

8-31-2022

AIS4C: AIS Candid Conversation on Community Conduct: Panel Report from ICIS 2020

Helle Zinner Henriksen
Copenhagen Business School, hzh.digi@cbs.dk

Traci Carte
Illinois State University, tacart3@ilstu.edu

Ulrike Schultze
Southern Methodist University, uschultz@mail.cox.smu.edu

Dawn Owens
University of Texas at Dallas, dawn.owens@utdallas.edu

Maung k. Sein
University of South-Eastern Norway, maung.k.sein@usn.no

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aisel.aisnet.org/cais>

Recommended Citation

Henriksen, H., Carte, T., Schultze, U., Owens, D., & Sein, M. k. (2022). AIS4C: AIS Candid Conversation on Community Conduct: Panel Report from ICIS 2020. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 51, pp-pp. <https://doi.org/10.17705/1CAIS.05105>

This material is brought to you by the AIS Journals at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in *Communications of the Association for Information Systems* by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.



AIS4C: AIS Candid Conversation on Community Conduct: Panel Report from ICIS 2020

Helle Zinner Henriksen

Copenhagen Business School
hzh.digi@cbs.dk

Traci Carte

Illinois State University
tacart3@ilstu.edu

Dawn Owens

University of Texas, Dallas
Dawn.Owens@utdallas.edu

Ulrike Schultze

Southern Methodist University
uschultz@mail.cox.smu.edu

Maung Sein

University of South-Eastern Norway and Kristiania
University College
Maung.K.Sein@usn.no

Abstract:

This report reflects the discussion that took place at a virtual panel at the ICIS 2020 conference. It focuses on a candid conversation on the code of conduct (AIS4C) among AIS community members. As our AIS community has evolved, we have grown in size, diversity, and in the scope of member needs; it is important for all stakeholders to understand what is expected as members of this academic community. The panel included those currently serving in AIS committees related to member and research conduct. The objective of the panel was to start a dialogue about what we – as members of the AIS – each hope to gain from our academic interactions, and how AIS can help members achieve these goals and help each other achieve desired outcomes. Maintaining good standing in the AIS community protects individuals' professional reputations and the reputation of the IS discipline as a whole. Understanding what AIS offers its members to accomplish these objectives, allows individuals to fully leverage AIS member services to become more successful researchers and teachers. By situating the panel within the current COVID-disrupted world, the descriptions of desirable behavior among members and the outlining of member services, this panel report is intended to benefit current and future members of AIS.

Keywords: Code of Conduct, Diversity, Inclusion.

This manuscript underwent peer review. It was received 9/08/2021 and was with the authors for three months for one revision. Lauri Wessel served as Associate Editor.

1 Introduction

In 2019, AIS celebrated its 25th anniversary. A recent mapping of the AIS growth trajectory illustrates how the association's founders were male and located in North America. Years later, colleagues from Europe joined followed by peers from Asia. At the end of 2020, there are nearly 5,000 members representing all corners of the globe and organized into 45 local chapters. Additionally, over the years, junior faculty, PhD Fellows and graduate students have been encouraged to join the association and participate in its activities. As a result, AIS now reflects an academic community whose members represent all career stages.

Today, AIS is characterized by diversity in practically all dimensions: age, gender, ethnicity and geographic location. Challenges related to inclusion and perceived exclusion have recently been raised in the journal *Communications of the Association for Information Sciences* (CAIS) (Windeler et al., 2020). Windeler et al. (2020) note that diversity can produce many benefits such as varying viewpoints and perspectives, which in turn contribute to the development of novel ideas and innovative solutions. However, differing backgrounds and perspectives can lead to conflict. Arguing for the need to engage in ongoing candid conversations about the purpose and value of a global community, Windeler et al. (2020) concludes by emphasizing the importance of creating an academic community that “focuses on empathy, civility, and respect.”

Throughout its history, the ambition of the association has been to maintain a spirit where AIS members have actively worked on these focal areas. Similar to academia in general the aim has been to exhibit mutual respect while engaging in open, candid, and critical academic debates. However, this ethos of fostering the free flow of ideas, respectful tackling of controversial topics and appreciation of different opinions seems to be under increasing pressure.

Firstly, similar to academia in general, the association has seen an increase in plagiarism in submissions to AIS outlets and this trend has accelerated during the COVID pandemic. To date, the AIS has not experienced big scandals related to researcher misconduct that have necessitated the retraction of published materials similar to what has been seen in other disciplines. These include the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, which publicly called an author team to account for self-plagiarism (JEP, 2011), the *American Journal of Medicine*, which retracted a paper in 2014 after discovering that it had been published elsewhere (Alpert, 2014) and the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Lancet*, both of which published papers in 2020 that reported on fraudulent data showing the impact of drugs on COVID survival rates (Offord, 2020). Indeed, the value of a code of conduct, we propose, lies in retractions being rare and ideally enacted at the behest of responsible authors who notify journal editors of errors in their data and/or data analysis, as was the case recently in the *Academy of Management Journal* (Desai, 2020; AMJ, n. d.). In connection with these examples it should be mentioned that the variation in plagiarism and academic misconduct is broad (Gregory & Leeman, 2021) and clearly there are grey zones that require scrutiny by peers before taking radical steps such as retraction or other similar grave punitive steps taken in response to colleagues. AIS recognized this and took active steps to create clarity by establishing the Research Conduct Committee (RCC).

Secondly, in the last few years, following the emergence in late 2017 of the #MeToo movement, which sought to empower women by making visible via social media how many had survived sexual assault and harassment, especially in the workplace, some conference attendees began reporting unwanted sexual attention. Responding to these occurrences in 2018, the AIS council approved the constitution of a Member Conduct Committee (MCC). This committee was intended to serve as a formal mechanism for defining and policing rules to regulate social as well as professional interactions among AIS members. Since its inception, the MCC has formulated a set of rules constituting a Member Code of Conduct (AIS, 2019) as part of the association's bylaws, which the AIS council formally approved in December 2019.

