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A Look Back at the First Seven Years of the *AIS Educator Journal*

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James Madison University

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ABSTRACT

At the 2003 meeting of the AIS Educator Association, an idea for an on-line resource for AIS educators was first introduced. The idea evolved into the *AIS Educator Journal*, the first completely on-line academic journal in the accounting education field. Since the first issue went live on-line in 2006, sufficient manuscripts have been blind-reviewed and accepted to provide an annual volume each year. A total of 31 articles by 60 authors and co-authors have been published. This article provides a brief history of the journal and a summary analysis of the first seven volumes.

Keywords

Keywords - AIS Educator Journal, On-Line Journal, Teaching Resources, AIS Educator Association

INTRODUCTION

Almost ten years ago, the Board of Directors of the AIS Educator Association discussed the formation of a journal dedicated to the teaching of accounting information systems. Unlike the *Journal of Information Systems*, this journal would focus exclusively on teaching, as opposed to research into accounting system design, operation, evaluation, and theory. And unlike the *Journal of Accounting Education* and *Issues in Accounting Education*, this new journal would focus exclusively on teaching of accounting systems, accounting technology, and the application of technology to teaching accounting.

Another defining and innovative characteristic: This journal was to be an on-line resource available via the Internet, rather than a printed hardcopy periodical. The Board of Directors specified that access to the journal, its articles, and the ancillary and teaching materials

accompanying the articles, were to be available free – without further cost, subscription fee, or charge – to all members of the AIS Educator Association. The on-line journal was intended to be the dissemination organ of the association, whose mission statement can be stated simply, “to develop the skills of AIS educators”.

In the Foreword article to the first issue in 2006, James E. Hunton wrote,

“The first volume of the AIS Educator Journal marks a significant milestone for the AIS Educator Association. The unique aspects of this new e-journal are many. ... Indeed, the AIS Educator Association is on the forefront of a new and exciting way of continuously delivering valuable classroom materials to AIS students and educators across the globe. While creating and publishing classroom materials is vital to a healthy discipline and reflects a valuable scholarly pursuit, we who teach AIS courses need to stay focused on the operative word – education.” (Hunton, 2006)

At the time of its conceptualization, the journal was intended to be the means by which the Association would share the best papers and presentations from its annual conference. The conference, founded by AIS professor Jack Stewart of the University of Northern Colorado, was intended to be a gathering of AIS educators from all sizes and types of institutions – a place where they could share materials, discuss experiences, and assist each other in becoming better educators.

In contrast to the Information Systems (IS) section of the American Accounting Association (which included AIS disciplinary research in its mission) the AIS Educator Conference would be limited to education within the AIS field. The conference deliberately selected venues affordable by smaller institutions — and even individuals who might have to pay for the cost themselves. The conference welcomed and encouraged participation by AIS educators from all institutions — large and small, private and public, research and teaching, including junior colleges and even liberal-arts colleges which offered courses in accounting information systems. The guiding principle was that AIS educators should have a venue for improvement of their skill set in an environment emphasizing AIS education, rather than accounting education in general, or research in the field of AIS in general.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE JOURNAL

At their annual meeting in June 2003, the Board of Directors of the AIS Educator Association discussed the formation of a resource dedicated to the dissemination of materials for the teaching of accounting information systems. According to the minutes of the June 29, 2003 Board Meeting, under the heading “Discussion of an online journal,” the minutes record:

“After some discussion, it was agreed to see how the membership feels about an on-line journal. It was agreed to form a committee to study whether this would be feasible. The committee will consist of Greg Krippel, Sandy Richtermeyer, Stacy Kovar (who will chair the committee), Curt Westbrook, and perhaps one or two volunteers from the general membership.” (AISEA, 2003a)

The minutes of the July 1, 2003, general membership business meeting record the proposal of a new committee, called the “On-Line Media Investigation Committee ... to investigate the possibility of the Association sponsoring an on-line journal, using the web to share cases, homework and assignments, etc. The committee will need to consider what kind(s) of review or scrutiny is needed, where the site will be hosted, etc.” (AISEA, 2003b)

