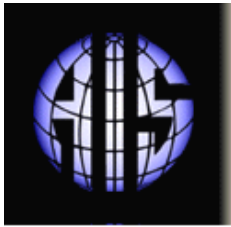
Currently, something really interesting is happening in *CAIS*. I think this is due in part to our move to ScholarOne. It is related to the choice of review process we give authors. *CAIS* has always offered authors a choice of traditional peer review and editorial board review. The former involves an associate editor and two or more reviewers, while the latter means a review by an associate editor and the EIC. Traditionally, the proportion of requests for peer review have held steady at about 20 percent. Now, after we have moved to ScholarOne, the requests for peer review have more than doubled, to over 50 percent. Now, the journal has to rely more on reviewers than ever before. While I am not completely sure why this is happening, I do hope that readers and authors will sign up to be reviewers as well. Even if you have a ScholarOne account with *CAIS*, you may not be signed up as a reviewer, since the default has been for the reviewer role to not be automatically created when a new account is created. If you think you are not yet a reviewer but want to be, contact the *CAIS* office. It will be interesting to watch over the next few years to see what effect this shift will have on the journal and what it publishes.

Finally, some personal comments: When I accepted the offer to become EIC at *CAIS*, I was determined to see that the journal stayed true to its mandate, of publishing interesting and relevant papers that would not be published in other MIS journals. I was also determined to make sure the journal continued to turnaround manuscripts quickly, based on a review process that was fair and constructive as well as efficient. With a talented and dedicated editorial review to help me, I think we were able to achieve both of these goals. I am pleased with how the journal progressed during the last three year, and I hope the readers are too. We have published some truly fascinating papers in the past three years.

I have many people to thank for these accomplishments. I would of course like to thank Paul Gray for his guidance during my term as EIC at *CAIS*, and for his original vision of what the journal ought to be. I have tried to stay true to that vision. I would also like to thank the various people who have served as associate and senior editors during my time at the journal. They are the ones who have done the truly heavy lifting, and each person has contributed to *CAIS* in his or her own special way. I would also like to thank all of the many people who have served in the capacity of reviewer. With the growing popularity of peer review at *CAIS*, they are playing an increasingly important role. Of course there would be no journal without content, so thanks to the authors who continue to send their interesting and unique work to *CAIS*. I could not have done any of this without the support of my department chair, David Paradice, and FSU College of Business Deans Joe Nosari and Caryn Beck-Dudley. Finally, I am indebted to the two doctoral students who served as managing editor, Chris Furner and Rob Hooker. Thanks especially to Rob for working at the MANAGING EDITOR post for two months without pay.

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