The MCC was modeled after the Research Conduct Committee (RCC), which was constituted in 2003. Consisting of editors, session chairs and reviewers that serve in AIS events and journals, the RCC was charged with adjudicating allegations of violations of the AIS Code of Research Conduct (AIS, 2014). In this capacity, the RCC has been particularly active in monitoring plagiarism incidents, examining the evidence and recommending sanctions for members who are found guilty of violating the policy. This body then recommends certain actions to the AIS president who makes the final decision and administers any sanctions.

Given that not all community members are familiar with the AIS bylaws, the AIS4C panel at ICIS 2020 took the opportunity to draw attention to the codes of conduct and to start a conversation about how AIS serves its diverse membership. As such, the panel goes beyond simply informing members about existing codes of conduct; instead, it also seeks to make explicit what we owe each other as members of this community, both during times of 'business as usual' and of crisis. The COVID pandemic has highlighted and, in some ways, exacerbated many of the disparities that define AIS membership, e.g., access to high-speed Internet infrastructures to enable full participation in virtual meetings, space and time to work in an undisturbed manner during periods of lockdown and homeschooling, and the ability to secure COVID testing and vaccinations.

Reminding our members that they are part of a community of scholars seems particularly important during a time of social isolation. This sense of isolation may also have afforded unprofessional behavior that violates AIS codes of conduct. Against this backdrop our panel "AIS4C a Candid Conversation on Community Conduct" was organized for ICIS 2020. The overarching goal of this panel was to address the value and responsibilities of AIS membership. This AIS4C panel report highlights the formal governance structures and measures needed to strengthen the community's ability to establish civility and respect, as well as the expectations related to IS research practices and the social behavior of association members.

We sought to encourage caring, community-building behavior, as well as highlight expected behavioral tenets outlined in the AIS codes of conduct.

This report summarizes the panel discussion, which was held virtually. Its organization reflects the panel discussion. The first section briefly introduces the panelists and their opening statements, in which they responded to the two questions that guided the panel: (i) How can the AIS community support a robust community where we treat each other respectfully where we can come together and enjoy an open academic debate? and (ii) How will you contribute to this agenda? The second section presents reactions from the audience. Finally, reflections from the panelist along with the specific details of the AIS Member Code of Conduct and the AIS Research Code of Conduct conclude this report. We hope these insights benefit both existing and potential members of our professional association.

2 Panelists

Our panelists represent diverse backgrounds and responsibilities, and each seeks to contribute to this candid conversation in a unique way. The AIS Vice President of Membership and Chapters, Helle Zinner Henriksen, acted as panel chair and organized this important conversation on the give and take on which the AIS community depends. The following panelists contributed to this candid conversation (in alphabetical order):

- Traci Carte, Illinois State University (AIS Vice President of Conferences)
- Dawn Owens, University of Texas, Dallas (AIS Women's Network representative)
- Ulrike Schultze, Southern Methodist University (AIS member and active in the gender debate in academia)
- Maung Sein, University of South-Eastern Norway and Kristiania University College (AIS Research Conduct Committee Chair).¹

3 Positions and Discussion

As stated above the conversation was initiated by two questions that each panelist addressed in turn:

- 1) How can the AIS community support a robust community where we treat each other respectfully and where we can come together and enjoy an open academic debate?
- 2) How will you contribute to this agenda?

Panelists drew on their experience with the association especially based on their different roles. We have summarized the key messages from each of the panelists in Table 1 followed by an in-depth discussion from each.

¹ Maung Sein was affiliated with the University of Agder, Norway at the time of the panel.

Table 1. Panelists and Key Messages

Panelist	Key message
Ulrike Schultze	<i>The COVID crisis has highlighted some of the obstacles our female colleagues experience due to a need for attending to care activities which lead to inequalities in pursuing academic goals.</i>
Traci Carte	<i>As the AIS Vice President of Conferences, we all need others to be of service for us to be successful in our academic efforts. Failure to do so impacts the review process and the quality of conferences.</i>
Maung Sein	<i>As the AIS Research Conduct Committee Chair, I take the perspective that certain types of conduct act as challenges and barriers to respect. Plagiarizing is showing disrespect. AIS has clearly defined rules and guidelines for plagiarism. Borrowing from the slogan of a famous shoe brand "Just DON*T do it"</i>
Dawn Owens	<i>In order to encourage a fruitful exchange of ideas, members need to feel comfortable expressing their ideas. As an international organization, there should be an emphasis in supporting diversity and inclusion. Respect our colleagues, acknowledge differences, adhere to the member code of conduct.</i>

3.1. Question One

Q1: How can the AIS community support a robust community where we treat each other respectfully and where we can come together and enjoy an open academic debate?

Ulrike Schultze, opened the discussion by focusing on the challenges many community members are experiencing during the COVID crisis. Drawing on the November 2020 *JAIS* editorial (van Osch et al, 2020), she highlighted how women in academia are disproportionately affected by the lockdowns. With both child- and elder-care tending to fall disproportionately on women, they are experiencing more challenges than men are when trying to meet their professional goals. This manifests itself in women submitting research at a slower rate than prior to the pandemic and at a slower rate than their male counterparts during the pandemic. In *JAIS*, fewer papers with women co-authors were submitted in Spring 2020, a pattern that was particularly pronounced when it came to papers with female first authors. Furthermore, women IS scholars accepted and completed a disproportionate number of *JAIS* reviews during the lockdowns.

