

# MIS Quarterly

## The Reviewer Role at MISQ

### MISQ Roles<sup>1</sup>

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 the SE, AE, and Reviewer Roles

The table below summarizes the SE, AE, and reviewer roles, along with the corresponding perspectives, focus and value-added, in the editorial process.<sup>2</sup>

	<b>Reviewer</b>	<b>Associate Editor</b>	<b>Senior Editor</b>
<b>Perspective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Individual</i> based on expertise and experience</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Holistic</i> across reviews</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Holistic</i> across reviews and associate editor report</li></ul>
<b>Focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contribution of the paper</li><li>• Major issues that affect publishability of work</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sensemaking of reviews</li><li>• Own assessment</li><li>• Revisability of paper within reasonable time and effort</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sensemaking of reviews and associate editor report</li><li>• Own assessment</li><li>• Revisability of paper within reasonable time and effort</li></ul>
<b>Value Added</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feedback based on expertise (domain, theory, method)</li><li>• Suggestions for improvement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guidance</li><li>• Not vote-counting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guidance</li><li>• Not vote-counting</li></ul>
<b>Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advice</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recommend</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decide</li></ul>

### The Reviewer Role

*MISQ* expects **virtuous reviewing**, where reviewers add significant value to the editorial process by adopting a constructive mindset in assessing papers.

<sup>1</sup> Terms-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.).

<sup>2</sup> Excerpted from Rai, A. 2016. "Editor's Comment: Writing a Virtuous Review," *MIS Quarterly* (40:3), pp. iii-x.

The reviewer works in close cooperation with the AE, who incorporates your assessment of manuscripts and forwards her/his recommendation to the SE, who is the final decision-maker in reviewing submissions for *MISQ*. Your role is to carefully read the paper you have been asked to review, to determine its strengths and weaknesses, to suggest plausible approaches to enhance the contribution and address the concerns, and indicate your overall conclusion about the publishability of the paper.<sup>3</sup>

For a description of virtuous reviewing, please see the following editorial: [Writing a Virtuous Review](#). Also, the following *MISQ* editorials discuss how to avoid Type I and Type II errors in reviewing, the ways in which reviewers and editors can adopt a proactive and constructive stance, and the *MISQ* Reviewer Development Workshops: [Curation of Reviewer Resources](#).

## Personal Rewards of Serving as Reviewer

The greatest reward a reviewer is likely to experience is the deep satisfaction of knowing you are reviewing novel and exciting research and bringing this work to the eyes of the community. In nearly all cases, these papers would not be nearly as effective were it not for your assistance as a reviewer in developing and sculpting the intellectual content.

When a paper you have reviewed appears in pre-print or print, you will experience contentment, even pleasure that your hard work has helped a colleague or group of colleagues and your assistance has elevated this work to the point where it can receive the attention it is due. In many cases, you will also be able to enjoy the progression of these ideas as they are utilized and cited by other researchers and the ideas grow and become refined overtime.

Another tangible benefit of serving as reviewer is that you are at the intellectual heart of the discipline. Not only will you see early versions of exhilarating work that will, no doubt, influence your own thinking, but you will also be part of an organization that recognizes such work through “Best Paper” awards and other acknowledgments

## Procedure for Handling Papers

How should you go about handling papers that you have agreed to review? The following steps outline what should be happening at each stage of the process.

1. **For each round of reviewing, make a recommendation about the manuscript to the AE. Each round, you, as reviewer, will be asked to make a recommendation on the disposition of the manuscript. The range of these decisions is: (1) reject, (2) major revisions, (3) minor revisions, (4) accept conditionally (very minor revisions), and (5) accept.**

How do you make this key recommendation? This task entails carefully reading the manuscript rather than making a recommendation based only on a cursory reading. We rely very much on reviewers exercising their knowledge, experience, and wisdom in reaching their own, independent decisions.

Why would you make a recommendation of major revisions, minor revisions, accept conditionally, or accept? When papers are first received at *MISQ*, it may be that they are attacking fascinating problems and have innovative approaches to these problems. In such a situation, the review team may see promise in the work, but the paper needs either a considerable amount of revising (major revisions) or a limited amount (minor revisions) in order for the paper to be developed into a publishable paper. Rarely, very rarely, will papers have achieved the plateau of conditional acceptance or acceptance when they are first received. For even the best papers, the review team almost always has suggestions that can improve the paper.

Recommendations of accept conditionally and accept typically occur after one or more rounds of review. When the authors have dealt with all the substantive issues and the review team is in clean-up and polishing mode, these are the appropriate recommendations.

