

# Editorial Preface

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Dear IJSS readers I must apologise to you for the lateness of this edition. I will not offer an excuse but an explanation. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the journal and it is beginning to mature. In order to continue with its development and compete in a highly competitive market we have to keep on improving. It is not easy in this market because journals have to contend with others in the field but also there are many competing outlets including social media and on-line discussion groups. To add to this complexity in the USA, UK, Australia and NZ there are regular research exercises, designed to improve the quality of research. In order to take part in these exercises, and to progress in their career they have to; academics are encouraged to submit to star rated journals, the more star rating the better. And this is despite the policy of asking reviewers to judge each quality article rather than the rating of the journal in which it was published. This is understandable as its supporters argue that these journals and their referees demand high standards and only the best papers get published. But this is not always the case as the pressures on academics to publish often means papers about papers are published with fewer papers reporting the outcomes of real world research. This means that new journals such as ours, which encourages field research and the exploration of ideas that lie outside the main areas favoured by government have to work that much harder. Academics publishing Systems theory and practice means that they are not competing on a level playing field, however, it is what it is and so we must find ways of satisfying our membership and compete with journals that do sit within the research exercise units of assessment (UoA). Neither Systems nor Information Systems have their own UoA in the UK research exercises. We are fortunate that our publisher supports such areas as ours and it is to our advantage to support them in their endeavours. To this end we have been reviewing the way IJSS functions. We have added several new editors to the associate and international editorial review boards. These new colleagues widen our group both geographically as well as adding their expertise to the journal.

Over the next year or so our plan is to recruit a managing editor who will help in the management of the journal and grow our number of submissions, the new editorial board members will also help us to continue to improve the quality of our publications through their advice and their encouragement of authors to submit their ideas and experiences of the practice to us. Making these changes has taken a significant amount of time to organise and put in place. The first part of the task is almost complete and you will notice several new members to the editorial team appearing on the inside cover of our journal. If any of our readers, with Systems experience, practitioner and academic, would like to join us please let me know.

IGI have also responded to the demanding markets that journals inhabit and are updating their policies, across their extensive publication portfolio. We are in frequent communication with their editorial staff about how we can develop the IJSS for the benefit of our authors and I provide a summary of their policy on publication below (for a full account of their policy please see the UKSS web page). I think these new policies suits the 'mission' of IJSS very well, in particular the policy on open access publishing, which I know is important to colleagues involved in research exercises, and a policy relating to the review process (Publons Reviews) will be enhanced. These policies are

aimed at maintaining publishing standards in an increasingly competitive market some of which are summarised below.

IGI Global's philosophy has been and will continue to be, publishing content based on the innovative nature and quality presented in the work as opposed to focusing purely on profitability. When other larger publishing houses are maintaining criteria solely based on the popularity and profitability of the content, we are instead focused on providing our authors and editors an outlet to share their research findings with the rest of the world. During the past 30 years, we have published some of the most innovative forward-thinking (and at times very niche) content that has greatly progressed the research field, even if we were left with very little revenue in return. This approach has never deterred us from our mission of being a top knowledge disseminator and partnering with the research and library communities around the world to expand the body of knowledge in different academic disciplines to improve and fuel both societal and technological advancements. We would like to also share with you the good news that IGI Global has recently been granted full membership to the prestigious Committee on Publication Ethics "COPE" which is just further evidence of our ongoing commitment to producing and disseminating the highest quality vetted academic content to researchers all over the world.

**Indexing Progression for IGI Global Journals:** IGI Global is currently publishing 175+ scholarly journals and our total number of journals will soon exceed 185 as we continually work to acquire and inaugurate new journals. At this time, more than 70 IGI Global journals are indexed in Scopus, more than 60 IGI Global journals are indexed in the Web of Science, nearly 40 are indexed in Ei Compendex, and more than 15 are indexed in PsycINFO, among many others.

**Publons Reviews:** In an effort to provide recognition to the valuable work of reviewers across all of our 175+ journals, IGI Global is in the process of verifying reviews that were uploaded via Publons. We encourage you to upload your completed reviews to Publons, in order that you gain the credit and recognition for your diligent efforts towards the IJSS. While we are not fully in a partnership with Publons at this juncture, we are exploring the opportunity to integrate our platform with theirs.

**Open Access Initiative:** Starting within the next day or so, our publishers are unveiling a new Open Access Initiative, benefitting individuals whose institutions subscribe to one of our journal databases. The relevant information on this is listed below.