What implications do these findings have for AIS's goal of fostering respectful interaction and open debate? At minimum, they highlight that access to these interactions and debates is unequal. While this has always been the case, the pandemic has subjected more members of the community to these exclusions. Specifically, women are likely to find it more difficult to determine the topics of conversation as they struggle to complete and submit their own research. Instead, their participation in the IS community's conversation is limited to responding (i.e. reviewing), which is less valued. From this perspective, the disproportionate number of reviews taken on by women during the pandemic may be indicative of their effort to stay engaged in AIS conversations in the limited ways available to them.

Ulrike argued that building a strong community requires that inequities between members' access be recognized, acknowledged and accommodated. Empathy towards individuals and an effort to understand how their circumstances affect their ability to contribute to debate is imperative to maintaining a sense of belonging, mutual respect, and collective identity.

Despite the challenges it has generated, the COVID crisis nevertheless also provides AIS members with unique opportunities. Not only has it resulted in more of us becoming aware of the undeniable social rifts that exist in AIS (e.g., the digital divide), but it has also offered us insights with which we can develop empathy and accord one another compassion and respect. Virtual meetings allow us to encounter each other without the façades that are generally enacted during professional meetings. We catch a glimpse of people's everyday lives (e.g., interruptions by kids, pets and domestic partners, time differences) that previously would have had little room in professional interactions. Such slips in the professional façade provide us with invaluable clues for stepping into and imagining life in the other's shoes.

Additionally, the pandemic has also created a host of new shared experiences, including the stress of converting in-person classes into an online format virtually overnight and the disorientation of homeschooling our children. These shared experiences foster not only empathy and mutual respect but have the potential to create new communities of interest. Both help bridge the social inequities that are inevitably part of a global community like AIS and pave the way for actively pursuing a compassionate environment, respectful conversations and open debate, rather than assuming these will emerge on their own.

Ulrike closed by wondering how AIS might leverage the experiences and insights gained during the pandemic to develop an academic community that continuously strives for members' equal access to the collective's conversations, debates and ideas.

While this opening of the panel had reference to contemporary challenges due to the COVID crisis, it essentially reflects structural challenges in the academic research community. Challenges that are specifically addressed in the AIS Women's Network college. Before addressing gender issues there was a focus on community responsibilities related to conferences and publications.

Traci Carte continued on the COVID-19 theme but took a slightly different perspective focusing on how AIS members are coping with the current COVID-19 situation and maintaining productivity. She talked specifically about simultaneously managing the current climate while addressing the requirements of service to our community. Our success depends on all of us being of service in the form of reviewing, editing, and serving in important conference roles. Our research outcomes require a quality peer review process. One unfortunate impact of the pandemic is that many of our required activities may take longer requiring us to be very careful in the voluntary activities we agree to do. Admittedly, we all need to be protective of our time given all the new things pulling on it (teaching duties moved online, children being home-schooled, etc.). So, how should we navigate the required activities and the voluntary ones?

Traci discussed the importance of thoughtful contributions to service. Our community needs our members to be thoughtful reviewers and volunteers. We cannot be successful researchers without the peer review process at our journals and at our conferences. So, what does it mean to be thoughtful in this work? We likely understand that thoughtful reviewing means working to be developmental and reasonable in our critique of others' work. But thoughtful also means taking care to be reasonable in what we agree to do (but not stingy) and it means being timely in how we discharge those duties.

Anecdotally, members of our field have lamented longer review times as a result of the pandemic. In addition, the impact of the pandemic may not be evenly distributed across our members. For example, it may be disproportionately impacting women (especially women with children) (e.g., Collins et al., 2020). In a recent *J AIS* editorial (Van Osch et al., 2020), an investigation was conducted to determine to what extent the pandemic may be harming our productivity and whether that harm is evenly distributed. The authors found a moderate decrease in submissions from women compared to men. They also found review times had decreased somewhat (rather than increasing). Finally, their results suggest that women were completing a disproportionate amount of the reviews. This may be a good time to remind members that our responsibility to review is proportionate to the number of papers we submit. The findings at *J AIS* suggest that men have been more able to maintain submission frequency but may not be agreeing to review at that same pace, while women have struggled to maintain submission levels but continue to review at or above their pre-COVID levels.

Maung Sein took the position that the AIS community needs to understand the other side of treating each other respectfully: *what does it mean to treat each other disrespectfully*. In the one year that he has been chairing the Research Conduct Committee, the RCC has handled 15 cases of alleged plagiarism. Most of the allegations were filed by program chairs of various conferences including ICIS (8 cases). The RCC investigated each case and sent in its reports to the AIS president whose role it is to make the final decision on what action is to be taken. It is not necessary to cite research or prior work to drive home the point that plagiarism is unethical and unacceptable conduct. Much of our interaction in the IS community is based on trust. Plagiarism can erode trust. It is disrespectful – first and foremost to the authors from whom the material is copied, but also to the community (in the immortal words of Rudy Giuliani “are we fools?”). It adds to the already heavy burden of program chairs and reviewers to detect evidence of plagiarism. Finally, it is disrespectful to colleagues who serve on committees such as RCC in that handling these cases take time off their other commitments. All the colleagues mentioned here do their work pro bono and, in most institutions, the time spent on AIS activities does not count as part of their normal workload.

There is one other aspect of plagiarized work that relates to power asymmetry which is elaborated on later in section 4.1 below.

Dawn Owens focused on the diversity of AIS members and the need to encourage a healthy exchange of ideas. AIS is an international organization with community members from different backgrounds, cultures, positions, and genders. There should be an emphasis on supporting diversity and inclusion. Fruitful exchange of ideas only comes when members are comfortable expressing their ideas. Our goal should be to create a culture that supports diversity and encourages engaging discussions. This is also supported by the association as stated in the AIS Diversity and Inclusion statement available on the AIS website: “The open exchange of ideas and the freedom of thought and expression are central to the aims and goals of the AIS Community. These require an environment that recognizes the inherent worth of every person and a group that fosters dignity, understanding, mutual respect, and that embraces diversity” (AIS, 2018).

