

Editor's Response to a Letter from an Anonymous Reviewer

We recently received the following "review" of an article involving a paper submitted on the subject of database management systems:

Since MIS Quarterly has rejected without review other database papers, I don't see why you even want a review on this paper. Let me know when you decide what types of papers or whose papers you really care to publish.

This academic reviewer went on to classify the paper as subject to outright rejection and as being absolutely not appropriate for publication in the *MIS Quarterly*. I think the reviewer's questions deserve an answer so I am responding in a public manner.

Dear Reviewer,

If the staff of the MIS Quarterly has offended you in some way, I would like to offer an apology. We take our jobs very seriously and are working quite hard to develop a quality journal for both the MIS practitioner and academician. Apparently you have encountered our editorial system with unhappy results. So that you might feel better, I would like to respond to your implied questions and, in doing so, attempt to appease your feelings.

In the first place, the MIS Quarterly is trying to publish material that is appropriate for the MIS practitioner and the MIS academician. Largely we are feeling our way on a judgmental basis to what is appropriate and what is not. The judgments are made mainly by the editors, but with inputs in some cases from our reviewers. The test of appropriateness usually involves the main thrust of the material submitted.

We tend to view MIS as dealing with the organizational use of computers and other technologies (e.g., management science, decision support). We feel that other outlets for publication exist for articles dealing with the technology itself and/or articles directly addressing support disciplines (e.g., psychology). Thus, in the case of a database article the appropriateness test is based upon the thrust of the article. If it is strictly of a technical nature, we probably would not review it since the Transactions on Database Systems or the Communications of the ACM would be more appropriate.

The appropriateness test is first applied by at least one Consulting Editor and the Senior Editor. The manuscript to which you are referring obviously passed this first test or you would not have seen it as a reviewer. I am guessing that perhaps you submitted a manuscript that did not pass this test. We then trust our Associate Editors, with guidance from the reviewers, to make a second judgment regarding appropriateness. The ultimate decision rests with the Senior Editor.

As a new journal in a new area, information systems, we are obviously not set on what we will publish regarding subject matter or what we will not publish. We look to our editors, reviewers, and readers to help us establish our place in the publication field.

A second test applied to all submissions regards quality. We ask our reviewers and editors to carefully examine the quality of all articles they see. Here again, judgment comes into play. It is our objective within the bounds of judgment, to publish appropriate, high quality material for our readers.

Finally, you ask "whose manuscripts" we publish. Other than invited articles, which are clearly noted, we submit all our manuscripts to blind review. I can assure you that the decision involving what we publish is based upon what we see, not upon by whom it was written. There is only one person in the whole world who is, by editorial policy, precluded from publishing in the MIS Quarterly. I am —

Yours truly,

Gary W. Dickson
Senior Editor