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Societal Impact and Accreditation: Implications for Information Systems Research and Practice

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Abstract

The *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems* has, since its inception, played a role in publishing manuscripts focused on positive societal impact in the Midwest and beyond. This paper discusses current AACSB, ACBSP, and ABET accreditation standards focused on societal impact and offers examples of manuscripts published in the journal categorized by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals which is suggested as a taxonomy for societal impact by AACSB accreditation standards. Suggestions for future manuscripts are then offered to interested information systems faculty who are seeking an outlet for manuscripts reporting their curricular, scholarly, and other activities with societal impact. Potential focus areas suggested for future work include the elimination of the digital divide, measuring and reporting social mobility index, the use of information systems to support the development of resilient agriculture, the use of information systems to monitor and improve water quality, high impact teaching practices and information systems curriculum innovations, gender equality in information systems education and practice, eliminating or at least reducing the learning equity gap, and remote and hybrid work arrangements.

Keywords: societal impact; social mobility index; information systems; accreditation standards; AACSB; ACBSP; ABET; gender equality; economic growth; infrastructure; high-speed Internet access; digital divide; resilient agriculture; water quality; pedagogy; remote work; United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

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1. Introduction

Current accreditation standards addressing information systems programs in colleges of business, management, and engineering focus increased attention on the societal impact of research, teaching, and service initiatives. This paper will discuss societal impact with respect to AACSB, ACBSP, and ABET accreditation standards, highlight key areas on which information systems faculty may wish to focus their work to address societal impact in accreditation standards, and outline ways in which the *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems* can support societal impact initiatives and serve as an outlet for faculty interested in publishing reports of their work related to societal impacts.

2. Accreditation Standards and Social Impact

Although scholars and practitioners working in the information systems field have traditionally been concerned with the individual, organizational, and societal impacts of their work (e.g., Chen et al, 2008; Clemons et al, 2016; De Leoz et al., 2018; Dwivedi et al., 2023; Malhotra et al., 2013; Melville, 2010; Sabherwal & Grover, 2024), current accreditation standards governing information systems programs in college of business, management, and engineering make these perspectives and goals explicit.

2.1 AACSB Accreditation Standards and Societal Impact

Many information systems programs located in colleges of business and management are accredited by AACSB or ACBSP. The “2020 Guiding Principles and Standards for Business Accreditation” place an explicit and increased emphasis on societal impact (AACSB, 2023). The standards require business and management schools to articulate how they have a positive societal impact across several standards that must be addressed in order for a college of business and management to attain or retain accreditation (AACSB, 2023). Specifically, standard 9 states that: “The school demonstrates positive societal impact through internal and external initiatives and/or activities, consistent with the school’s mission, strategies, and expected outcomes.” Standard 8 also states that: “portfolio of intellectual contributions contains exemplars of research and publications that have a positive societal impact that is consistent with the school’s mission and strategic plan,” (AACSB International 2020 Standards).

Additional guidance for setting and measuring goals related to societal impact is provided in a supplemental document titled “AACSB and Societal Impact: Aligning with the AACSB 2020 Business Accreditation Standards” (AACSB, February 2023).

Given the collective role business and management school faculty play in advancing and supporting positive societal impact, information systems faculty are understandably concerned with how their teaching, research, and service activities can advance accreditation standards related to societal impact. AACSB standards require curriculum and intellectual contributions that help the school achieve societal impact with a focus on positive societal impact stated in the school’s strategic plan. The standards welcome societal impact that is local, regional, national, and international in scope, with activities that achieve social impact typically involving engagement with stakeholders relevant to the business and management school’s mission (AACSB, February 2023).

AACSB standards allow, but do not require, activities with societal impact to be categorized and reported using the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals which are listed in Table 1 below (United Nations, 2024).

2.2 ACBSP Accreditation Standards and Societal Impact

Information systems programs located in colleges of business and management may be accredited by ACBSP which also has some focus on societal impact. ACBSP standards emphasize the consideration of impact on society as students learn to design solutions to technical problems. Specifically, standard one of the ACBSP discusses “Social and Community Responsibility” and “Impact on Society” (ACBSP, February 2024) which requires accredited institutions to “Describe the processes used by the business unit’s leadership to identify and address the impact on society of its program offerings, services, and operations,” (ACBSP, February 2024). The Criterion 5.3.C of standard five of ACBSP (faculty focus) focusses on scholarship using the Boyer Model. Under the scholarship of integration section, the standard further elaborates that “It is essential to integrate ideas and then apply them to the world in which we live,” (ACBSP, February 2024).