Out of this initial concept evolved what is today the *AIS Educator Journal*. The first editor, Arline Savage from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, spent almost three years putting together an editorial board and roster of reviewers covering the various specialties within the AIS education field. The initial set of reviewers represented a wide range of institutions, educational approaches, and topics within AIS. Skip White is well-known for his expertise on XML and XBRL. Guido Geerts is highly respected for his work in Business Process Modeling and AIS database design. Bonnie Klamm has wide experience in teaching Enterprise systems, Sandy Richtermeyer was Faculty Member in Residence with the Institute of Management Accountants, Roberta Barra specializes in fraud and internal control, Mark Simkin and Carolyn Strand Norman co-authored an AIS textbook covering AIS core concepts, Barbara Ross worked with the European Conference of AIS. These are just a few of the award-winning AIS educators possessing diverse backgrounds and experiences, and who volunteered to serve on the initial editorial board.

Spanning three years of conference presentations, the first issue of the journal contained seven articles including the invited preface. The 2006 issue’s appearance on the World-Wide Web broke new ground as being the first all-online journal in accounting education.

Stacy Kovar, PWC Faculty Fellow at Kansas State University, served as the initial Associate Editor, and would succeed Arline as Editor for the 2007 through 2009 issues. Arline continued her association with the journal as associate editor. The 2007 issue contained four articles, some of which were carryovers from the three years the journal was “under construction.” As the backlog cleared, the 2008 issue published two articles, and the 2009 issue had three articles.

During Stacy’s time as Editor, the Journal attained its Cabell’s listing. It was added to the list of acceptable outlets counting for tenure and promotion at a growing number of institutions, and its articles began appearing as references and citations in other publications.

To this point, the journal had concentrated on publishing the best papers from the AIS Educator Conference. As knowledge and awareness of the journal grew, the Board decided to open the journal to manuscripts and papers which had not necessarily been presented at the conference. Calls for papers were issued, and soon new manuscripts began arriving. Thanks to the work of Arline and Stacy, the journal was experiencing a tremendous influx of new manuscripts, resulting in a renewed review and publication backlog.

As Stacy completed her three-year term as Editor, David Fordham of James Madison University was named as new editor beginning with the 2010 issue. This continued the tradition of a former officer and Board Member of the AIS Educator Association serving as Editor of the journal. Because of the recent growth in submissions, two associate editors were engaged: Arline Savage continued as associate editor, and Bill Heninger of Brigham Young University was added, along with an expanded panel of reviewers.

The growth in submissions helped boost the journal’s quality and reputation. One of the primary goals of the editors has always been to assist authors in sharing good AIS educational materials, techniques, and experiences. Hence, the major thrust of the review process is to help authors turn a good idea, good materials, or good technique, into a good article. In some cases,

the final article ended up being very different from the author's original submission. Thus, it is sometimes quite difficult to tell when a completely-rewritten paper should be counted as a revision versus a new submission. During the first seven years, the journal received and processed approximately 134 submissions and major revisions, depending on how one wishes to count.

THE PURPOSE OF BLIND REVIEW

Each submission is evaluated by two blind reviewers selected from the editorial board. Notwithstanding the emphasis on helping authors publish good quality articles, the target audience takes precedence. The instructions provided to reviewers make it clear that the goal of the review process is not necessarily to "filter" the received submissions, but rather to help the journal's audience and readership by sharing ideas and materials in the form of well-written, easily-understandable, and helpful, articles. If a submission contains a good idea, a useful teaching technique, a report of an innovation, a new method of delivery of instruction, interesting results of an educational experiment, or anything else that has potential to materially improve AIS education, then the reviewer's response should assist the author in creating a high-quality article for sharing with the AIS education community.

Of course, if an experiment is flawed, or the materials are not innovative, or a significant contribution cannot be identified (over and above the already-published literature and materials), then the review process should clearly communicate the reason for rejection. In many instances, however, rejection was the result of the article not being directly related to education, or not being directly related to accounting information systems or accounting technology, or otherwise failing to meet the topical guidelines for the Journal, rather than flawed design or lack of contribution.

