

Research Commentary: Diversity in Information Systems Research: Threat, Promise, and Responsibility

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This paper confirms the evidence of diversity in information systems (IS) research and identifies the ways in which diversity both threatens and advances the field of IS. While advocating diversity within the field of IS, the paper also discusses the responsibilities that must be assumed by IS researchers. Responsibilities include a "disciplined methodological pluralism" (Landry and Banville 1992) in which researchers clearly justify their research aims, theories, and methods. Responsibilities also include researchers' commitment to collaborative ideals. (*Research Methods; Information Systems Research; Collaboration; Scientific Paradigms*)

Introduction

Since the inception of the field of information systems (IS) in the 1960s, researchers have drawn upon a bewildering variety of theoretical traditions and employed a vast number of specific methods to address a widening range of applied issues. The presence of diversity in IS (and in neighboring fields such as organization science and marketing) has sparked controversy and debate over the effects of diversity on the health of those disciplines. For many, diversity has become a source of worry and a threat to the survival of the field. For others, diversity is a source of pride and a sign of continued vitality.

Benbasat and Weber (1996) usefully document the sources of diversity in IS research, charting the field's historical trajectory to the present. Drawing chiefly from the current debate in organization science, they focus upon the threat of diversity to the future of the IS field. Benbasat and Weber urge a "rethinking" of our diverse tradition in view of the political implications of diversity. By failing to establish a clear and unique "territory," they argue, IS is threatened by more established and coherent disciplines in the struggle for resources and academic legitimacy. If nothing is done, IS might simply fade away or be taken over by a more powerful discipline.

It does not appear that IS, any more than organization science, is ready to shed its diversity and adopt a more unified research paradigm, such as those used in finance or economics. Like it or not, IS research will continue to diversify. However, maintaining diversity will not necessarily condemn IS to future oblivion. Our fate as a field depends less upon how diverse we become and more upon our upholding our collective responsibilities as researchers. If those responsibilities are taken seriously, diversity can help IS to fulfill its highest promise as a relevant and vital field of academic research.

This paper first confirms the evidence for the claim that IS research is diverse, then reviews the arguments that diversity threatens the survival of IS as a field of study. The promise of diversity is then considered, and an optimistic case is made for the benefits of diversity. Finally, the responsibilities of scholars wishing to achieve the benefits of diversity are discussed.

The Many Blooming Flowers of IS Research

In 1982, Jeffrey Pfeffer criticized the field of organization science for resembling a weed patch rather than a well-cultivated garden (Pfeffer 1982). With its plethora of

theories and multiple paradigms, organization theory was not, in Pfeffer's opinion, a unified discipline but rather an undisciplined mess. His plea to restore order was widely appreciated, and his book received awards and critical praise. However, the field of organization science refused to rally around Pfeffer's call for orderly unification. Today, almost 15 years later, researchers in organization science continue to propagate a wide variety of theories while they debate the merits of diversity.

The same issues being discussed in organization science have confronted IS from its earliest years (Benbasat 1996, Benbasat and Weber 1996). In IS, diversity is evidenced by the variety of topics being addressed, the number of theoretical areas being referenced, and the range of specific methods being employed in IS research. No longer can the emergence of a dominant theoretical perspective be anticipated, and little effort has been expended to articulate a unified view of IS or how to study it. The evidence for diversity in IS research is all around us, and any cursory glance at the leading journals provides sufficient evidence to support the claim of increased diversity.

Benbasat and Weber's (1996) historical perspective on IS research shows how our current institutional arrangements are closely linked to those of the past. For example, doctoral training in IS is usually organized to provide exposure to one or more "reference disciplines," a term popularized by Keen's (1980) influential address to the first annual Conference on Information Systems (now ICIS). Many senior faculty in IS received their own doctoral training in one of these disciplines because IS doctoral programs did not exist at the time of their studies. As a result, multiple reference disciplines continue to contribute heavily to the intellectual development of IS.