Prior research has shown that diversity and inclusion efforts encourage innovation and creativity – “diverse groups bring more ideas and resources while enhancing productivity and creativity” (Olbrich et al., 2015). The AIS mission statement reflects this by encouraging the “advancement of knowledge and the promotion of excellence in the practice and study of information systems”². The only way to support this mission is if we all respect our colleagues and embrace their collective differences.

Dawn ended by encouraging everyone in the AIS community to respect their colleagues, acknowledge and embrace their differences, and adhere to the member code of conduct. This requires members to review and acknowledge the code of conduct and support the diversity and inclusion efforts of the association.

In addition to what was discussed at the panel, it is important to highlight the diversity and inclusion (D&I) efforts made by the association. AIS has made it a priority to address D&I. In 2018, the then AIS president, Alan Dennis, called for a special task force on diversity and inclusion led by the SIG on Social Inclusion. The task force published a final report³ with recommendations for AIS communities including special interest groups (SIGs), chapters, and colleges. One of the recommendations was to include community members in the discussion. This should be a collective effort, not something that needs to come from the top down. Each AIS community should set diversity and inclusion goals specific to their community. Therefore, we should encourage members to engage in the discussion about these topics and set goals within their organizations.

3.2. Question Two

After highlighting the community perspectives related to respectful and professional interaction the panelists shared their thoughts on their individual commitment to the agenda. Specifically focusing on question 2 of the panel:

Q2: How will you contribute to this agenda?

Ulrike Schultze in line with her theme of acknowledging and bridging social inequities (e.g., gender, race, geography/time zone) that are inevitably part of a global community like AIS, Ulrike maintained that the solutions of compassion, mutual respect and shared experience lie at the interpersonal level. Stepping into another’s shoes is highly personal. Her contribution to fostering open access to conversations, debate and ideas is to pay it forward by mentoring PhD candidates and junior faculty. This represents a “lead-by-example” approach to building a culture of empathy, which some may criticize as inadequate due to its limited scalability. However, just as the moral of the starfish parable (Blog, n. d.) teaches that helping one starfish at a time (by throwing them back into the ocean) is better than being paralyzed by the impossibility of helping every starfish and consequently doing nothing.

Traci Carte in carrying forward the issue of equitable service suggested that in her role as VP conferences she can look for ways to balance the voluntary duties and make sure no individuals are depended upon too heavily. This is important for two reasons – 1) to ensure that no one’s collegiality is being abused and 2) to help ensure that, as an association, we are constantly growing our less experienced members into service roles such that when they are no longer inexperienced they are ready

² aisnet.org/age/AboutAIS.

³ DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION in the AIS, Recommendations for AIS Communities: Special Interest Groups (SIGs), Chapters, and Colleges https://cdn.ymaws.com/aisnet.org/resource/resmgr/insider/AISCommunityReport_final.pdf

to provide leadership in the many ways that service to our association requires experienced leaders (i.e., conference leadership, SIG leadership, journal leadership, etc.).

Second, she articulated an interest in helping to address issues raised by Maung. She serves on both the RCC and MCC. The number of cases being brought currently suggests that our members may not be entirely clear in what the AIS expects from them in good member and researcher conduct. She is working with AIS leadership to help bring awareness to members⁴.

Finally, as a member of our community who identifies as female, she feels an obligation to help women in our community feel like they have equal representation. There are conversations being had in both the executive committees of AMCIS and ICIS to find ways to balance conference leadership each year to better represent all members. These initiatives came from the executive committees, but as Vice President of conferences she will fully support them and help until this sort of equity becomes commonplace at our conferences.

Maung Sein noted that from the plagiarism cases that RCC has handled during his tenure in the committee, it became clear that there is a great deal of confusion about AIS's plagiarism policy. The RCC observed that the majority of the plagiarism cases were "self-plagiarism": authors cut and paste their own work that has been presented or published in other fora such as conferences and journals. AIS does not consider this as plagiarism. This means authors can send AIS conference papers as is to AIS-listed journals. The confusion is the extent that journal editors can ask for when adding something extra to these papers to be considered for their journals. The case of copying from published journal articles is clearly plagiarism. The RCC can contribute by first helping AIS to have a clearly stated and clearly structured policy and then, arguably more importantly, disseminate this policy to the AIS community. To that end, the RCC can help organize workshops where not only the policies would be explained, but also to emphasize strongly that plagiarizing is being disrespectful to the community.

Dawn Owens as both a member and leader in the AIS community, re-iterated that she will support the RCC and MCC and help disseminate information regarding policy and procedure. She will also continue to raise awareness about the importance of diversity and inclusion in the community. She encouraged everyone to review the diversity and inclusion statements on the AIS website⁵ along with the report prepared by the task force⁶.

4 Q&A with the Audience

After the panel addressed these questions, the audience raised additional issues of concern among AIS members. In the following sections, we present each topic and present the main reactions that the panelists provided to it.

4.1. Power Asymmetries among Senior and Young Scholars

The first theme in questions and comments related to power asymmetries that young scholars experience. The power asymmetry manifests in many ways but a common feature is that senior faculty are central in the (AIS) research community and they have a potential influence on young scholars' careers. An example that was brought forward related to a personal early career experience, in this situation the participant stated she was asked to review a paper and recommend a particular outcome. For a junior faculty member, reviewing for a journal is a burdensome task, but it is at the same time an honor and it looks good on a CV. There was consensus among all participants in the panel and the audience, that such behavior is obviously unacceptable. The fundamental issue, however, is that there are no mechanisms hindering it unless senior faculty take responsibility.

