

MIS Quarterly

The Authorial Role¹ at MISQ

MISQ Roles

There are four critical roles in the reviewing of manuscripts at MISQ in addition to the role of the Minnesota staff. These are (1) the authorial role, (2) the reviewer role, (3) the AE role, and (4) the SE role. For each of these, a descriptive document has been prepared and is available for perusal by the entire IS community at <http://www.misq.org>. Each document has been written from the perspective of those enacting a given role.

Overview of Authorial Role

Authors have a special role in manuscript handling at MISQ and it will make the entire process much smoother if you are clear about your role, namely its benefits, privileges, responsibilities, and procedures. Likely many of the dimensions that will be covered here are well known to most IS scholars, but for the ingénue and those who wish to be meticulous, the following observations may be able to shed some light.

At MISQ, authors work directly with the SE who is charged with making the final decision about your paper. You may make recommendations for SEs to handle your paper, and the policy is to try to accept your recommendations whenever possible. Authors have to understand that sometimes SEs do not feel they have the necessary expertise for your paper and sometimes they are already handling a large workload and cannot take on a new assignment for that reason. In any case, we will select an SE who will take on the full responsibility for managing the review of your work.

The AE works in close cooperation with the SE, with the success of this partnership being determined not by the ability to filter out problem papers, but to figure out how to get good papers successfully through the review process at MISQ.

Personal Rewards of Working with the Review Team

The review process is intended to assist you in presenting your ideas in the strongest possible terms. So in the best of all possible situations, authors will find that the process leads to their papers being better organized and contributions enhanced. In short, the best-run reviews bring out the strong suites in the paper, minimize the weaknesses, and define the scope of the contributions. We all know that there is no such thing as perfect research, and so the real issue is whether the papers can be made exciting enough and at the same time be crafted methodologically so that they become worthy of publication.

Authors should recognize that the review team is an unpaid, volunteer service by your colleagues. They have been encouraged to give you constructive feedback and to try to see the value in each and every submission. But they also realize that they need to honestly and thoroughly assess your papers for the sake of the journal and the sake of the profession. Journals maintain their high standing when they enforce high standards for acceptance, and this benefits the journals, the authors, and the institutions that support research.

Authorial Privileges

¹Terms-of-art in this document include: SE (Senior Editor); EIC (Editor-in-Chief); AE (Associate Editor); review team (the entire group of evaluators, including SE, AE, and reviewers); Minnesota staff (The Regents of the University of Minnesota own *MIS Quarterly* and, thus, the staff who assist the EIC in running the journal are employees of the University of Minnesota); editorial board (generically, the sum total of EIC, SEs, and AEs; more specific terms would be the SE Editorial Board, etc.).

As noted above, you have the privilege of working with a review team whose espoused purpose is to develop papers so that they are worthy of publication. Your recommendations about who should review your paper are warmly invited and thoughtfully considered. Editors have to find reviewers who are both knowledgeable and available to do the reviewing, and if you can nominate qualified reviewers, then it actually enhances the quality and speed of the process.

Authors also have every right to expect a reasonably fast turnaround on their paper. Inquiries to the review coordinator or the SE handling the paper are always acceptable protocol and you should avail yourself of this privilege.

Finally, authors are privileged to be considered for the annual best paper award, should their paper eventually be published in *MISQ*. Finalists are also recognized.

Authorial Responsibilities

Privileges come with certain obligations. Above all, you need to be sure that you are responsive and civil to the review team. Whereas it is infrequently the case that authors are uncivil, it does happen so let us dispense with this item first. You may feel that reviewers are unfair to their paper in some respect, or have based their judgment on misinformation, misinterpretation, or lack of knowledge. The truth of these opinions is not nearly as important as how you express this point of view. Keeping in mind that reviewing is, at its heart, an altruistic effort on the part of colleagues, the professional approach to expressing lack of confidence in a review opinion is to send a separate message to the Senior Editor (or, but only when appropriate, the EIC). The tone of this informal dialogue should be civil and polite.

Another avenue for expressing this point of view is in the “Response Document.” Here you may present a reasonable argument for why you disagree with the review comment, but, above all, you should never state or imply that the reviewer is ignorant or lacking in judgment. The level of the discourse should be rational and scientific. Indulgence in emotionally charged language is inappropriate in scientific fields.

Authors also need to be responsive. When reviewers take the time to comment, sometimes quite extensively, on your work, then it is only fitting that you take these comments seriously enough to explain yourself or indicate where and how you have changed the paper to deal with the reviewer’s suggestions.