	Goal
1	No Poverty
2	Zero Hunger
3	Good Health and Well-Being
4	Quality Education
5	Gender Equality
6	Clean Water and Sanitation
7	Affordable and Clean Energy
8	Decent Work and Economic Growth
9	Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
10	Reduced Inequalities
11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
12	Responsible Consumption and Production
13	Climate Action
14	Life Below Water
15	Life on Land
16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
17	Partnerships for the Goals

Table 1. Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2024)

2.3 ABET Accreditation Standards and Societal Impact

Information systems programs located in colleges of engineering may be accredited by ABET which also has a focus on societal impact. ABET standards emphasize the consideration of impact on society as students learn to design solutions to technical problems. Curriculum standards for computing programs accredited by ABET require coverage of “local and global impacts of computing solutions on individuals, organizations, and society” (ABET, 2024). While not identical to AACSB, or ACBSP standards, the suggestions in the following section should be helpful as information systems faculty working in colleges of engineering consider ways to publish manuscripts focused on societal impact in the *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems*.

3. Societal Impact and the *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems*

Given the critical role information systems play in shaping and supporting societies around the world, information systems faculty have the potential to support the attainment of initiatives focused on societal impact in the context of accreditation standards. The journal has published many papers and provided an outlet since its inception for papers reporting intellectual contributions and engagements with stakeholders that have societal impact. Example manuscripts published in the journal categorized by selected United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2024) are presented in Table 2 below.

Goal	Topic	Manuscript
Zero Hunger	Agricultural Practice	Power, D., and Hadidi, R. (2019). Transforming agriculture: Exploring precision farming research needs. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i> . 2019(2), Article 1.
Good Health and Well-Being	<p>Pandemic Preparedness</p> <p>Health Information Systems</p> <p>Global Health Initiatives</p> <p>Healthcare Workers and Information Systems</p>	<p>George, J. F., and Hadidi, R. (2022). COVID-19 and its impact on the Midwest United States. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2022(1), Article 1.</p> <p>Heavin, C. (2017). Health information systems – Opportunities and challenges in a global health ecosystem. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2017(2), Article 1</p> <p>Fernández, E. (2017). Innovation in healthcare: Harnessing new technologies, <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2017(2), Article 8.</p> <p>Kenny, G., O' Connor, Y., Eze, E., and Heavin, C. (2017). Trends, findings, and opportunities: An archival review of health information systems research in Nigeria. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2017(2), Article 6.</p> <p>Vroegindeweij, R., and Carvalho, A. (2019). Do healthcare workers need cognitive computing technologies? A qualitative study involving IBM Watson and Dutch</p>

		<p>professionals. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2019(1), Article 4.</p>
<p>Quality Education</p>	<p>High Impact Teaching Practices</p>	<p>Eierman, M. A., and Iversen, J. H. (2018). Comparing test-driven development and pair programming to improve the learning of programming languages. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2018(1), Article 3.</p> <p>Hadidi, R., and George, J. F. (2022). COVID-19 and examples of “best” teaching practices from the lens of different stakeholders. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2022(2), Article 1.</p> <p>Lebens, M. (2021). Using prototyping to teach the design thinking process in an asynchronous online course. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2021(2), Article 3.</p> <p>Luse, A., and Burkman, J. (2018). Safely using real-world data for teaching statistics: A comparison of student performance and perceived realism between dataset types. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2018(1), Article 2.</p> <p>Mitchell, A. J. D. (2018). Small business website development: Enhancing the student experience through community-based service learning. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2018(2), Article 4.</p> <p>Hadidi, R., and George, J.</p>