Another common problem for junior faculty is related to participation in projects and publications which are not necessarily beneficial for the career of the junior faculty. However, the junior faculty must invest much energy and time in the projects in order to get a position. There is one aspect of co-publication that is related to the power asymmetry issue. Of the cases of alleged plagiarism, a number of them had been co-authored by a senior faculty and one or more junior faculty, often a PhD student. When the RCC

⁴ For any interested reader, the AIS researcher code of conduct can be found here: <https://aisnet.org/page/AdmBullCRResearchCond> and the member code of conduct can be found here: <https://aisnet.org/page/MemberCodeOfConduct>

⁵ aisnet.org/page/DiversityInclusion

⁶ aisnet.org/age/AboutAIS

investigated these cases, the senior co-author seldom took the blame beyond the simple excuse that “the wrong version of the file was submitted.” Leaving aside the fact that the correct version would still contain plagiarized parts, more serious concerns arise. First, the senior co-author may not have meaningfully contributed to the paper beyond lending his/her name to give the paper “weight”. Second, perhaps more seriously, the senior co-author may have put pressure on the junior to take the blame. In either case, it is disrespectful.

A common observation across these questions related to power asymmetries is that junior colleagues are extremely vulnerable and have much at stake with respect to career opportunities. It is further clear that the responsibility for avoiding the situations lies with the senior faculty. A fundamental question is – *Can any code of conduct capture the asymmetries that are deeply rooted in academia?*

There was agreement among the panel that bringing it to the table may be the first step in that direction. However, we cannot ignore that in academia, there are structural challenges related to performance just as there are structural requirements related to gender. Both junior and senior faculty are experiencing performance pressures from their institutions. Performance pressures related to attracting external funding, good teaching evaluations and publishing in top journals where senior faculty are in the frontline. Therefore, power asymmetries are deeply rooted in academia. University rankings and accreditations are illustrative examples of those structural pressures. At the individual level this is furthermore quantified via measures such as the h-index. Though criticized by the community it remains a central indicator in the assessment of the individual faculty (Waltman & Van Eck, 2012).

4.2. Sequence of Authors

Another issue that is familiar to practically all academic scholars was brought up: Sequence of authors. As mentioned by the audience, junior researchers are often in a position where they do data-collection and analysis, and further the main part of the writing. But it may be a senior co-author who has paved the way to a prestigious outlet and with the influence to be listed as first author. This leaves the junior researcher with very little room for maneuvering. As highlighted by the panel members there are different norms in different contexts. Some colleagues agree on sequence of authors based on actual contribution to the manuscript others have alphabetical order of the last name as the main rule.

4.3. Accommodating Different Ethnical Groups

Another theme that was brought forward related to the lack of the ability to accommodate “different” ethnical groups in the AIS community. One of the audience members commented on how the conferences are lacking attendance from Africa and that it is rare to see a female with a head covering at conferences.

As noted by the panelists, it is an articulated ambition of the AIS to be global which is also illustrated by our logo. Differences in economic ability have been recognized by the AIS through the introduction of a range of AIS scholarships⁷ along with variable membership fees based on the UN index of economic development. Economic support is however only one dimension of inclusion of different ethnical groups. Another dimension relates to the attractiveness of the community. It is beyond the scope and purpose of this article to address the ongoing discussions on racism and decolonization in academia but some introspection in our practices is nevertheless useful.

As explicitly stated in the mission statement of the AIS “The Association for Information Systems (AIS) serves society through the advancement of knowledge and the promotion of excellence in the practice and study of information systems.”⁸ It is beyond question that information technology is widely diffused to all corners of the globe. However, the community and conferences must be sensitive to global perspectives on IS. The study of IS in for example Africa or Asia must be included not only in tracks and outlets targeted towards ICT4D but in the general conference tracks and IS journals. A detailed treatment of this mutually beneficial synergy is succinctly captured in the editorial by Sahay et al. (2018) in the special issue of *J AIS* on “ICT4D, the next grand challenge for IS research and practice.” A caveat is in order here. While “Global South” is the term used in the literature, e.g. in Development Studies to designate the less developed areas of the world, the term tends to have geographical connotations. This is an over-simplification for at least two reasons. First, the South covers a vast swath both geographically

⁷ <https://aisnet.org/page/scholarships>

⁸ <https://aisnet.org/page/AboutAIS>

as well as economically. Some countries in the South are very well developed economically (e.g. Singapore and Korea), others are world leaders in IT (look no further than India) while others are somewhere in between (e.g. the so-called ASEAN Tigers such as Malaysia). Second, as the work of Sajda Qureshi of The University of Nebraska-Omaha around Omaha's disadvantaged groups, starkly illustrates, pockets of underdeveloped areas exist even in the so-called Global North (Qureshi, 2015). A more relevant focus is how resource-poor (or rich) these areas are. The essential point though is that these diverse groups need to be included in the IS discourse and conversation on respectful discourse.

4.4. Raising Awareness

A key question is how can we communicate and raise awareness about the code of conduct? During the discussion, the audience suggested that the code of conduct be displayed prominently at conference venues. It was further mentioned that panels such as the AIS4C are necessary to remind each other of the existence of the explicit rules outlined in the code of conduct. Over time it strengthens the norms in the community. One of the problems is that members may not be informed about the code of conduct and even if being informed may not invest the necessary time to familiarize themselves with its details. As pointed out by another audience member the code of conduct is not new to the association, it has been in place for a while. She suggested that it is about time that we pay more serious attention to this agenda, and it is a shared responsibility to remind each other.