Research studies consistently show the effects of reference disciplines on IT. Swanson and Ramiller's (1993) topical analysis of 397 papers submitted to *Information Systems Research* in its first five years of operation revealed a variety of "thematic areas" and contributing disciplines. They concluded that no single disciplinary tradition tied all of the themes together. Rather, multiple disciplines were responsible for generating the foundations upon which individual submissions lay. Recognizing that communication across these disciplines

posed a challenge to the IS field, Swanson and Ramiller expressed hope that, "Once attracted to the IS academic village, many scholars will continue to choose to reside there, and will carry on the building of a heterogeneous, and yet congenial, community" (1993, p. 326).

Swanson and Ramiller's study indicates that diversity in IS was manifest from the time that *Information Systems Research* first began to receive manuscripts for publication, three years before its first issue was published. The journal's second editor-in-chief, John King, offered commentary that is representative of the liberal editorial policies of many journals serving the field of IS.

. . . it is arguable that information systems probably is not even a field, but rather an intellectual convocation that arose from the confluence of interests among individuals from many fields who continue to pledge allegiance to those fields through useful ties of various kinds. . . . These fields are a source of intellectual capital in the form of good ideas, methods, folkways and mores that are necessary for any decent research community. . . . Our leading publications contain many articles that could as easily and appropriately have been published in journals from computer science, applied mathematics, economics, organizational studies, psychology, and so on. (King 1993, p. 293)

The diversity of research appearing in IS journals is no accident. Rather, journal editors have encouraged researchers to broaden the intellectual base of IS to include participation by researchers from other disciplines, such as journalism and library and information science. Such contributions would extend the ability of IS journals to disseminate new ideas about information technology and its application to a wider range of social domains.

In addition, we have seen the appearance of new journals that have distinct, although not exclusive, editorial stances. For example, *Journal of Organizational Computing* is primarily focused on economic analyses and analytic methods in investigating technologies that support organizational structures and processes. *Accounting, Management and Information Technologies* is another new journal with a distinct orientation toward interpretive work in information systems. A host of journals focusing on specific technologies (networks, databases, knowledge-based systems, and so on) are also appearing. Thus, researchers in IS have an increasing variety of outlets to which they may submit their work.

The result of these current developments has been a reduction in the degree to which any particular paradigm or approach dominates IS research. Even the frequently-lamented domination of the positivist paradigm seems to have weakened, due in part to the influence of European research traditions on IS (Benbasat and Weber 1996). Thus, in their earlier assessment of articles in mainstream IS journals, Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) concluded that IS was dominated by positivist research and that interpretive studies and critical theory were underrepresented. However, based on an examination of the editorial statements of eight influential publication outlets in the IS field Walsham (1995) concluded that:

The total dominance of a small number of orthodox journals with an explicit positivist philosophy has changed. A researcher who wishes to adopt an interpretive or critical perspective can either submit their papers to the mainstream IS journals, where in at least one case there has been an explicit shift in editorial policy to permit such articles, or they can aim their work at a journal such as *Accounting, Management and Information Technologies*, which has demonstrated strong support for such methods. Alternatively, their work could be targeted at one of the European journals, which, as we have seen, have shown their willingness to publish interpretive papers (Walsham 1995, 390-391).

Thus, diversity in IS research is being promoted through the conscious policies enacted by leaders in the IS field. We have not failed in some mission to converge toward a unified paradigm; we have willfully pursued an opposing aim. IS is not negligent in its gardening; it has chosen a strategy to let many flowers bloom.

The Threat of Diversity

As Benbasat and Weber (1996) note, the choice of diversity carries important consequences and implications for the IS field. For them, diversity poses a major threat to the vitality of IS. With no single theory to unify the efforts of researchers, those efforts may be dissipated in self-indulgent projects that fail to build upon established knowledge. Journals may become schizophrenic compendia of unrelated research reports, each based on a different theoretical framework and empirical method. Scholars within the field may find it difficult, if not ultimately impossible, to communicate with one another thereby reducing opportunities for collab-

oration. Worse, members of a diverse academic field may become prone to fight among themselves, each seeking to justify an approach to research that is neither understood nor appreciated by his or her colleagues. While a diverse field, such as IS, may initially attract visitors from other fields, they may decide to pass through rather than stay once they discover that IS offers little unified theoretical substance for them.