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<sup>3</sup> Manuscripts at *MIS Quarterly* are processed online at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/misq>. All reviewers need to register in order to receive and process manuscripts. Please direct *all* communications through this online system so that we have a complete audit trail of the reviewing process. **This is extremely important.**

Why would you recommend rejecting a paper? The answer is simple enough. In your judgment, you view the paper as not making a significant enough contribution and unlikely to do so even with revision, you will recommend rejection. Of course, your determination is contingent on the *category* of the paper. See the *MISQ* website for descriptions of the categories of papers: <https://misq.org/categories>

2. **Prepare your report.** Upon reading the manuscript, if you determine that the paper should not continue any further in the review process (i.e., your recommendation is rejection), then you as reviewer write a report that explains your reasons for recommending rejection and offering constructive suggestions about how the authors can pursue their research. Before sending your recommendation to the AE, please feel free to communicate with the AE if you have any issues to clarify or discuss regarding the review assignment that will enable you provide a constructive assessment.

Upon reading the manuscript, if you determine that the paper needs changes before it is ready for publication, you will recommend either major or minor revisions. Rarely, very rarely, would you recommend acceptance of a paper the first time you see it. The fact is that not even the best scholars in the field will be able to produce a paper where significant improvements cannot be made.

Major revisions implies that the changes you propose are fixable, but extensive. Minor revisions means that the authors have mostly crafted a publishable paper and the requisite changes are fairly limited to the highly do-able list you are providing.

Please share with the authors key references they may have missed. Make these as thorough as possible. Avoid directing the authors' attention to a whole body of literature that you think would help the paper; this is perhaps accurate, but puts the authors in a difficult position. Either provide them with specific citations or do not mention this bibliographic lapse in your report.

*MISQ* is moving toward an editorially directed process. You would not have been asked to review a paper unless the two editors, the AE and the SE, see promise in the paper after pre-screening it.

Our widespread practice of this framing will preempt endless cycles of revisions of papers that are finally rejected on the  $n^{\text{th}}$  cycle. *MISQ* has a reasonably good record in *not* rejecting papers after multiple revisions, and we would like to continue to shine in this category.

You will want to clearly communicate your impressions and assessment of the paper to the AE. In the request from the AE to serve as reviewer, you might have been asked for your own independent judgment about the chances of the paper succeeding in the review process. The AE may have briefly outlined above why s/he saw promise in the paper and how it could offer a solid research contribution. The AE needs to know about aspects of the paper that you find exciting and think could render a significant contribution. The AE also needs to know about problems that you see with the paper, with a differentiation between those that are fixable and those are not fixable.

This set of statements summarizes your role neatly. After examining the strengths and weaknesses of the paper, express your judgment as to whether the reservations you have can or cannot be corrected for ultimate publication.

## Privacy

Please understand that *MISQ* is giving you access to submissions and all other review documents solely for the purpose of evaluation. You may not share them with any other parties. The manuscript under review is not citable, and its contents remain the intellectual property of the authors until such time that it would be accepted for publication and the authors sign a copyright transfer to *MISQ*.

Clearly, the paper may have influenced your general thinking about a particular phenomenon and that is all to the good. But unique intellectual innovations in submissions are sacrosanct and may not be referenced, adapted, or reused without express permission from the authors. Unfortunately, since the review process is a double-blind process, we cannot share with you the names of the authors. Until a paper is accepted for publication, it may not be cited.

## Reviewer Assignments and Time Lines

We very much appreciate your agreeing to review for *MISQ*. Please appreciate the fact that there will not always be a one-to-one match between the topic of the paper and your expertise, narrowly defined. If the only way we could review papers would be if there were such a match, we would need nearly as many reviewers as there are authors. In short, you

will likely have to stretch at times to be able to provide reasonable feedback to the AE and the authors, but that is business-as-usual. This is not to say that you might at some point be asked to review a paper that is entirely out of your ken. Hopefully such cases are rare, and that most of the time you will be able to draw upon your specific and general knowledge of the research in IS and provide constructive feedback.

If you are already handling a reasonable set of papers under consideration by journals and conference and feel that you cannot take on more, indicate this to the AE.

A major goal is to improve even further our reputation for providing timely reviews. In this regard, upon receiving a manuscript, please strive to fulfill the following time lines:

<b>Table 2. Timelines for the <i>MISQ</i> Editorial Process</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial screening by SE</li> <li>• SE assigns AE</li> </ul>	4 to 5 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial screening by AE</li> <li>• SE and AE discuss pre-screening</li> <li>• SE and AE collaboratively select candidate reviewers</li> <li>• AE invites and assigns reviewers</li> </ul>	7 to 10 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewers</li> </ul>	21 to 28 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of AE report</li> </ul>	7 to 10 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of SE report</li> </ul>	7 to 10 days

## Your Selection as Reviewer

You have been asked to assist because we believe that you have the ability to accurately assess the quality of our manuscript and can provide a constructive, timely review. Although a volunteer activity, it is still an honor to have been selected to review. The entire IS community owes a debt of gratitude to those such as yourself who readily volunteer to take on this critical set of tasks.

Thank you for your service to *MISQ* and the IScommunity!