		<p>F. (2023). Potential uses of AI-based platforms in teaching and learning. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2023(2), Article 1.</p>
<p>Gender Equality</p>	<p>Gender and Use of Information Systems</p> <p>Gender and the IT Workforce</p>	<p>Witt, C., Melton, J., and Miller, R. E. (2024). Gender, emotional intelligence, and the need for popularity: Exploring the causes of faux pas posting beyond the behavior of friends. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2024(1), Article 3.</p> <p>Kiely, G. L., Heavin, C., and Lynch, P. (2019). Building a shared understanding of female participation in IT through collaboration: A shared mental model approach. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2019(1), Article 3.</p> <p>Rowland, P., and Noteboom, C. B. (2018). Anchoring female millennial students in an IT career path: The CLASS anchor model. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2018(2), Article 3.</p>
<p>Decent Work and Economic Growth</p>	<p>Information Systems and Economic Development</p> <p>Information Systems Career Preparation</p>	<p>Hadidi, R., Power, D., and George, J. F. (2016). Information technology is transforming the heartland: Making the case for Midwest United States. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2016(1), Article 1.</p> <p>Muraski, J. M. (2023). IS career day in a class: Raising college student awareness and interest in information systems.</p>

	<p>Development of Degree Programs Targeting High Demand Career Fields</p>	<p><i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2023(1), Article 3.</p> <p>Strader, T. J., and Bryant, A. (2018). University opportunities, abilities and motivations to create data analytics programs. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2018(1), Article 4.</p> <p>Muraski, J.M., and Iversen, J. (2022). Growing computer science and information technology education in K-12: Industry demand and ecosystem support. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2022(2), Article 2.</p> <p>Muraski, J.M., Iversen, J., and Iversen, K.J. (2021). Building collaboration networks and alliances to solve the IT talent shortage: A revelatory case study. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2021(1), Article 3.</p>
<p>Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure</p>	<p>Universal High-Speed Internet Access</p>	<p>Marett, K., and Xiao, S. (2022). Broadband Internet access as a localized resource for facilitating information security knowledge. <i>Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems</i>. 2022(1), Article 2.</p>

Table 2. Examples of the *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems* Manuscripts Focused on Selected Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2024)

The *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems* invites manuscripts across the spectrum of issues related to information systems and societal impact. We suggest that potential authors consult the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals taxonomy (United Nations, 2024) as well as other categories of societal impact that may be adopted by their institutions. We anticipate that the variety of goals selected by colleges of business and management will generate a similar variety in the topics of manuscripts submitted. Additionally, we invite manuscripts focused on curriculum, scholarship, and other initiatives and are particularly interested in manuscripts that describe and evaluate initiatives related to external stakeholders. Finally, while the journal has a regional mission, we invite publications with a local, regional, national, and international scope.

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

Eliminating the Digital Divide. Although the digital divide was identified some time ago and has been studied and addressed over time, discrepancies persist and became increasingly problematic during the COVID-19 pandemic (Lythreitis, 2022). We welcome manuscripts addressing the digital divide with a focus on studies and initiatives designed to work toward an elimination of the digital divide regionally, nationally, and globally. Initiatives designed to eliminate the digital divide have the potential to reduce poverty, improve health, promote quality education, improve gender equality, improve economic growth in poorly served areas, reduce inequalities, and boost industry, innovation, and infrastructure (United Nations, 2024).

Use of Information Systems to Support the Development of Resilient Agriculture. The resilience of farming and agriculture is a pressing issue in the Midwest region of the United States. Resilient agriculture is the philosophy that land management methods should preserve the potential of agricultural land for future production and economic gain. Additionally, the ability of the agricultural sector to adapt and continue to innovate is essential (Center for Resilience, 2024). As part of ensuring the resilience of the agricultural sector, there is a clear need for farms in the Midwest region of the United States and beyond to become better prepared for the challenges of weather extremes and climate variability (Williams et al., 2022). Less clear is the role that information systems may play in building agricultural resilience. Access to climate information has been proposed as an essential feature of agricultural resilience; however, challenges in the use of this information have been found and future research and initiatives can be designed to better understand and address these challenges (Chaudhuri & Kendall, 2021; Haworth et al., 2018; Savari et al., 2024).

