

Letter from the Editor

Bridget N. O'Connor

A friend once told me that if a concept is easy to define, it is not very interesting. If this is true, “office systems” or “office information systems,” or “end-user computing,” or the term we used in describing our most recent model curriculum, “organizational and end-user information systems (OEIS),” all describe a very interesting field! Even as I write this, efforts are underway to rename the Office Systems Research Association (OSRA) and this journal.

As an organization, OSRA has made efforts to define itself, most notably through our journal (particularly Elizabeth Regan’s “Putting Office Systems into Perspective” special issue), and our model curricula. We have, therefore, been defined by what we publish.

Due to our interdisciplinary nature, a wide range of theoretical bases exists for our field. We borrow from these foundational lenses to help us examine OEIS practices in both organizations and in academe. Sometimes we are interested in the impact that technologies have on the organization. In such cases, we use lenses from organizational theory, including job (re)design, planned change, group behavior, etc. Other times, we are concerned about the impact that technology has on how we interact with each other; in such cases, our lenses are often based on communications theory. When we are designing new work systems, we often rely on management foundations that include systems thinking, information resource management, individual and group decision making, and quality of work life. As we examine how individuals in both organizations and our classrooms learn to use and apply systems, we borrow from a wide range of learning theories.

Kurt Lewin, the noted social psychologist, said, “Nothing is so useful as a good theory.” Once we find a model, theory, or framework that may help us understand the “why” of practice, we know we are in a position to ask the right questions, explain practice, and predict. This means that OEIS needs to understand itself and

perhaps even develop its own approaches to understanding the impact that technology has on “work” and “the individual” in organizations. This will not be an easy task, but is the goal of OSRA and this journal.

About this Issue

The two lead articles in this issue are investigations of computer anxiety among undergraduate business students. Both studies are noteworthy in that their authors present rather surprising findings. Ray, Sormunen, and Harris, using an attitude inventory, found that women students reflected greater comfort in using computers than their male counterparts. And while Hemby, using a tested computer anxiety scale, found that the students in her sample were anxious about using computers, their keyboarding skills were not related to that anxiety.

In examining university practices toward email distribution lists, Merrier, Duff, and Patterson provide an interesting case study that documents the premise that effective use of technology is more a management issue than a technology issue, as the lists were not used as intended, impeding rather than improving communications. Crews and Alexander, in a survey of those universities in Asia with whom Ball State University has designated as “sister universities,” describe the technological capabilities and needs of those organizations.

Our “Making a Difference” section includes an incredibly comprehensive overview of resources that could make the OEIS educator’s and researcher’s life much easier. Hunt and Perreault have compiled a collection of textbooks, journals, websites, and other resources that should enhance our teaching, learning, and scholarship. In an overview of two bibliographic

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software packages, Rohmann gives us an understanding—and feel—for how such “tools for the trade” in our case, can help us more easily and thoroughly manage our bibliographic databases.

This issue of the OSRJ is going on line. Check the OSRA homepage <http://osra.org> for

links. Scholarship is to be shared—if one of us has an idea and gives it to someone else, we both have an idea. Through the more global sharing of our scholarship, we will be in a position to better define and shape our field—no matter what name it goes by!

Guidelines for Authors

The *Office System Research Journal* publishes articles related to the field of end-user and organizational information systems (OEIS). Submissions may present the results of research in the discipline, deal with research methodologies and data treatment techniques, or describe research or experiences related to instruction in the discipline. For the “Making a Difference” section, manuscripts that discuss our theoretical bases or describe an innovative policy, procedure, method, technique, or practice that has potential benefit for systems professionals and/or educators and technology trainers are encouraged. We also accept reviews of current books—both academic and popular presses—related to OEIS. All submissions are submitted to a blind review process.

Authors should follow the style described for manuscripts and bibliographies in the Fourth Edition (1994) of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*; however, tables should be single spaced. Authors should not be identified anywhere in the manuscript. Submit four copies of the manuscript. On the original copy, include a cover page with author name, title, organizational affiliation, telephone number, and email address. A 100-150 word abstract of the manuscript should be included with the manuscript.

Manuscripts should be submitted exclusively to the *Office Systems Research Journal*. Previously published manuscripts are not acceptable. Manuscripts are selected through a blind review process involving the editors and referees selected from the Editorial Board. The Journal is indexed in the *Business Education Index*, the *Current Index to Journals in Education*, and the *Computer Literature Index*.

Upon acceptance, a digital copy in Microsoft Word format will be required. Send four copies of your manuscript to Bridget N. O'Connor, VP Publications and Editor, Office Systems Research Journal, New York University, 239 Greene Street, Suite 300, New York, NY 10003.