Authors have the choice of submitting their article manuscript as a standard submission or as an open access submission for the journal of their choice. Once the peer review process is completed, and the article manuscript is accepted by the Editor(s)-in-Chief of the journal, authors electing the open access option will be prompted to then pay an article processing fee in order to freely share the research under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licensing. For any author whose institution's library invests in an IGI Global journal database, IGI Global will match the library's investment with a fund of equal value to go toward subsidizing the open access article processing charge (APC) for any students, faculty, and staff at that institution. As such, if the author from that institution selects open access and the article manuscript is accepted, in lieu of an APC invoice being sent to them, they will instead receive a waiver confirmation that the charge has been taken from the allocated fund.

## **THIS EDITION**

We have 4 papers and an opinion piece included in this edition. The first paper is entitled Joy in Academia and is written by Germán Bula, and Sebastián González. In their paper they pose the question 'What is the role of academia in society as a whole?' They ask if the sole purpose of schools and universities is to provide training for the jobs marketplace, or, should academia help in the work of society's ongoing adaptation and self-recognition? To investigate this they adopt Beer's Viable System Model to emphasis that the role of academia goes beyond servicing the economy. They argue that to do so it must be organized in such a way that it can actually help rethink the identity and purpose of

society. The role of academia in society, they envisage, is analogous to the role of positive emotions in human beings: ‘...they both serve to enhance the repertoire of possible actions of a system, and to integrate these possibilities in a coherent whole.’ As positive emotions need conditions of contextual safety, so does academia and as such they argue it is necessary to revise certain evaluative practices that hinder academia’s creative roles. They explore how VSM can assist in this aim.

The second is paper is written by Petia Sice, Steven Anthony Thirkle, and Suzannah A Ogbu, and is entitled *Management, Information and Knowledge Ecology*. In their paper they adopt an ecological perspective as a means of making sense of management and information systems as a part of the overall business platform. They argue that they find the notion of double-loop learning and knowledge creation to be useful when thinking about the role of Information Systems in organisations. The role of Information Systems, they argue, is to support, facilitate and improve the knowledge creation and knowledge implementation processes in the organisation. Dialogue is considered fundamental to learning and creativity and as a consequence the skills of awareness and reflection need to be enacted within the communication processes of organizations.

The third paper, is written by Christine Welch and entitled *Exploring Health Services with the Help of a Work Systems Lens*, is a reflection of the types of challenges that health service provisions face, not just within the UK but in all counties who provide health care. There is she points out no simple solution to the way forward. A combination of improved life span, expectations and political ‘football’ make this what we might refer to as a ‘mess’, Optimal solutions to many separate problematic situations will probably not result in a satisfactory dissolution of the ‘mess’. Open systems approaches are required, recognizing that organizations subsists from moment to moment as a reflection of interactions among people and technologies. As part of such an inquiry, Work Systems Methods may be useful as a vehicle for reflection and comparison.

The final paper is written by Peter Imrie and Peter Bednar and is entitled *Security Benefits of Little Data from the Socio-Technical Perspective*. They raise the point that those that manage an organisation are developing ways to extract value from big data and the amount of personal data being stored in centralised systems is rising. In recent time we have seen how these have become targets for hackers which raises concerns about end user privacy with how the data is handled. They suggest that Virtual Personal Assistants (VPA) that use the Little Data approach of keeping data within the control of the end user have the potential to mitigate these risks. Adopting a Socio-Technical perspective the authors consider the potential security benefits of utilising a VPA as a supporting technology for controlling an individual’s personal data.

The opinion piece is written by Ian Roderick and entitled *Polarising Qualities of Systems Thinking*. Ian explores the way ‘categorising’ is used to describe how people behave or think differently. He makes the valid point that the categories that are used are constructs or styles of dealing with the world analysis or statistical survey of field research. They are not about you and me - but never the less they are ways of explaining differences in us all.

For example, with some exceptions human beings can be categorised as male or female. This categorisation acts to polarise us. A well-defined example of a multipolar division is putting people into age brackets. It is well defined, as the boundaries are precise to the day or even hour and minute. But we begin to get hints of a problem. Many people like to consider themselves in the same age group as the one beneath the absolute numerical one they fall into, at least until they strain credibility. It is when things are not clear-cut that polarisation into categories leads to tensions and resistance.

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