

Editorial: Key development areas for the growing and maturing knowledge management research field: creativity, novelty, relevance and impact

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The modern knowledge management (KM) research field is now roughly quarter of a century old – some of the seminal KM books were published in later part of 1990's and the key KM journals such as KMRP and JKM were established around the turn of the millennium (see, e.g., Schiuma et al., 2020). The KM research field has been growing and evolving constantly. For example, in 2018 we received 373 original submissions for the KMRP journal while in 2020 the number of submissions had increased to 625 submissions. A similar growth trend can be observed in the number of article downloads: in 2018 in total 15.550 articles were downloaded from KMRP website while in 2020 the number had increased to 72.501. In light of these numbers both the KM research field and the KMRP journal seem to be doing fine.

While the number of submissions has significantly increased over the years, KMRP has until now been publishing only four issues, that is, around 40 articles per year. This has made the acceptance rate very low and in some cases caused delays between article acceptance and publication. In order to cope with the growth of the KM research field and the increased submissions, KMRP will be publishing six issues per year starting from Volume 20 in 2022.

While moving to six issues per year makes it possible to publish more articles annually, we feel it is possible to maintain the high academic quality and managerial relevance of the journal. As Editors-in-Chief, we would especially like to see submissions that are original and novel. We welcome submissions that present new ideas, question existing theories and models and those that are critical to the KM discipline and its activities. Good examples of such studies include "Using critical KM to address wicked problems" by Dumay (2020) and "A comparative study of knowledge management research studies: Making research more relevant and creative" by Jevnaker and Olaisen (2022). These studies are good examples in the sense that they question the relevance and value of KM as a managerial practice and as a research field and, in doing so, challenge the research community to pursue new and more ambitious goals.

One characteristic of a maturing research field is that nowadays there are many submissions that are starting to resemble each other – submissions that seem quite mechanistic or technical and aim only at very minor additions in new knowledge. Surely there is room also in the future for studies that verify existing research findings or refine theories with additional empirical data. However, we want to encourage authors to consider carefully the contribution and the added value of their study in light of the body of existing KM research. For example, we receive annually dozens of submissions exploring (with statistical tools using questionnaire-based data) the connections of, say, drivers of knowledge sharing or hiding and their impact on organisational performance. Of course, such questions are at the core focus of our journal. The problem with many of these studies is that the contribution to what is already known is incremental at best, sometimes non-existent, compared to other studies already published. Such studies are not likely to make major theoretical breakthroughs. In addition, from a managerial perspective, such studies are unlikely to provide significant new insights that would impact managerial practice. Thus, we would like to encourage authors to be creative and original, and to come up with studies that contain novel ideas. This will increase the likelihood of getting your paper accepted and it will also make KMRP more interesting to read.

Nowadays – as the KM research field has become more established and mature – there are more than twenty academic journals focusing on the theme of knowledge management. Sometimes it is not easy to distinguish the profile and role of each of these journals. KMRP seeks to be a journal that focuses on understanding the knowledge perspective of managing organizations. The unique perspective of KMRP – also visible in the journal name – is the interplay between research and practice. Therefore, we aim to develop KMRP so that it evolves as a journal publishing rigorous academic research with high empirical and theoretical ambition but at the same time remaining genuinely relevant for the practitioners and thus being able to make a significant societal impact.

References

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