It is therefore the reviewers, rather than the editor, who take credit for assisting authors in getting published, and it is the authors and reviewers together, not the editor, who take credit for the quality of the journal. The editor, associate editor, Association, and the AIS education community in general owe a debt of gratitude for the time, effort, and sincere dedication invested in the journal by the reviewers on the editorial board.

PROPOSAL FOR AFFILIATION WITH THE AMERICAN ACCOUNTING ASSOCIATION'S I.S. SECTION

In 2008, the American Accounting Association's *Journal of Information Systems* announced its intention to cease publication of education papers. Instead, the AAA instructed authors to direct those manuscripts to the AAA's general-purpose education journal, *Issues in Accounting Education*. The AIS Educator Association proposed, and the AAA's Information Section leadership approved, a joint committee to study the feasibility of together sponsoring a journal dedicated to the specialized needs of AIS teaching faculty. The committee called itself "The Joint AAA-IS/AISEA Task Force" and was "charged with the responsibility to explore a jointly-sponsored journal for educational resources and research." The members of the Task Force were: Sarah Bee, Ronnie Daigle, David Fordham, Deb Cosgrove, Martha Eining, and

Mary Curtis. The Task Force worked during 2009 and submitted its proposal to the Executive Committee of the AAA-IS Section on November 27, 2009, and to the Board of Directors of the AIS Educator Association on November 30, 2009.

It is uncertain what actually became of the Task Force's proposal. The AIS Educator Association Board tentatively approved the proposal. There is some evidence that the AAA-IS Section leadership also endorsed the proposal, but ran into difficulty over the sharing of editorial control based on to AAA Publications Committee policies. There was also some discussion regarding a potential issue with the cost-sharing arrangement of the journal's budget.

Some emails exist to indicate that the Task Force might have been expected to reconvene and revise the proposal. But no evidence has been found to suggest that any formal recommendation for specific revisions or change was ever actually communicated to the Task Force. Apparently, due to the lack of specific guidance and direction as to exactly *how* to revise the proposal, the Task Force was unsure how to proceed, and was thus unable to, and did not, prepare a revision.

In any event, the AIS Educator Association proceeded to continue publishing the journal, assuming full editorial control and cost. A call was issued by the AIS Educator Association for nominations for Editor, and after reviewing the candidates, David Fordham was named as the new editor for the next three years.

ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST SEVEN VOLUMES

In the first seven volumes, the Journal published 31 articles by 60 authors. Two authors (David Hayes and Clinton (Skip) White), authored or co-authored three articles each. Five (Nancy Jones, Jim Mensching, Mark Simkin, Roberta Barra, and David Fordham) authored or co-authored two articles each. The list of published authors and co-authors includes instructors, adjuncts, assistant, associate, and full professors, as well as students and professionals.

In terms of content, the journal appears to be meeting its stated goal. Twelve articles contained or introduced ready-to-use "drop-in" cases covering a wide variety of AIS topics – everything from IFRS to internal control, from database design to ACL, from computerized accounting practice sets to SOX compliance activities. Another four articles presented materials which can be used or applied to create an instructor's own customized case or assignment materials.

Fourteen articles described innovative teaching techniques or approaches. These range from the application of Monte Carlo simulations for Budget Process Modeling, to having students audit their systems understanding aid practice set from an earlier accounting course. Six articles were reports of experimental or research studies exploring the effectiveness of various teaching techniques and approaches, or factors affecting educational success in the AIS environment. One of these was a comparative analysis of topical coverage in AIS and MIS courses, intended to serve as a benchmark for curriculum designers.

There were 13 articles which could be considered cross-disciplinary in content. These articles combined AIS education concepts with such topics as IT/MIS (3 articles), auditing (5 articles), encryption and data security (2 articles), as well as budgeting, IFRS, and introductory accounting (1 article each).

One article was a report by an AIS instructor on an experiment conducted by a team of radio experimenters in which they sent and received conventional wireless 802.11 signals

across a distance of 56 miles (setting a temporary world record in the process). This article directed the attention of AIS educators to the need for increased emphasis on the expanded risks introduced into accounting systems by incorporating such wireless network links.