Another question that arose, which by all means highlights the need for governance mechanisms in the community, was the following: "How will AIS manage other elements of member misconduct for example, making unwanted advances at a conference?" The Member Conduct Committee was initially established to create an instrument to address this question. In the development of the Member Code of Conduct cases like this are briefly addressed. The ideal scenario is, however, that the specific rules are never needed because everyone keeps in mind that civility and respect among peers in the AIS community are universal principles (Windeler et al., 2020).

5 Key Resources

Throughout this article we have highlighted a number of resources that AIS has developed over time as guidance to the community. In Table , we summarize the resources covered in our panel discussion. In Table , we add several other AIS resources that help communicate community norms through which we learn acceptable behavior in our community. Finally, in Table , we share a few excellent resources from outside of AIS that can help our members be informed about researcher conduct more broadly.

Table 2. AIS Scholarly Conduct Resources.

AIS resource	AIM	SCOPE	LINK
Membership Conduct Committee (MCC)	To define rules for social as well as professional interactions among AIS members	Boundaries are defined by direct criminal behavior (sexual and violent behavior regulated by law) and practices that are not socially acceptable but not explicitly mentioned in the MCC. Violation can lead to exclusion from the AIS community.	https://aisnet.org/page/MemberCodeOfConduct
Research Code of Conduct (RCC)	Expresses the standards expected of AIS members, in relation to research and publication	It provides a basis for consideration by the AIS Research Conduct Committee of instances of possible scholarly misconduct by a member in relation to research and publication activities. Violations can lead to expulsion from the AIS community, termination, and/or retractions.	https://cdn.ymaws.com/aisnet.org/resource/resmgr/Admin_Bulletin/AIS_Code_of_Research_Conduct.pdf
AIS bylaws	Establishes expectations of AIS governance including leadership structure, activities and member services	Encompasses the association in its entirety but largely governs leadership behavior. Violations can lead to removal from office.	https://aisnet.org/page/AISBylaws

Table 3. AIS Resources for More Informal Communication of Appropriate Scholarly Conduct.

AIS resource	AIM	SCOPE	LINK
AIS Career Services	Creation of a central repository of academic jobs	Bring together Academic job seekers and IS departments who are hiring.	https://academiccareers.aisnet.org/jobseeker/search/results/
AIS World ListServe	Maintain active communication among members	One of the longest running and most active Listserv's on the planet dedicated to serving the Information Systems Academic community.	https://aisnet.org/page/AISWorldListserve
Research Communities	Creation of communities around shared research, teaching, or service interests	With more than 80 SIGs & Chapters and four Colleges, AIS hosts community groups with the world's leading research scholars.	https://aisnet.org/page/GetInvolved
IS Conferences	Provides a forum for academic colleagues to meet, collaborate, discuss, debate and enjoy IS research.	AIS members have access to ICIS, the most prestigious gathering of IS scholars in the world. AIS Members also have access to some of the largest regional IS academic conferences in the world such as ECIS, PACIS, AMCIS and many more.	https://aisnet.org/page/Conferences
AIS eLibrary	To provide an online repository for IS journals, conferences, Chapter & SIG proceedings and affiliated outlets.	The AIS eLibrary hosts 55,000 IS research articles, across 16 journals and numerous conferences, chapter and SIG proceedings. The eLibrary also hosts thousands of author-videos, webinars, discussion threads, and more.	https://aisel.aisnet.org/
AIS scholarships	Support educational and research endeavors within AIS.	Scholarships are available for doctoral studies as well as to fund conference travel.	https://aisnet.org/page/scholarships

Table 4. Exemplar Sources for Appropriate Scholarly Conduct

Source	AIM	SCOPE	LINK
MIS Quarterly	Editorial on research transparency: Chart a course for research transparency at MISQ.	Research transparency is defined as the practice of being open about how a piece of research has been undertaken and its implications	https://misq.org/misq/downloads/download/editorial/722/
Academy of Management	Video series on Ethics in publishing your research	Coverage of a range of publishing issues: authorship, conference to journal management, plagiarism, slicing the data, etc.	https://aom.org/research/publishing-with-aom/ethics-of-research-publishing-video-series

6 Takeaways

The subsequent reflection from the panel led to the panelists deciding to prepare this manuscript. Originally, the core ambition was to discuss how AIS has witnessed that professional interaction requires explicit guidance. As illustrated in Sections 2 and 3, a central part of the communication in the panel was to highlight that AIS has reacted to the need for guidance on professional interaction with the recent development of the Membership Code of Conduct, a supplement to the Research Code of Conduct. Furthermore, the academic community has experienced additional challenges due to the COVID pandemic and this was included in the panel discussion too. However, as reflected in Section 4, questions from the audience suggested that there are other and more subtle issues that are not easily captured in policies. Different dimensions of power asymmetries were highlighted among other themes such as gender, disabilities, diversity, access, and harassment, a rich topic that deserves particular attention. Power asymmetry manifests in different forms, but two forms are particularly deleterious. The first is

related to academic misconduct, especially in plagiarism cases. We have elaborated on this earlier. More troublesome, perhaps is the second form – sexual harassment cases. Young scholars, especially PhD students are vulnerable to this heinous conduct. It should be noted that such harassment cases are also observed amongst peers. One such case was handled by the RCC in early 2018, at that time, no AIS body existed to address this specifically. The case involved a PhD student harassing a fellow PhD student at multiple conferences. Due to legal constraints, the case was simply referred to the alleged perpetrator's university. Subsequently the MCC was formed to have a set of formal procedures to address this type of unwanted community behavior.