Working with a fragmented or splintered paradigm may also place IS at an economic disadvantage in the competitive world of institutionalized knowledge production and education. Disciplines with more unified paradigms are likely to experience steadier streams of funded support for their research, greater power and legitimacy within the institution of higher education, greater success in promoting and tenuring faculty, and greater perceived productivity (Pfeffer 1993). These political realities may have little relevance to the usefulness of knowledge produced, but reduced power and legitimacy may negatively influence the quality of professional life enjoyed by researchers and educators.

Those in IS have witnessed, and frequently suffered from, the tenuous stature of IS within academic institutions. Despite healthy student enrollments, IS is often a weak contender in the fight for intellectual legitimacy. Some universities in which IS programs were first established now have little critical mass of faculty or doctoral students remaining. Suffering both from neglect and from political assaults, these programs have lost ground while older programs have been sustained. Talented faculty in IS move frequently as the local balances of power and political landscapes of academic institutions shift. IS is regularly put on the spot to make a case for its very existence, while more established programs endure. Because these threats affect both organizations and individuals, their potential damage is magnified. Students receive a less relevant education when information technology is programmed out of a curriculum. The psychological damage done to researchers in IS cannot be calculated, but it is clear that the IS field has suffered more than its share of injured exiles throughout its history.

For all of these reasons, it can be argued that IS focus its efforts upon a unifying research paradigm that is capable of generating a credible, influential body of re-

search findings (Benbasat and Weber 1996). As Pfeffer (1993) observed:

Members of high-paradigm fields enforce both theoretical and methodological conformity. They do this by reserving the most desirable places only for those who conform to the disciplinary orthodoxy and criticizing, regardless of their power or the validity of their ideas, those who depart from the established paths (Pfeffer 1993, p. 614).

A field in which control is concentrated in the hands of a comparatively small elite is one in which power is much more institutionalized and control by the dominant paradigm is quite likely to be perpetuated. By contrast, an area of inquiry characterized by diffuse perspectives, none of which has the power to institutionalize its dominance, is one in which consensus is likely to remain elusive and the dispersion in resources, rewards, and activity will be great. (Pfeffer 1993, p. 615)

Thus, the threat of diversity may be countered by paradigm consensus, in which elite members are encouraged to enforce narrowly defined conceptions of appropriate work through their control of journals and external funding. Those who conform to the dominant paradigm are likely to be rewarded: individuals excelling in mainstream research are granted promotion and tenure; institutions supporting mainstream research enjoy greater prestige and financial stability. In Pfeffer's view, conformity and control are the price a field must be willing to pay in order to receive the prize of political power and institutional legitimacy.

The Promise of Diversity

Despite the threat that diversity poses, researchers in many fields, including IS, are committed to realizing the promise of diversity. The published reactions to Pfeffer's arguments reveal an emotional involvement uncommon in academic debates. Canella and Paetzold (1994) argued that the legitimacy of research should not derive from the approval of an elite corps of gatekeepers or from its alignment with orthodox perspectives. They considered the idea of ostracism of minority views to be unethical, and the notion of institutional elitism to be offensive. "Pfeffer's vision would lead to a tyranny of the elites, who would protect their positions by denying the existence of evidence that challenges their views and by undermining the credibility of those whom they cannot control" (Canella and Paetzold 1994, p. 338).

Van Maanen's (1995a, 1995b) responses to Pfeffer's vision were even more impassioned and virulent:

I want to suggest here that this sour view of our field is—to be gentle—insufferably smug; pious and orthodox; philosophically indefensible; extraordinarily naive as to how science actually works; theoretically foolish, vain and autocratic; and—still being gentle—reflective of a most out-of-date and discredited father-knows-best version of knowledge, rhetoric and the role theory plays in the life of any intellectual community. (Van Maanen 1995a, p. 133)

The point of recounting this exchange is not to shift the focus to one of IS's closely allied reference disciplines, but rather to gain insights into the issue now confronting IS. Indeed, through our connections with organization science, we may learn from the debate and spare ourselves the figurative spilling of each others' blood while more established fields observe with amusement.¹

The question is simple to pose, yet difficult to answer. Should we, in sympathy with Pfeffer's concerns, pursue a path defined by elite guides that is instrumental in responding to the threat of diversity? Or, in sympathy with Pfeffer's critics, should we follow more permissive paths that lead in multiple, unexplored directions? Can we afford to satisfy our intellectual curiosities and risk getting lost in the process? Confronting these questions requires that the promise of diversity be acknowledged along with its threats. Four of the advantages of diversity stand out.

