IS for Practitioners Department

Central Importance of Practitioner-Research in CAIS

The Communications of the Association for Information Systems (CAIS) recognizes the critical importance of practitioner-research in advancing the field of Information Systems (IS). This approach, well-established in applied fields such as education, healthcare, social work, and management, serves as a vital bridge between academic knowledge and real-world application, enriching both domains.

Practitioner research, shaped by seminal works like Schön's focus on the 'reflective practitioner' (1983), Argyris & Schön's work on an action-oriented perspective on organizational learning (1978), and Lewin's introduction of action research (1946) offer several key advantages. It helps fill the theory-practice gap, provides contextual understanding, facilitates rapid knowledge translation, fosters innovation, and empowers practitioners in knowledge creation. In the rapidly evolving field of IS, these benefits are particularly crucial for validating and refining theoretical concepts in real-world settings.

CAIS advocates a broader definition of practitioner research to offer unique and valuable contributions to the IS discipline:

1. Real-world Relevance: Practitioner research is grounded in the day-to-day realities of IS implementation and management (Benbasat & Zmud, 1999; Rosemann & Vessey, 2008). This ensures that the research addresses problems of genuine concern to the IS community.

2. Contextual Richness: Practitioner research provides deep insights into the organizational, cultural, and technical contexts in which IS operates (Klein & Rowe, 2008; Mathiassen & Nielsen, 2008). This contextual understanding is crucial for developing nuanced theories and practical solutions.

3. Timely Insights: Practitioners are often at the forefront of emerging trends and challenges in the field (Baskerville & Myers, 2004). Their research can provide early insights into new phenomena before they become widely recognized in academic circles.

4. Practical Validation: Practitioner research offers opportunities to test and refine academic theories in real-world settings, contributing to the validation and evolution of IS knowledge (Baskerville & Myers, 2004; Davison et al., 2004).

5. Innovation Catalyst: The problem-solving orientation of practitioner research often leads to innovative approaches and solutions that can inspire new directions in academic research (Österle et al., 2011; Sein et al., 2011).

6. Knowledge Translation: Practitioner researchers play a crucial role in translating academic concepts into language and frameworks that resonate with industry professionals, enhancing the impact of IS research (Gill & Bhattacherjee, 2009).

7. Multidisciplinary Perspective: Practitioner research often naturally integrates insights from various disciplines, reflecting the complex, multifaceted nature of real-world IS challenges (Van de Ven, 2007; Mathiassen & Nielsen, 2008; Straub and Ang, 2011).

8. Ethical and Societal Considerations: Practitioners are well-positioned to identify and explore the ethical implications and societal impacts of IS, bringing these crucial considerations to the forefront of the research agenda (Davison & Martinsons, 2022).

Goals of the IS for Practitioners Department

The IS for Practitioners Department aims to:

1. Bridge the gap between academic research and practical application in the field of Information Systems.

2. Provide a platform for practitioners to share IS-related insights, experiences, and research with both academic and practitioner audiences.
3. Encourage academics to present their IS-related research in ways that directly address practitioner needs and concerns.
4. Foster collaboration between academics and practitioners to produce IS-related research that is both rigorous and relevant.
5. Provide practitioners with accessible, actionable IS-related insights that can inform their decision-making and practice.
6. Contribute to practitioners' professional development by exposing them to cutting-edge IS-related research and encouraging reflective practice.
7. Stimulate ongoing dialogue and knowledge exchange between different stakeholders in the IS community.
8. Identify emerging trends and challenges in IS-related practice that warrant further academic investigation.

High-Quality Characteristics of Practitioner-Research

High-quality practitioner-research in the context of this department is characterized by:

1. Relevance:
    - Addressing current, significant IS-related challenges faced by practitioners
    - Focusing on IS-related problems that have near-term implications for practice
    - Aligning with industry trends and organizational priorities
2. Rigor:
    - Demonstrating a clear, logical and transparent research process
    - Using appropriate data collection and analysis techniques
    - Acknowledging limitations and potential biases in the research
3. Accessibility:
    - Presenting findings in a clear, actionable manner for practitioners
    - Providing concrete examples and illustrations of key points
    - Offering specific recommendations or guidelines for implementation
4. Reflexivity:
    - Incorporating critical reflection on the research process and outcomes
    - Acknowledging the researcher's role and potential influence on the research
    - Discussing lessons learned and areas for improvement in future research
5. Contextual Richness:
    - Providing detailed information about the organizational and technological context
    - Describing relevant industry, market, or regulatory factors

