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**From the Selected Works of Adriane B. Randolph, Ph.D.**

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# Context-Aware User Profiles to Improve Media Synchronicity for Individuals with Severe Motor Disabilities

Adriane B. Randolph

Stacie Petter, *Baylor University*

Veda C. Storey

Melody Moore Jackson, *Georgia Institute of Technology*



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## Established theory rejection

The *Information Systems Journal (ISJ)* receives a large number of submissions that describe the direct or slightly modified application of well-established theoretical perspectives in new contexts. Regrettably, senior editors reject many of these submissions without sending them out for formal review. This editorial explains why this occurs and describes what might instead constitute a sufficient contribution in such cases.

In 2020, *ISJ* rendered final decisions on 368 submissions. While *ISJ* deliberately refrains from setting a hard target for the number of acceptances to allow for the publication of good research, the number of available slots for publication is obviously limited.

Equally important as journal capacity constraints is limited review team resources. Each paper sent out for review requires a senior editor, an associate editor and two or three reviewers. When using the conservative number of two reviewers per paper, 368 final decisions would have required at least 736 reviewers. Finding reviewers with the relevant expertise to review submissions is a painstaking process, as the most qualified reviewers are many times already reviewing other manuscripts for *ISJ* and/or other journals. Associate editors often need to approach many potential reviewers in order to secure two well-qualified reviewers.

Beyond this, submissions receiving revise and resubmit decisions require significantly longer time commitments. Three rounds of review can easily take 18 months (90 days for the review process and 90 days for the authors to revise the manuscript each round). While these time commitments seem painful at times, they are crucial to a quality review process that helps authors publish the very best version of their work. It is likely that most authors have experienced the frustrating process of multiple rounds of review, only to realise that in the end their work was much improved.

What does all this have to do with submissions that simply apply established theory in a new context? The answer is, a great deal! As an Association of Information Systems (AIS) basket of eight journal, *ISJ* receives a significant number of high-quality submissions. Editors must make tough choices about which manuscripts to send out for review and which manuscripts to reject directly (i.e., 'desk reject'). Editorial teams consider many factors during this process. Will the research be of interest to the IS community, and, importantly, to *ISJ* readers? Does the research build on research previously published in *ISJ*? Is the research well-motivated? What are the chances of eventual acceptance? Is the theoretical framework appropriate? Are the methods suitable for answering the research question? Does the research provide new insight to an existing body of knowledge or open up a new area of inquiry? A negative answer to the last question is one of the primary reasons why editors frequently reject submissions that merely apply well-established theoretical models in new contexts.

A particularly salient example of well-established theory frequently applied in new contexts is TAM (and its derivatives, such as TAM2, TAM3, UTAUT and UTAUT2). TAM and its related versions are well known; thus, it is relatively straightforward for researchers to apply them in new contexts such as when organisations introduce a new software package to users. This is not to say that conducting this research does not require a great deal of effort. In many cases, it does. Nor does it suggest that the findings are not valuable, especially for the organisation in which the researchers apply the model. In fact, organisations should be interested in applying TAM; they can learn about the acceptance of new technology using a well-established model. However, such applications do not provide scientific insight beyond the knowledge that the model is predictive in a new context.<sup>1</sup> Since researchers have repeatedly established TAM's predictive properties, such studies add very little to existing knowledge and thus are unlikely to survive the rigorous *ISJ* review process.

Other submissions attempt to integrate additional constructs into the different versions of TAM. All too often, however, these submissions include constructs that researchers have previously introduced to this literature. Sometimes, authors appear to add new constructs almost arbitrarily. In cross-sectional survey designs, many perceptual measures will share at least some variance with outcomes such as behavioural intentions. Authors gleefully proclaim that their new model explains additional variance, and, therefore, the inclusion of the new variable is of great importance. What these authors often forget is the motivation for why this new variable is included in the first place. Research involves a tradeoff between explanatory power and parsimony. Although the model may explain slightly more variance, is it worth the tradeoff in parsimony? Do the new variable and related theoretical underpinnings provide new scientific insight? These important questions require more than superficial justification by authors. Given the frequency of *ISJ* submissions that add variables to established theoretical models, eventual publication of the work is highly unlikely.

So what constitutes a sufficient contribution in such cases? Carter and Bélanger (2005) provide a good example of how to integrate several different theoretical perspectives successfully. Setting the tone for the article, Carter and Bélanger offer a rich motivational discussion on why the integration of trustworthiness, innovation and acceptance factors represents an important step towards better understanding e-government services software acceptance. The authors first describe the four relevant theoretical perspectives, namely, the technology acceptance model, diffusion of innovations, perceived characteristics of innovating and, finally, the concept of trustworthiness. Next, they compare the theoretical mechanisms of these different perspectives and successfully integrate them into a well-justified research model. The authors then validate the measures for each of the constructs and use regression analysis to evaluate the relationships among the measures. Not surprisingly, *ISJ* lists Carter and Bélanger (2005) as one of its all-time highest cited articles. According to Google Scholar, it is also the top-cited paper for both these authors.

Although this editorial relies on TAM related examples, authors frequently submit work that uses other theories in a similar fashion. Established theories are either directly applied in new contexts, or new variables are added without proper motivation. Neither case provides a contribution to knowledge sufficient for publication in a top-tier journal such as *ISJ*.

In closing, although rejections are always disappointing, authors can take heart that they are in good company. Close to 90% of all *ISJ* submissions are rejected. This editorial should help authors decrease their odds of rejection by avoiding the submission of manuscript types that typically result in rejection.

In this issue of the *ISJ*, we present eight papers.