First, *diversity in IS expands the foundation upon which knowledge claims in the field are based*. For example, claims to knowledge about the use of groupware technologies may arise from both a controlled laboratory study and an interpretive field study. Although the results of two such studies cannot be directly compared, more practical knowledge is created by adding the findings together than by considering either single study alone. In a unified field, knowledge claims are more closely aligned because research findings build directly upon one another. However, the accumulated knowledge is

¹ In the organization science debate, Pfeffer and Van Maanen express not only their polarized positions but also a degree of personal animosity. My personal admiration and respect for Professors Benbasat and Weber is substantial, sincere, and based on many years of collective commitment to seeing the IS field prosper. My opposition to their position is based solely on the arguments they present.

vulnerable to basic challenges, and entire fields may be dismissed as irrelevant and misguided. The expanded foundation provided by diverse approaches to research in IS ensures that knowledge claims are supported by more than one paradigm.

Second, *diversity attracts good people to the field of IS, where they can address applied problems that interest them.* As noted earlier, the founders of IS all earned their degrees in other fields, and IS continues to attract scholars from related disciplines. Whereas unified fields are eager to restrict the influx of new people and new ideas, IS is enriched by new entrants. For example, King's (1993) invitation to library and information scientists seems especially timely as electronic publication and knowledge dissemination become more technically feasible. Also, knowledge drawn from specialists in electronic media and telecommunications can inform the design of organizational learning systems based on hypertext and web technologies. The ability of IS to remain relevant depends partially on the infusion of new people with new ideas from a variety of disciplines.

Third, *diversity fosters creativity.* In fields with unified paradigms, shifts in thinking rarely occur because the mainstream thinking is rarely challenged. Diverse fields are far more creative because incongruous and conflicting ideas are more frequently voiced and the resulting tensions generate the energy that drives creative resolutions. We have not reached the point where creativity is not needed in academic work. Certainly more creativity is indicated for addressing the problems of designing, developing, and implementing new technologies in organizations.

Finally, *diversity advances the valued principle of academic freedom.* If academia stands for anything, it stands for the freedom to pursue problems and exploit opportunities for expanding knowledge. Knowledge creation is admittedly not an efficient process, and academic institutions are usually designed to be fertile sanctuaries for individual researchers, any one of whom could produce breakthrough findings. In this way, universities differ from factories that are designed to produce uniform products for mass consumption. In the university environment where academic freedom is so well protected, it is contradictory for disciplines to restrict freedom and diversity through independent coercive measures.

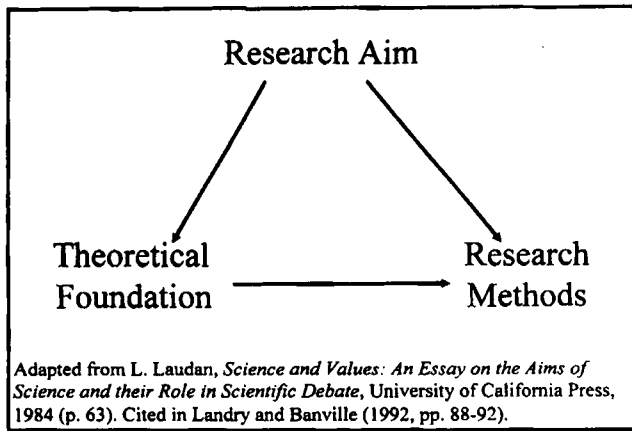
A focus on the threats posed by diversity in IS is likely to conceal the amount of knowledge that has been produced by IS researchers. By allowing diverse perspectives to flourish, IS has already delivered on its promise to produce useful knowledge. Although a thorough inventory of knowledge generated from IS research has not yet been taken, Table 1 itemizes some areas in which meaningful contributions to practice have been made. In contrast to unified fields with narrow research agendas, researchers in IS have contributed broadly to our knowledge, and the diversity in our methods and theories has played a central role in these accomplishments.

