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Editors' Comments: Special Issue on the Boards of Directors and the Governance of Technology

Iris Junglas

EDITORS' COMMENTS

Special Issue on the Boards of Directors and the Governance of Technology

As is customary at *MIS Quarterly Executive*, the last issue of the year is home to a special section—this time on the "Boards of Directors and the Governance of Technology," spearheaded by Joe Peppard, Blaize Reich and Martin Mocker.

Undoubtedly, an organization's board of directors plays a crucial role for providing guidance and oversight. But the absence of globally accepted standards for reporting digital assets and the progress of IT projects, often paired with the digital illiteracy of board members, offers challenges. In their editorial, the special section editors provide an overview of the context, function, and role of boards of directors, alongside the legislative and regulatory environment they navigate. They delve into historical approaches, into common technology-governance issues, identify gaps in understanding board effectiveness, and conclude with advice for researchers exploring this emerging topic.

Sam Altman's ouster from OpenAI is a timely illustration of the importance of the board in governing IT. His dismissal as CEO was the direct result of a board of directors in friction. Open AI's unique organizational structure as well as concerns about the long-term impact of AI on society further compounded the problem. At this writing, Altman is back and most of the board is gone. That case study has yet to be written.

Our special issue section has two papers. The first one, titled "The Importance of Board Member Actions for Cybersecurity Governance and Risk Management" and written by Jeffrey G. Proudfoot, W. Alec Cram, Stuart Madnick and Michael Coden, unearths a set of prominent cybersecurity challenges facing board members and provides recommendations for responding effectively. Two of those co-authors, Stuart Madnick and Jeffrey Proudfoot, will return next December, along with Mary Sumner, as guest editors for a special issue on "Managing Cybersecurity to Address Increasing Digital Risk." (Reminder: Manuscripts are due March 1st, 2024). The second article, titled "How Boards of Directors Govern Artificial Intelligence," written by Benjamin van Giffen and Helmuth Ludwig, zooms in on the way boards oversee and integrate the adoption and implications of AI within corporate governance practices. Taken together, both papers interviewed more than 50 board members across a wide variety of industries.

While not part of the special issue section, the paper on "Warren McFarlan's Pioneering Role in Impacting IT Management Through Academic Research," written by Blake Ives, Mary Lacity and Jeanne Ross, is a beautiful complement to the theme. Warren McFarlan, as a founder of the field of IT management research, was instrumental in making the c-suite and board of directors recognize the importance of the IT group. His 2005 *Harvard Business Review* paper, co-authored with Richard Nolan, on "Information Technology and the Board of Directors" was the wellspring for this line of research.

McFarlan's influence on the management of the information systems resource has been momentous. His numerous *Harvard Business Review* articles, alongside his many textbooks, his 300+ cases and teaching notes, paved the way for the management of IT field to emerge. His frameworks became essential components in many MBA and Executive MBA courses. Perhaps his greatest contribution to the field is through his participation in, and leadership of, executive education programs at the Harvard Business School that helped thousands of CIOs and other c-suite executives to discover both the challenges and opportunities of IT. Many of us have also benefitted from, or been entertained by, his incomparable performances standing in the front of a class, or a ballroom, full of practitioners or scholars. The authors also recount the key roles McFarlan played in bridging practice and scholarship. One of those was, at a critical point in time, his leadership as the third editor-in-chief of MIS Quarterly, a still young journal that, at the time, was financially dependent upon the Society for Information Management (SIM), a professional association for information management whose board McFarlan sat on (another is his long-time involvement on

our own advisory board). While this will bring back memories for many practitioners and senior scholars alike, it also promises to be an inspiring and enlightening read for a newer generation of scholars, particularly those who intend to do research of relevance to practice.

Next, I formally acknowledge our new genre called "MISQE Insight." *MISQE Insight* contributions, most of which will be invited, are not typical research articles, as measured by *MIS Quarterly Executive* standards, but rather an outlet to capture the IS zeitgeist in real-time. For example, in the second issue of this year, we have had a "research conversation" with Mary Lacity, Jeffrey K. Mullins and Le Kuai on the "Evolution of the Metaverse"[1] (Last year, we tackled the topic of digital wallets[2]). The overarching idea of *MISQE Insight* is to look for "sensing" articles—articles that have an ear on the ground and introduce, or reflect, on a new digital phenomenon in a timely manner. As part of this genre, we will also identity and solicit well-known and respected authors to provide us with their own "senses" about a current topic.

As part of our *MISQE Insight* genre, Tom Davenport, who recently published an article in HBR titled "We're All Programmers Now,"[3] reflects on the low-code-no-code movement, as well as the idea that ordinary employees can easily be citizen developers. Historically, software development is done, well, by software developers. Users have an important but often merely supporting role; they provide input, write requirements, and assess the implementation afterwards. Up to now, users were more bystanders than active participants in the coding process. Davenport's *MISQE Insight* article on the "Inevitability of Citizen Development" helps us see how this phenomenon is unfolding. Together with other *MIS Quarterly Executive* publications earlier this year, such as "Fueling Digital Transformation with Citizen Developers and

Low-Code Development"[4] and "How Shell Fueled a Digital Transformation by Establishing DIY Software Development,"[5] Davenport's article is a great prelude to our upcoming special issue on "The Rise of Low-Code/No-Code in Accelerating Digital Transformation." You will welcome the fruits of our special senior issue editors, Noel Carroll, Johnny Holmström and Sabine Matook, hopefully in the second half of 2024.

This issue also includes a preview of the "2023 SIM IT Trends Study," written by Vess Johnson, Katia Guerra, Russell Torres, Hossein Mohit, Chris Maurer, Smriti Srivastava, and Sourav Chatterjee. As every year, the Society for Information Management (SIM) collaborated with a team of IS scholars and surveyed its members to identify IT issues currently of concern to CIOs. While this preview, as the name implies, is only a pre-holiday teaser, look for the complete report in our March 2024 issue. You will learn what the data from more than 400 organizations and 250 senior IT executives in 30 different economic sectors in the US, has to say. This is a truly unique data set from a project now in its 43rd year.

Enjoy reading and sharing those articles!

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Editor-in-Chief

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1   Lacity, M, Mullins, J. K., and Kuai, L. "Evolution of the Metaverse," *MIS Quarterly Executive* (22:2), June 2023, available at: https://aisel.aisnet.org/misqe/vol22/iss2/6

2   Lacity, M., and Carmel, E. "Self-Sovereign Identity and Verifiable Credentials in Your Digital Wallet," *MIS Quarterly Executive* (21:3), September 2022, available at: https://aisel.aisnet.org/misqe/vol21/iss3/6

3   Davenport, T., Barkin, I., and Tomak, K. "We're All Programmers Now," *Harvard Business Review*, September-October 2023, available at: https://hbr.org/2023/09/were-all-programmers-now

4   Novales, A, and, Rubén, M. "Fueling Digital Transformation with Citizen Developers and Low-Code Development," *MIS Quarterly Executive* (22:3), September 2023, pp. 221-234, available at: https://aisel.aisnet.org/misqe/vol22/iss3/6.

5   Carroll, N., and Maher, M. "How Shell Fueled Digital Transformation by Establishing DIY Software Development," *MIS Quarterly Executive* (22:2), June 2023, available at: https://aisel.aisnet.org/misqe/vol22/iss2/3