In the first paper, Amon Rapp (2022) examines a massively multi-player online role-playing game through social practice theory in order to understand how the game time may affect players' engagement. The author shows that, in a video game, time unfolds in multiple temporalities, which are curated and tuned by game designers through the design of certain game design elements, namely the basic design components of a game. These temporalities elicit temporal experiences that stimulate engagement in various ways, by tying players to the shared temporality of the game community, by making them feel fulfilled over the long term and by automatizing their experience of play. The study contributes to IS research by proposing a novel understanding of how time can be intentionally designed to sustain user engagement. Furthermore, it suggests that 'time design' in video games could inspire engaging designs in broader IS contexts, such as in the gamification of online communities and crowd working systems.

In the second paper, Eriksson and Ågerfalk (2022) analyse the ontological question of identity, focussing specifically on institutional identity, which is the identity of socially constructed institutional objects. An institutional entity is a language construct that is 'spoken into existence'. We elaborate on how institutional identity changes how we understand conceptual modelling and the models produced. We show that different models result if we base modelling on a property-based conception of identity compared to an institutional one. We use the Bunge-Wand-Weber principles, which embrace a property-based view of identity, as an anchor to the existing literature to point out how this type of ontology sidesteps identity in general and institutional identity in particular. We contribute theoretically by providing the first in-depth ontological analysis of what the notion of institutional identity can bring to conceptual

modelling. We also contribute a solid ontological grounding of identity management and the identity of things in digital infrastructures.

In the third paper, Lagna & Ravishankar (2022) explore the potential of fintech innovations to enhance financial inclusion and reduce poverty. The authors argue that while the IS research community is taking significant interest in fintech, published research rarely speaks to financial inclusion or else uses the term in a perfunctory manner with limited focus on pro-poor finance. Building on calls for socially impactful IS and management research, Lagna and Ravishankar encourage scholars to take an ethical turn and pay more attention to pro-poor financial inclusion. To this end, they draw on the existing IS literature on fintech and Information and Communication Technologies for Development scholarship to develop a framework for guiding IS research on fintech-led financial inclusion. This framework highlights the entrepreneurial, strategic, technological and developmental facets of fintech for financial inclusion.

In the fourth paper, Baham and Hirschheim (2022) note that 20 years after the *Agile Manifesto* was developed, agile software development (ASD) has become widely adopted in organisations that engage in software development. Born out of practice, ASD has received much attention from researchers who have provided several insights into the phenomenon with theoretical underpinnings and empirical support. Still, despite calls for a more unified theoretical understanding of ASD, a theoretical core of ASD has not been identified. Thus, what constitutes 'agile' theoretically is still said to be unclear. The authors offer a theoretical core of ASD research, clarifying what is essential and what is less essential for IS agility, with the intention of sparking a scholarly discussion, and providing implications of such a core for understanding method tailoring.

In the fifth paper, Randolph et al. (2022) provide evidence of how information systems (IS) can make a meaningful difference to a person's quality of life. The results of a design science research effort help people with limited communication ability due to severe motor disabilities communicate through better brain-computer interface design. The authors present an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) system that incorporates context-aware user profiles to improve the communication process for individuals with severe motor disabilities. They offer design principles substantiated by media synchronicity theory to inform those designing communication systems for individuals that rely on AAC systems.

In the sixth paper, Kim et al. (2022) examine the factors affecting insiders' security breach from the prosocial rule breaking perspective. They develop a research model including factors such as prosocial motivational assessment and situationally induced personal characteristics. In the context of healthcare, they empirically test the model with nursing students in South Korea with a scenario-based experiment. They find both altruistic and egoistic motivations affect situational empathy, while an egoistic motivation affects subjects' perceived responsibility to commit prosocial rule breaking. Furthermore, they find that the perceived responsibility mediates the relationship between empathy and prosocial intention to rule breaking. They argue that organisations can better manage prosocially motivated insiders' security breach by understanding these factors and their relationships.

In the seventh paper, Mezazade Mehrizi et al. (2022) show that established ways of thinking of and working with IS (legacy habits) not only inhibit the transition to the new system, but sometimes can create an initial trigger for discontinuing a legacy systems (detracting role) and further act as a bridge for learning how to use new systems that replace legacy systems (bridging role). By comparing two cases, they explain how the role that legacy habits play in legacy discontinuance is contingent on the configuration of various socio-technical conditions: the technical similarity between the legacy and new systems, users' orientation towards change, the extent to which IS change requires the move towards routine activities and whether the tasks are organised collectively or individually. As a novel focus, the study shows that understanding IS change requires examining how users deal with legacy systems, as well as how they adopt new ones.

In the last paper, Payton et al. (2022) employ the genre of an opinion piece to convey their experiences as black scholars in the IS discipline. Focussing on the Black Lives Matter movement, the authors articulate how systemic and personal challenges impact the professional careers and even scholarly contributions of black professors. Though the AIS has examined diversity among its members and released a public statement in response to recent social and political events, the authors go further by offering actionable recommendations designed to embrace inclusion

through transparency, justification, compliance and enforcement. The authors challenge the field to examine its structural barriers both within the AIS along with constraining practices in IS departments as well as their colleges and broader institutional environments.

Andrew Hardin<sup>1</sup>  
Christoph Schneider<sup>2</sup>  
Robert M. Davison<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Business, University of Nevada Las Vegas, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

<sup>2</sup>IESE Business School, University of Navarra, Madrid, Spain

<sup>3</sup>Department of Information Systems, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, Hong Kong

### Correspondence

Robert M. Davison, Department of Information Systems, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, Hong Kong.

Email: isrobert@cityu.edu.hk

### ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> There is always the chance that the model may not be predictive in the new context. In that case, it is possible that researchers will discover new insight into TAM's applicability. Whether this provides a significant theoretical contribution is another question.

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