These contributions can be hypothetically compared to what IS research might have contributed if it had in fact been guided by an early call for paradigmatic consensus. For Pfeffer (1993), economics is the model of a highly developed paradigm. If warnings like his had been heeded when IS began, IS research conceivably could have been dominated by an economic paradigm. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, economic theory included a focus on "information economics," an approach to assigning economic value to information based upon the contribution of that information to de-

Table 1 Examples of Knowledge Generated by IS Research

The configuration of useful business applications of information technology, including operating systems, networks, architectures, interfaces, data storage and retrieval.
The factors motivating the adoption and use of information technology by individuals, groups, organizations, and industries.
The process of technology use and adaptation, wherein the consequences of IS use are realized.
The organizational consequences of information technology, particularly effects on structural forms such as virtual and networked organizations.
Understandings about the organization and management of information resources within and between companies, and the management of IS professionals in those organizations.
Awareness of information technology's role in supporting group processes.
Knowledge about the development of IS applications, including technical issues and development methodologies, the social process of IS development, and the connection between development tools and social processes.
Methods for training end-users and novices how to build and use IS applications.
Effective security and privacy policies for organizations using IS.

Figure 1 Triad for the Justification of Research



cision making. Using the methods of statistical decision theory, particularly Bayesian analyses, information economics offered potential to guide the study of information systems by focusing on their economic contribution to firm performance through the effect of information on decision making. For example, one could compute the expected value of perfect information in a decision problem, thereby placing an upper limit on the cost the decision maker should be willing to spend on the information. Such an approach might have given us greater insight into today's "productivity paradox" had it guided the whole field of information systems.

But what could we not have discovered if IS research had been so focused? Would any of the interpretive studies in IS have ever been conceived? Would interactive and object-oriented methods for IS development ever have been imagined? Would end-user computing and client/server architectures have evolved in the absence of research on their consequences for organizational structure? Although we cannot answer these questions, it is fair to conclude that information economics would not have produced the knowledge base necessary for these diverse contributions. Information economics has had only a modest influence in the IS field, and we have learned far more by infusing research and theory from disciplines besides economics. IS, as a diverse field, has been able to focus on many aspects of information technology in organizations and focus significantly on *current, relevant topics* throughout its history. Our nimble jumps from topic to topic, from

method to method, and our propensity to employ multiple paradigms is a sign of strength, not weakness. They keep us relevant to business practice and to the needs of higher education in business.

By contrast, information economics remains part of the central paradigm in operations research and management science (OR/MS), taught to every student as part of the quantitative approach to decision making. OR/MS has been criticized for decades as an area of business studies that, despite its convergence on a central paradigm for research, has made little contribution to business practice or productivity. Not surprisingly, faculty in OR/MS often target the "turf" won by IS programs in their political efforts to regain student enrollment and university resources. Their arguments question the legitimacy of IS research while promoting their own older and more established research paradigm. Sometimes these arguments are ignored, and sometimes they are believed.²

Our constituents in the business world and our students have not demanded paradigm unification. To the contrary, when offered the unified economics-based paradigm of decision theory in OR/MS, practitioners and students "voted with their feet" by abandoning such programs and often moving toward IS. IS has fulfilled its promise to the extent that it has avoided paradigm consensus and pursued diversity. Had IS taken the course of unification, its legacy would now be impoverished.

Responsibilities: The Rules of Freedom

Although a commitment to diversity in IS research is partly responsible for enriching IS, sustaining and extending those contributions depend on two basic responsibilities. The first draws from Landry and Banville's (1992) application of Laudan's (1984) essay on science and values. This responsibility imposes a discipline on our choices of theoretical frameworks

² My comments about OR/MS draw primarily from recent personal experiences and from early involvement in OR/MS research. Published criticisms of OR/MS have appeared for at least 30 years, however it is beyond the scope of the present paper to reiterate or document these criticisms.

and research methods, in place of an unregulated, "anything-goes" posture. The second responsibility pertains to our commitment to the ideal of collaboration within the IS field.