The panel highlighted a need to reflect on whether the AIS community has a common frame of understanding of the term “respect” which is the bedrock on which candid conversations can take place. What is the space of these conversations and how meaningful are they? How is this space contested and how is an agreement reached? Looking into our research toolbox we can agree that an appropriate analytical lens to examine these types of questions is discourse analysis (Jorgensen & Phillips, 1999). After all, candid conversations that have the goal of creating an inclusive AIS community are a collaborative effort. The question then is how do such conversations restrict or open possibilities for the members and what do we need to do to find opportunities for collaborative action? (see Innes and Booher (1999) for an illustration of this approach).

Finally, it has to be highlighted that other academic domains are in the middle of a vivid decolonization debate, a debate that has also been recently addressed in our community (Myers et al., 2020; van der Poll et al., 2020). This issue was raised by one in the audience during a discussion on global attendance at conferences. Although the discussion was limited during the panel, the debate is one of interest and worthy of a broader discussion.

7 Conclusion

The AIS4C panel provided a forum to discuss the value and responsibility of AIS membership. Given the diversity present in the close to 5,000 member-strong international community of the AIS, the panel introduced the codes of conduct related to both membership and research, highlighting individuals' responsibility both to adhere to rules outlined in the code of conduct and to be of service to each other.

The research and member codes of conduct are in place to support the academic community at conferences, both in terms of research and professional conduct. Given that there was very limited attendance at the panel, this suggests that publishing this panel report may provide a greater opportunity to increase awareness about these policies and encourage further dialog. Cases reported to both MCC and RCC continue to be on the rise. Because this rise may simply be a result of a lack of awareness, AIS will be including in future AIS event registrations a checkbox that reminds participants of the AIS Member Code of Conduct. By checking the box, a conference participant confirms that he/she has read the codes of conduct and agrees to abide by them. The same applies to the submission procedure where authors will be reminded of and must agree with the Research Code of Conduct. This can create awareness and help establish norms for our inter-personal interaction.

AIS continues to provide support to its members through the implementation of policies and procedures, as well as open communication. The recent emphasis on Member Code of Conduct and Research Code of Conduct provides important guidelines. Nevertheless, much remains to be done. The panel highlighted the need for the individual to take responsibility for professional interaction. However, formal rules of academic conduct have their limitations. As stated in the preamble to the code of conduct: “The Code is concerned with how fundamental ethical principles apply to a computing professional's conduct. The Code is not an algorithm for solving ethical problems; rather it serves as a basis for ethical decision-making.”

AIS also has endeavored to create opportunities to bring members together to learn from each other and enhance our sense of community during the pandemic through virtual events. One such effort is the monthly Research Exchange program⁹. These monthly virtual events provide access to panels of experts in our field on relevant topics for all members regardless of research interest and any level of research requirement at their home institutions. The topics have ranged from finding good questions, to effectively responding to a revise and resubmit invitation. Members from all regions have been represented on these panels. Efforts like this one are meant to help members keep progressing in their careers by gaining from

⁹ <https://aisnet.org/page/researchexchange>

their AIS affiliation a set of resources (either attended live or viewed in the library of recordings) that encourage meaningful conversations about those aspects of our careers with which we struggle.

The recent COVID pandemic revealed challenges academics face (Gewin, 2021), particularly about gender bias (Van Osch et al., 2020). Some female colleagues experienced hardships due to the need to tend to children who were also at home. However, there are also challenges related to power asymmetry and ethnic diversity – each of which has not been fully addressed via the current policies. The question remains – how do we encourage open, fruitful discussion about these challenges in a way that supports different opinions? AIS is not unlike any other organization where diversity and compliance training are required. Our goal is to continue to bring attention to these important issues so that AIS continues to be a premier organization for Academics and Practitioners in AIS and by sharing our progress. Our goal is that we can provide helpful insights and guidelines to other organizations.

Finally, as stated at the end of the Code of Conduct: “Each AIS member should encourage and support adherence by all computing professionals regardless of AIS membership. AIS members who recognize a breach of the Code should consider reporting the violation to the AIS Member Conduct Committee (AIS MCC) or the AIS Research Conduct Committee (AIS RCC), which may result in remedial action as specified in the AIS Bylaw No. 4 Severance and Reinstatement of Membership. The remedial measures may include, but are not limited to, member censure, suspension or expulsion.”

It is, however, our sincere hope that these committees remain idle to the largest possible extent.