Six articles in the seven issues directly addressed the use of educational technology by educators in teaching AIS. Fourteen articles addressed the *teaching* of accounting technology to students. These 14 dealt with the teaching of Microsoft Excel (5 articles), XBRL (3 articles), ACL and IDEA (2 articles), database design (1 article), and general accounting software (3 articles), thus covering a broad spectrum of technological tools.

Appendix A of this article restates the formal Mission of the *AIS Educator Journal*. Appendix B is a complete list of articles published in the journal across the first seven volumes, displayed in bibliographic format. Appendix C lists the institutions represented by the 60 authors and co-authors.

CONCLUSION

The Journal is alive and well. William (Bill) Heninger of Brigham Young University is the new Editor, and his first issue will be Volume 8 (2013). The journal now has three associate editors: Ronnie Daigle of Sam Houston State University, David C. Hayes of James Madison University, and Joanne Segovia of Winona State University. The journal's current Editorial Board can be found in Appendix D.

Thanks to the support of the AIS education community, submissions continue to arrive. While the journal relies heavily on the "best papers" presented at each annual AIS Educator Conference, outside submissions continue to be an important contribution.

Grateful acknowledgement is given not only to the many authors and co-authors of the submissions, but also to the reviewers, both past and present, who have added so much to the quality of the published articles.

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APPENDIX A

MISSION OF THE AIS EDUCATOR JOURNAL

From its inception, the mission of the AIS Educator Journal has been to “Disseminate research that will benefit AIS education”. The Journal seeks papers and manuscripts from any of the following categories:

Research

- Research about AIS education methods from a variety of perspectives (for example: classroom, field, or laboratory experiments, pedagogical models, etc).
- Research presenting the importance of content that might be integrated into AIS courses.
- Interdisciplinary education research with a systems or technology component, such as control and auditing systems, database systems, enterprise systems, e-commerce, expert systems, artificial intelligence, decision aids, knowledge management, financial reporting systems, general AIS framework, information security, internet, web-based systems, organization and management of IS and IT, the systems development life cycle, systems implementation, project management, networking, telecommunications, and XBRL.
- AIS basic research that has potential for being applied or disseminated in an accounting classroom (AIS, auditing, managerial, financial, taxation, etc.)

Classroom Applications

- AIS educational cases and class projects, including those that are interdisciplinary with other accounting and information systems and technology courses.
- New course or program descriptions
- Innovative, or especially successful, methods for teaching AIS courses or topics.

Tools

- Tutorials and demonstrations of useful new applications, software, and teaching tools.
- Reviews of books, articles, software, and other tools applicable to AIS education.

Papers not falling into one of the above categories, but clearly applying directly to Accounting Information Systems education will also be considered.

APPENDIX B

LIST OF ARTICLES APPEARING IN THE FIRST SEVEN VOLUMES

- Antcliff, M., R. Doren, L. Harris, and D. C. Hayes. 2012. A Case to Provide Students Practice in Basic and Advanced Functions of IDEA Software. *AIS Educator Journal*, 7(1): 69-73.
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APPENDIX C

AUTHOR AND CO-AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS IN THE FIRST SEVEN VOLUMES

Baylor University
Bentley College
Bentley University (2)
California Polytechnic State University – San Luis Obispo
California State University Chico (6)
Central Michigan University
The Citadel
Clarkson University
Coastal Carolina University
Houston Baptist University
KPMG Advisory (2)
KPMG Audit
Iowa State University
James Madison University (7)
Northern Kentucky University (2)
Minnesota State University Mankato (2)
Minnesota State University Moorhead (2)
Mississippi State University
Seattle University
Southern Illinois University
State University of New York at Oswego
University of Alaska Anchorage
University of Delaware (5)
University of Hawaii at Hilo (2)
University of Houston – Downtown (2)
University of Kentucky
University of Nebraska Lincoln
University of Nebraska Omaha (3)
University of Nevada Reno (2)
University of North Carolina at Wilmington
University of Northern Colorado (2)
University of Rochester
University of South Florida (3)
University of South Florida St. Petersburg
University of Tampa
University of Wisconsin Whitewater
Washington and Lee University
Western Carolina University (2)
Winona State University
Xavier University

APPENDIX D

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