Disciplined Diversity

A field as diverse as IS requires *disciplined methodological pluralism*, a phrase coined by Landry and Banville (1992). For them, methodological pluralism is ". . . a position that favors a diversity of methods, theories, even philosophies, in scientific inquiry" (1992, p. 78). Methodological pluralism lies between the extremes of methodological monism, such as that advocated by Pfeffer in organization science, and an anarchic, anything-goes attitude. Both extremes are regarded as untenable for any science, rendering pluralism as a desirable state that aptly describes most fields, even those which are often viewed retrospectively as operating with unified paradigms (Laudan 1984).

Discipline is required to prevent methodological pluralism from becoming methodological anarchy. To guide IS researchers, Landry and Banville (1992) draw upon Laudan's (1984) triad of justification, a simple adaptation of which is shown in Figure 1. According to this representation, theoretical foundations for research and specific research methods are justified by research aims, or purposes. They should *not* be chosen because they conform to a dominant paradigm or because the researcher believes in their intrinsic value. Rather, theories and methods are justified on pragmatic grounds as appropriate tools for accomplishing research aims. Such discipline requires that researchers be clear about their aims, that they justify their choices of theory and method, and that they maintain a balance among the three positions on the triad. Using these principles, researchers in IS can justify their use of many individual paradigms and research methods. If a particular method cannot be justified, it should not be selected.

For example, researchers with the aim of testing established theories about the determinants of IS use would be obligated to include one or more of the variants of the Theory of Reasoned Action that have assumed prominence in the IS literature. Moreover, the adoption of a particular theoretical formulation would probably require testing through quantitative, positivist research methods. An interpretive inquiry would be

more difficult to justify for this particular research aim. By contrast, the aim of studying information technology's role in organizational memory would easily justify more exploratory, interpretive research because organizational learning is an area in which multiple emergent theories coexist and little empirical research has been performed.

How does one decide which research aims to pursue? This is the point on the triad where choice is least restricted, but discipline is still required. Often, researchers in IS and other fields pursue aims of interest only to themselves. A more justifiable criterion for selecting research aims is to relate aims to the practical interests in the IS field. The best guide for choosing topics of interest to the community of IS researchers and practitioners is to listen to that community. The research and publication process is a form of conversation in which different voices contribute. If one listens carefully to the conversation, one is prepared to contribute to it.

The philosophical position advocated here is one of extreme pragmatism, justifiable in part because of IS's close alliance with the practical problems of business. Theories and research methods are intellectual artifacts, produced by scholarly communities with some purpose in mind. Too often in science, theoretical positions become more like religious beliefs than useful tools. Disciplined methodological pluralism refocuses us on the aims of science and research and requires us to justify every choice of theory and method in relation to those aims. It rejects the adoption of theoretical paradigms based on faith in their correctness and discourages blind allegiance to academic doctrines associated with various "schools of thought." Disciplined methodological pluralism requires an awareness of various theories and methods for addressing research aims.

The Ideal of Collaboration in IS Research

A diverse research community is vulnerable to the destructive consequences of conflict among its various specializations. Internecine wars between "techies" and behaviorists, between positivists and interpretivists, between qualitative and quantitative researchers are too frequently witnessed in IS. The self-inflicted damage resulting from such conflicts is unnecessary. Although politically naive and out of fashion, idealism offers an an-

swer to Benbasat and Weber's (1996) concern for "ways of resolving theoretical and methodological disputes" (Pfeffer 1993) in a diverse field.³ A commitment to diversity in IS research requires a commitment to the ideal of collaboration.

Within diverse departments, and across the entire IS field, the ideal of collaboration requires not just tolerance but genuine appreciation for our colleagues who undertake their research with different approaches. We should be thankful that they have chosen to apply their skills to IS issues so that our knowledge base will be more enriched. We should admire their skills, support their efforts, and look for opportunities to learn from them. Collectively, we can advance the IS field and celebrate the accomplishments that result from diversity.