References

- Alpert, J. P. (2014). RETRACTED: I Do Not Even Remember What I Smoked! A Case of Marijuana-induced Transient Global Amnesia. *AJM Online Clinical Communication to the Editor*, 127(11), e5-e6.
- AMJ. (n. d.). *Notice of retraction: Desai, V. M. (2016). The behavioral theory of the (governed) firm: Corporate board influences on organizations' responses to performance shortfalls. Academy of management journal, 59(3): 860–879.* AMJ. Retrieved from https://journals.aom.org/pb-assets/Notice_of_Retraction-1603372055073.pdf
- AIS. (2014). *Code of research conduct.* AIS. Retrieved from <https://aisnet.org/page/AdmBullCResearchCond>
- AIS. (2018). *Diversity and inclusion.* AIS. Retrieved from <https://aisnet.org/page/DiversityInclusion>
- AIS. (2019). *Member code of conduct.* AIS. Retrieved from <https://aisnet.org/page/MemberCodeOfConduct>
- Blog. (n. d.) *Positive life balance blog.* Retrieved from <https://positivelifebalance.com/blog/star-fish-beach/>
- Collins, C., Landivar, L. C., Ruppner, L., & Scarborough, W. J. (2021). COVID-19 and the gender gap in work hours. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 28, 101-112.
- Desai, V. M. (2016). RETRACTED: The behavioral theory of the (governed) firm: Corporate board influences on organizations' responses to performance shortfalls. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(3): 860-879.
- Gewin, V. (2021). Pandemic burnout is rampant in academia. *Nature*, 591(7850), 489-491.
- Gregory, A., & Leeman, J. (2021). *On the perception of plagiarism in academia: Context and intent.* Retrieved from *arXiv preprint arXiv:2104.00574.*
- Innes, J. E., & Booher, D. E. (1999). Consensus building and complex adaptive systems: A framework for evaluating collaborative planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 65(4), 412-423.
- JEP. (2011). Correspondence: David H. Autor and Bruno S. Frey. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 25(3), 239-240.
- Jorgensen, M., & Phillips, L. J. (1999). *Discourse analysis as theory and method.* Roskilde Universitetsforlag. Samfundslitteratur.
- Myers, M., Chughtai, H., Davidson, E., Tsibolane, P., & Young, A. (2020). Studying the other or becoming the other: Engaging with indigenous peoples in IS research. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 47(1), 382-396.
- Offord, C. (2020). *The Surgisphere Scandal: What went wrong?* The Scientist. Retrieved from <https://www.the-scientist.com/features/the-surgisphere-scandal-what-went-wrong--67955>
- Olbrich, S., Trauth, E. M., Niedermann, F., & Gregor, S. (2015). Inclusive design in IS: Why diversity matters. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 37.
- Qureshi, S. (2015). Are we making a better world with Information and communication technology for development (ICT4D) research? Findings from the field and theory building. *Information Technology for Development*, 21(4), 511-522.
- Sahay, S, Sein, M. K. & Urquhart, C. (2017). Flipping the context: ICT4D, the next grand challenge for IS research and practice. *Journal of the Association of Information Systems*, 18(12), 837–847.
- Van Osch, W., Leidner, D. E., & Beath, C. M. (2020). Does a societal lockdown treat gender the same? Submission and reviewing patterns at JAIS during Spring 2020. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 21(6), 11.
- van der Poll, A., van Zyl, I., & Kroeze, J. H. (2020). Towards decolonizing and africanizing computing education in South Africa. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 47(1), 140-163.

- Waltman, L., & Van Eck, N. J. (2012). The inconsistency of the h-index. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 63(2), 406-415.
- Windeler, J., Petter, S., Chudoba, K. M., Coleman, E., Fox, G., & Chapman, T. A. (2020). In or out? Perceptions of inclusion and exclusion among AIS members. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 46(1), 92-116.

About the Authors

Helle Zinner Henriksen is Professor (WSR) of Digitalization at Copenhagen Business School. Her research interests include digital government, digitalization of the Sustainable Development Goals and responsible digitalization in society. She has published in *European Journal of Information Systems*, *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, *Journal of Information Technology*, *Government Information Quarterly* and has presented her work at many international conferences. She served as AIS VP Membership & Chapters 2019-2022.

Traci A. Carte is currently the Director of the School of Information Technology at Illinois State University. She earned her PhD at the University of Georgia. Her work has been published in *MIS Quarterly*, *Information Systems Research*, *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, and numerous other journals. She currently serves as a senior editor for *Journal of the Association for Information Systems* and *AIS Transactions on Replication Research*. She also served as the VP of Conferences for AIS from 2018-2022.

Dawn Owens is a Clinical Associate Professor and Director of the Undergraduate Information Technology and Systems at the Jindal School of Management, UT Dallas. She teaches systems analysis and design, databases, and capstone courses. She earned her Master's Management Information Systems, and her PhD from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Her research focuses on understanding the impact of technology on work practices, particularly, virtual teams. She is very active in the Association for Information Systems (AIS), where she has served as co-chair of the AIS Women's Network and President for the Special Interest Group on IT Project Management.

Ulrike Schultze is a professor in information technology and operations management at Southern Methodist University. Her research explores the complex relationship between information technology and work practices. Drawing primarily on practice theory in her early work on the implications of knowledge management and internet-based self-service technology, her more recent studies of identity work in social media have led her to sociomaterial theorizing. This philosophical stance has also guided her exploration of digital innovation, platform evolution, and the sharing economy. She has served on numerous journals' editorial boards and is currently a senior editor at *Journal of the Association for Information Systems* and *Information & Organization*.

Maung Sein has a nomadic academic career spanning 33 years, he has served at several universities in USA, Norway, Sweden, Thailand, and Finland as permanent faculty, visiting professor or visiting scholar. He has conducted research in a variety of areas: end-user training, systems development and data-modelling, e-Government and ICT for Development (ICT4D). He has published extensively in, among others, *MIS Quarterly*, *Information Systems Research*, *European Journal of IS*, *The Information Society*, and *Information Systems Journal*. His wide editorial experience includes Senior Editor of *Journal of AIS*, Associate editor at *MIS Quarterly*, *MISQ Executive*, and guest-editing special issues of *Journal of AIS*, *Communications of the ACM*, and *Scandinavian Journal of IS*. He serves or have served on the Editorial advisory boards of *JAIS*, *IJIM* and *ISJ*. He co-founded AIS SIG on e-Government and is the current Chair of AIS SIG on Global Development. He is a past President of IFIP 9.4 (ICT for development). In 2021, he was inducted as an AIS Fellow in 2021 and received a DESRIST Lifetime Achievement Award in 2022.

Copyright © 2022 by the Association for Information Systems. Permission to make digital or hard copies of all or part of this work for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that copies are not made or distributed for profit or commercial advantage and that copies bear this notice and full citation on the first page. Copyright for components of this work owned by others than the Association for Information Systems must be honored. Abstracting with credit is permitted. To copy otherwise, to republish, to post on servers, or to redistribute to lists requires prior specific permission and/or fee. Request permission to publish from: AIS Administrative Office, P.O. Box 2712 Atlanta, GA, 30301-2712 Attn: Reprints are via e-mail from publications@aisnet.org.