Practice varies, but many SEs like authors to show how they have responded to reviewers through a “Response Document.” One popular format is the three column response table. Authors first separate the review team comments into separate ideas. In column 1, review comments are numbered, and column 2 holds the unabbreviated review comment. Column 3 has the authors’ responses. Authors do not need to always agree with the reviewers, but in lieu of compliance and correction, authors will need to present a good argument for why they chose another direction. Numbering the comments (in column 1) makes it easy to reference where a point was addressed in a previous response.

SEs will explain the format to be used to respond to the review team on a paper-by-paper basis.

Provenance Issues

Authors have an obligation to assure the journal that their work is not being considered for publication at another venue. This ethical violation is known as “double submission,” and is explained in the AIS Code of Research Conduct at: (http://www.aisnet.org/conduct/AIS_Code.htm). The primary reasoning behind this ethical stance is that reviewer time is a precious resource and double submissions flagrantly waste that resource.

You also need to assure the journal that your work has not been plagiarized or is subject to any other ethical charges. The exact form this provenance statement should take in the cover letter accompanying submissions is explained under “Information for Prospective Authors” at the *MISQ* website (<http://misq.org/roadmap/standards.html>).

Conflict of Interest Issues

You should also take care that their nominees for the review team do not have a professional or personal conflict of interest with you or any of your co-authors. A more detailed explanation of this point is available on the *MISQ* Website URL mentioned above.

Procedure for Submitting and Tracking Papers

How should you go about submitting and tracking papers? The following steps outline what should be happening at each stage of the process.

1. **Vet your paper well before finalizing a version for submission to MISQ.** Submitting a paper to a top journal before it is ready does not work in the authors' favor because it forces the journal to use precious reviewing resources to little purpose. If a paper is full of spelling and grammatical errors, for example, the reviewing team cannot help but to see these and attempt to correct them, but this is not a good use of high powered labor and the review team keenly senses this. Even if the paper is just poorly formatted and its bibliographic style does not correspond well to that which the journal requires, it is bound to cause some anguish on the part of one or another reviewer. Authors need to think like reviewers, and put themselves in the shoes of a volunteer, performing service to the field and simply trying to help out a colleague. One cannot help but feel that if the authors do not care enough to carefully prepare their own manuscript, then why should the reviewers spend their efforts worrying about it? It is easier and perhaps even more straight-forward to just reject the paper!

Vetting is easier than you might think. If the grammar and spelling are trouble spots and you cannot yourselves correct these, then you would be well advised to hire a professional copy editor who is a native speaker of English to assist.

Have colleagues who are experienced in publishing review the paper. Even a quick scanning can often reveal new ways to position your ideas, or report on your data analysis, should you have this section in your paper. There are many sources of professional assistance that you can rely on. Dissertation advisors have a vested interest in your success and are usually willing to give you a fair reading of your work even if they are not co-authors. Think about your doctoral student cohort. It is most likely that you helped out many of them during the years you were in the doctoral program together, and this is social capital you can draw on.

Finally, check the *MISQ* website for the document that helps you prepare the manuscript in the format that *MISQ* desires. It is at <http://misq.org/roadmap/standards.html>.

2. **Read the *MISQ* website with some seriousness so you know exactly what needs to be submitted.** *MISQ* requires a cover letter accompanying your manuscript. This letter, a sample of which is available at the URL above, will include your recommendations for editors and reviewers and a provenance statement regarding research ethics. If you have material that will eventually go into an Online Supplement to the paper, this also needs to be submitted as a separate document so it can be reviewed. *MISQ* has generous page limits for submissions, but this is one way to legitimately extend your reach.

3. **Track your paper.** Use the tracking system to follow the review progress of your paper. You will find it on our website at <http://www.misq.org/status.asp>. Keep in mind what was said earlier about inquiries regarding status. If you feel that your paper is not progressing as quickly as you would like, it is perfectly acceptable for you to make a polite inquiry with either the review coordinator (email: misqrevu@umn.edu) or your SE.
4. **For each round of reviewing, make sure that your manuscript has been carefully prepared and cover letters and other documents are professional in appearance and substance.** Again, the Website has information on how to prepare these documents. Find it at <http://misq.org/roadmap/standards.html>. The three column response document format was discussed above. If the SE asks for some form of this document, do the best you can to address comments in a straight-forward way. You need not quote long passage from your revised paper in the response document. This makes this document far too long for reviewers.

Selection of MISQ as the Journal to Review Your Work

We believe that you would be making a good choice if you ask *MISQ* to review your work. Whatever the eventual outcome, we will do our best to provide you with constructive, timely feedback. If your work is accepted for publication, it will be placed in a journal that is consistently ranked as one of the best and most heavily cited journals in the IS field.

Thank you for sending your research to MISQ!