Table 2 contains a shamelessly idealistic set of principles for collaboration, originally generated by the author as a tribute to his own colleagues. It is offered here as a more general set of collaborative ideals for the IS field. If we are committed to the ideal of diversity, we must respect, trust, and honor those who share common interests in IS but who explore those interests using different theories and research methods. We must accept that there are "many right answers" to the questions posed about IS in organizations and that diverse research approaches are preferable to any single approach, even though we may favor it.

Conclusion

Given the unlikely prospect that IS will abandon its historical commitment to diversity and rally around a unified research paradigm, the field needs to cope with the threat posed by diversity. This paper argues that IS researchers bear the responsibility for justifying their choices of research aims, theoretical foundations, and research methods and for communicating the rationale for their choices

³ In philosophy, idealism emphasizes the role of human perception in evaluating the "real world," whereas materialism holds that reality exists apart from the human mind. In the arts, idealism is manifest in expressions that capture the artist's conception of imagined states, often suggesting a sense of perfection. By contrast, in artistic realism the artist becomes a lens by which imperfect reality is viewed and appreciated. In the sciences, idealists are those committed to ideals such as creativity, the search for truth, the value of enlightenment, and honesty in the conduct of scientific work.

Table 2 Principles of Collaboration

1. **Respect.** I seek your contributions because I respect your expertise, judgment, and conduct. You complement me by contributing insights and resources that I lack. Although we contribute differently to our joint work, I respect and value the ways in which you are different from me.
2. **Responsibility.** I accept responsibility for ensuring that our relationship succeeds. I will not jeopardize our performance through carelessness or neglect.
3. **Trust.** I trust that your contributions and opinions are rendered for our joint benefit, and I will not question your intentions or integrity.
4. **Honesty.** I will be honest in contributing my own ideas and in assessing your contributions. I will not withhold criticism to avoid potential conflicts, and I will seek constructive criticism from you.
5. **Commitment.** I make a commitment to our joint work and to sustaining our working relationship. I promise to be available and responsive when you need me.
6. **Empowerment.** I will use my resources to empower you. I am genuinely interested in your professional and personal growth.
7. **Support.** I will respond to your needs for guidance, encouragement, and emotional support, and I will seek the same from you.
8. **Admiration.** I admire and value you as a colleague from whom I learn. I am pleased to have this opportunity to collaborate with you.
9. **Honor.** I acknowledge and honor the boundaries of our relationship. I will not conceal my admiration, or even affection, for you, but I understand and respect the limits of our relationship.
10. **Celebration.** I welcome the opportunity to celebrate our joint accomplishments.

to the research community. Moreover, this paper articulates an ideal of collaboration, in which members of a diverse research community may value their respective contributions. These measures are offered as solutions to the problem of diversity and permit the field of IS to go forward with its diverse platform of research. IS has accomplished a great deal in a short period of time, and we must ensure our continued ability to contribute to knowledge about applications of information technology in organizations. Rather than resorting to the political tactic of unification in order to build institutional legitimacy, the measures described in this paper are focused on the maintenance of a diverse and vital field.⁴

⁴ An earlier version of this paper was presented as the keynote address at NOKIBIT-96, the fourth annual Norwegian conference on the organisational use of information technology, and published in the Proceedings. I appreciate the opportunity provided by the organizers of NOKOBIT-96, especially Egil Eik, Carl Erik Moe, and Maung K. Sein. The ideas in this paper have evolved over a number of years in collaborations and conversations with

many colleagues, among them: Joyce Elam, Krish Muralidhar, Maung Sein, Geoff Walsham, Duane Truex, Sundeep Sahay, Allen Lee, Radhika Santhanam, Mike Newman, Lynne Markus, Bob Bostrom, Bob Zmud, and Wanda Orlikowski. Most recently, my thinking has been influenced by Izak Benbasat's (1996) presentation and comments made in response to it by Allen Lee, Richard Welke, Blaize Reich, Gary Moore, Detmar Straub, Wynne Chin, and Suzanne Rivard.

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John L. King: Associate Editor. This paper was received June 1996 and has been with the author 1 month for 1 revision.

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