- Explaining how contextual factors influence the research problem and findings

6. Ethical Consideration:
    - Adhering to ethical standards in research conduct and reporting
    - Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of research participants and organizations
    - Considering the broader societal implications of the research
7. Practical Impact:
    - Demonstrating the potential for tangible improvements in IS practice
    - Discussing potential challenges in implementing findings
    - Considering short-term and long-term implications of the research
8. Theoretical Connection:
    - Relating findings to existing IS theories or frameworks where appropriate
    - Identifying potential contributions to theory development or refinement
    - Bridging the gap between academic concepts and practical application
9. Multidisciplinary Perspective:
    - Considering insights from related fields when relevant
    - Addressing the cross-functional nature of many IS-related challenges
10. Innovation and Creativity:
    - Encouraging novel approaches to IS challenges
    - Exploring emerging technologies and their potential applications
    - Proposing new frameworks or models for understanding IS phenomena in practice

Types of Submissions Sought

The IS for Practitioners Department welcomes a variety of contribution types that address practical IS challenges across various sectors and industries. We seek reports and papers that explore the implementation and impact of emerging technologies, examine the human and organizational aspects of IS, investigate the strategic role of IS in organizational transformation, and analyze the ethical and societal implications of IS practices.

The department accepts the following types of papers:

1. Empirical Research:
    - Case studies of IS implementations or organizational changes
    - Survey-based research on IS practices or trends
    - Action research projects addressing specific IS challenges
2. Experiential Accounts:
    - Reflective practitioner narratives
    - Lessons learned from project successes or failures

    - Career insights for IS professionals
3. Conceptual and Analytical Pieces:
    - Frameworks for understanding or implementing IS solutions
    - Critical analyses of current IS practices or policies
    - Point-counterpoint articles on contentious IS issues
    - Practitioner responses to academic research findings
    - Foresight pieces on future IS trends and their implications
4. Review and Synthesis:
    - Systematic reviews of practical IS literature
    - Analyses of how academic theories apply in practice
    - Comparisons of different approaches to common IS challenges

All submissions should contribute to the understanding of practical IS-related challenges, offer insights for practitioners, and bridge the gap between academic research and industry practice. We particularly encourage reports and papers that provide actionable insights, challenge conventional wisdom, or offer novel perspectives on pressing IS issues.

Submission Instructions

Authors should submit via the CAIS ScholarOne site (http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/cais) and choose the "IS for Practitioners" Department. The submission should include:

1. A cover letter explaining:
    - The practical relevance of the submission
    - Its potential impact on IS practice
    - The type of paper being submitted (from the categories above)
2. For practitioner authors:
    - A brief description of your professional background
    - The context of your work or research
3. For academic authors:
    - An explanation of how your submission addresses practical IS challenges
    - Any collaboration with practitioners in the research process
4. The main manuscript, formatted according to CAIS guidelines

We encourage potential authors to contact the department editors prior to submission to discuss their ideas and ensure alignment with the department's goals.

Review Process

Submissions to the IS for Practitioners Department will undergo a rigorous but supportive review process:

1. Initial screening by department editors to ensure alignment with department goals and scope
2. Single-blind peer review by a mix of academic and practitioner reviewers

3. Assessment based on criteria including:
    - Relevance and importance of the problem or challenge addressed
    - Clarity and actionability of insights and recommendations
    - Potential impact on IS practice
    - Quality and rigor of the research or analysis presented
    - Accessibility of language and concepts for a practitioner audience
4. Constructive feedback focused on enhancing the practical value and accessibility of the work
5. Opportunity for revision and resubmission based on reviewer feedback
6. A final decision by the department editors

Support for Authors

To support both practitioners and academics in contributing to this department, we will offer:

1. Writing Development:
    - Workshops and webinars on academic writing for practitioners
    - Guidelines on translating academic research for practitioner audiences
2. Mentorship:
    - The pairing of practitioner authors with experienced academic mentors
    - Collaborative writing opportunities for academic-practitioner teams
3. Resources:
    - Templates for different types of submissions
    - A "learning space" with resources on research methods, academic writing, and IS theories
    - Curated list of exemplar papers for each submission type
4. Pre-Submission Support:
    - Consultations with department editors on potential submissions
    - Peer feedback opportunities through online practitioner-researcher forums
5. Post-Publication Promotion:
    - Featured spotlights of practitioner research in CAIS communications
    - Opportunities to present work at AIS conferences and webinars

We are committed to fostering a collaborative environment where practitioners and academics can learn from each other and collectively advance the field of Information Systems.

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