Information systems faculty working in the Midwest region of the United States are well positioned to undertake research and community initiatives focused on the potential benefits of and barriers to the use of information systems in the development of resilient agriculture. Additionally, faculty may partner with colleagues in agricultural colleges to develop curriculum at the intersection of information systems and agricultural innovation. The *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems* invites publications focused on these initiatives in support of the zero hunger and climate action goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2024).

Use of Information Systems to Monitor and Improve Water Quality. Polyfluorinated substances (PFAS) have been found in many public water systems and private wells nationally, and recent EPA regulations require the removal of these chemicals (Friedman, 2024). E. Coli, nitrates, and phosphorus also threaten the quality of water in the Midwest (Schneider, 2023). The role of information systems in monitoring and improving water quality will be an essential part of any initiatives designed to improve water quality (Behmel et al., 2016), and the journal welcomes manuscripts addressing these issues which are linked to the United Nations goals of clean water and health (United Nations, 2024).

High Impact Teaching Practices and Information Systems Curriculum Innovations. The *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems* has been and will continue to be an outlet for the publication of manuscripts on high impact teaching practices and curricular innovations in the field of information systems. Work on these topics supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of quality education, decent work, and economic growth (United Nations, 2024).

Gender Equality in Information Systems Education and Practice. The *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems* has also been an outlet focused on gender equality in information systems education and practice as seen in Table 2. The journal continues to welcome manuscripts in these areas which support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of gender equality and reduced inequality (United Nations, 2024). Manuscripts focused on gender differences in access to and use of information systems (e.g., Shah & Krishnan, 2023), gender equity and artificial intelligence (e.g., Paton-Romero et al., 2022), and gender equity and blockchain technology (e.g., Di Vaio et al., 2023) as well as those focused on other information systems topics are encouraged.

Remote and Hybrid Work. The *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems* encourages the submission of manuscripts on remote and hybrid work arrangements which may build on the work of Hadidi and Klein (2024). Work in this area is consistent with accreditation emphasis on societal impact by supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of eliminating poverty, decent work, and economic growth (United Nations, 2024).

4. Conclusion

As accreditation standards place more emphasis on societal impact, information systems faculty may examine their

research agendas, curricular focus, and other initiatives to find and develop ways in which their work may have a positive societal impact on their local, regional, national, and international communities. Potential initiatives may be found in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals taxonomy (United Nations, 2024) or through other frameworks that may be adopted by their colleges of business and management. While accreditation standards do not demand that all faculty have a focus on societal impact (AACSB, February 2023), over time, many information systems faculty may become interested in such a focus. As work with an emphasis on societal impact increases in support of various accreditation standards, the *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems* encourages submission of manuscripts on curriculum, scholarship, and other initiatives so that ideas can be shared across the Midwest and beyond as faculty build expertise and collaborate to work more intentionally in these areas.

5. Overview of the Contents of this issue

This issue of the journal includes two traditional research articles. Troy Strader and Royce Fichtner in their interesting, and curriculum related article looked at 163 US universities to see the extent of coverage of the Information Technology Ethical and Legal (ITEL) coverage in their curriculum. At this age of Generative AI, their findings and set of recommendations is very timely for IS and IT professionals to read about.

Austin Coursey, Matthew Tennyson, and Vlad Krotov in their important and informative article looked at the authorship attribution related to the R code. Given the popularity of R code these days, they propose a tool to properly attribute the generated R codes to the original author(s).

We appreciate and wish to acknowledge the contributions of reviewers for this issue of the journal, including Queen Booker (Metropolitan State University), Mari Buche (Michigan Technological University), Yi “Maggie” Guo (University of Michigan-Dearborn), Bryan Hosack, (Penske Logistic), and Alanah Mitchell (Drake University).

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Rassule Hadidi is Dean of the College of Business and Management, Metro State University, Minneapolis, Minnesota. His current research areas of interest include online and blended teaching and learning pedagogy and its comparison with face-to-face teaching; curriculum development and quality assessment; cloud computing and its applications for small and medium-sized enterprises; and quality of online information. He has served as the president as well as the At-Large Director of the Midwest Association for Information Systems and is the founding Managing Editor of the *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems*. He is an AIS Distinguished Member – Cum Laude and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Society for Advancement of Management.

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