



Information for Guest Editors of Special Issues (SIs) of the Information Systems Journal (ISJ)

We have had a number of very successful Special Issues (SIs) of the ISJ in the past and look forward to this continuing. Our policy is to have one SI per year however, this is dependent upon good proposals from suitable Guest Editors (GEs) being generated. So please consider becoming an ISJ GE.

Our experience has resulted in the following general guidelines and definition of the role of GEs which we hope you find helpful. Jan Ondrus is responsible for SIs and should be contacted in this connection.

This document firstly provides information for those considering becoming a GE for ISJ (Section 1). Secondly, it provides more detail of the process and role for those that have had an SI accepted (Section 2).

ISJ Contacts:

Special Issues Editor (SIE): Jan Ondrus (ondrus@essec.fr)

Managing Editor (ME): Philip Powell

Editors in Chief (EIC): David Avison and Guy Fitzgerald

ISJ Office: Kathryn Baxter

ISJ Editors Website: <http://disc.brunel.ac.uk/isj/>

Wiley-Blackwell ISJ website: www.blackwellpublishing.com/journals/isj/

Wiley InterScience ISJ website:

<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118514680/home>

SECTION 1. CONSIDERING BECOMING A GE

The role of the GE is important and they are generally responsible for the structure, contributions, quality, organising the reviewing, providing an editorial, and seeing the issue through to publication, etc. GEs should consider the following:

- (i) a SI should have a relevant theme (agreed by the Editors)
- (ii) the theme should not be parochial and be relevant to an international audience
- (iii) there should be a respected GE, normally someone well known in the subject area of the SI (**GEs must not submit their own papers to**

the SI, nor jointly authored papers. They will be able to contribute with an extended Guest Editorial). Where there is more than one GE they should probably not be from the same institution and ideally a second GE should be from a different country

- (iv) there should normally be four or five papers but see the page size limits for an issue (normally papers should not be over 7,000 words). See details below.
- (v) contributions should come from different authors and different institutions (ideally a mix of different countries)
- (vi) papers should meet the normal standards of review of ISJ, e.g. be original, not published elsewhere, make a significant contribution to the area, be reviewed by at least two referees, of the necessary size, etc. Ideally we like research based papers although good literature or review-based papers can also be appropriate. Although probably only one of this latter type in any one issue. We do not normally accept papers where students or MBAs are surveyed and used as surrogates for developers or IS managers.
- (vii) calls for papers for the issue should be open and widely disseminated by the GEs, including on AISWorld.
- (viii) the ISJ Editors reserve the right of veto of individual papers, or the whole SI, if they feel that the quality threshold has not been met and/or publication would be detrimental to the reputation of the ISJ. Normally of course this does not happen but GEs should ensure that the ISJ Editors are given the opportunity to comment on papers/the issue at the appropriate time.
- (ix) GEs should familiarise themselves with the ISJ, its ethos and standards – in particular you should visit the ISJ Editors Web Site at <http://www.isj-editors.org> which contains information and cfps for current SIs.
- (x) GEs should familiarise themselves with the kind of papers published by ISJ and in particular papers published in ISJ in the area of the proposed SI. If you do not have access to ISJ we will provide electronic access via Wiley-Interscience (please contact the SIE for details)

If you are happy with the above and have a theme that you wish to propose for a SI then please send the SIE the following information:

- title of proposed Special Issue (SI)
- theme of issue (the kind of information that would form the call for papers)
- proposed SI editors (affiliations, very brief statement of interests in the area)
- justification for the SI (why relevant, why topic is 'hot', audience, similar SIs undertaken by the editors, similar SIs in other journals, etc.)

- a draft of the Call for Papers for the SI (this will ultimately be made available on the Editors website)
- proposed means of publicising the SI (email lists, conferences, special interest groups, etc.)
- ideal proposed timescales (these will be amended in all probability to fit ISJ schedules and commitments but propose them anyway) for:
 - date of call for papers
 - deadline for receipt of papers
 - date of notification to authors
 - date SI ready
 - proposed date of publication in ISJ

You should receive a decision within a few weeks.

SECTION: 2. SPECIFIC ROLE OF GUEST EDITOR (GE)

Once approval for the SI has been given GEs undertake the following:

- 1 Construction of the Call for Papers (cfp) for the Special Issue.**
 This should be developed in consultation with the Editors as part of the acceptance process. The timing of the issue of the cfp and the schedule need to be agreed by the Editors. The cfp should ask for submissions to be made online at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/isj>.
 Authors will need to create a new account by registering as a new user. They will then need to select manuscript type and that it is a Special Issue submission.
- 2 Distribution and publicity of the cfp**
 This will depend on the exact nature of the SI but should be posted to AISWorld and on the AIS website cfp section at the minimum. The cfp will also be displayed on the ISJ Editors website (please check that it is there and contact the SIE if it is not or if it is in error). The more you do to publicise the better the submissions and the better the SI.
- 3 Receipt of submissions**
 The system will acknowledge papers automatically. As GEs you will be provided temporarily with SE accounts, enabling you to monitor and access submissions, allocate reviewers, etc. GEs may decide to reject papers without obtaining reviews if it is obvious that the paper is out of the area or not of the necessary quality. We do not want to waste reviewers time.
- 4 Choice of Referees**
 It is up to you to choose appropriate referees. Ideally we try to allocate one reviewer who is directly knowledgeable in the area, and a second referee that is in the area or a closely related area but someone who perhaps takes a slightly broader view. We are keen to involve new people in reviewing for ISJ so choose people you (the GEs) know and are happy with their expertise in the area and experience of appropriate reviewing. If you need to find new appropriate reviewers you might consider using the list of MIS faculty on

ISWorld which has indications of areas of expertise on which you can search. Also see the Editors Website 'Referee Hall of Fame' for a list of people the AEs have particularly praised. Of course use with caution as they are already well used! You can also use anyone from the Editorial Board. If necessary we can help with reviewers. We also have a list of about 150 referees that we have used in the past - let me know if you need some from this source. Another source of reviewers is authors of relevant papers in past issues of ISJ. The Manuscript Central system will enable you to find other ISJ reviewers that have been used in the past.

5 Organisation of reviews

On receipt of submissions and after the expiration of the deadline the papers should be sent to reviewers. A minimum of two reviews should be obtained for each paper. The choice of referees is somewhat flexible. See the *Guidelines for ISJ Reviewers* document (available on the ISJ Editors website), which you might want to send to reviewers, or you might want to construct your own for the SI. Obviously papers should make contributions to the topic area of the SI and reviewers should include recognised experts in the topic of the SI. The general standards and refereeing procedures of the ISJ should be adopted. Essentially this means that Papers should be double blind refereed, i.e. reviewed anonymously by two suitable and experienced people, with the identity of the authors not made known to the reviewers nor the reviewers made known to the authors. This is taken care of by the Manuscript Central system. A set of standard documents and letters are available (some on the Editors Website) for use or as guidelines/templates for communicating with referees and authors. See the ISJ website for more details and further 'author guidelines' at <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journals/isj/>. GEs should familiarise themselves with these instructions and procedures.

- The system will track all activity for you. On receipt of a referees report you will be notified and referees are automatically thanked. At this time you might wish to remind the second referee.

- On receipt of a second review you can make a recommendation based on referees reports (see variety of letters). Consult with ISJ Editors if you wish. Few referees like to reject they prefer to ask for 'revise and resubmit' or 'make major changes'. If both referees suggests reject we usually do. If both referees ask for 'revise and resubmit' then it is often really a rejection. However, these are matters of judgement. If in doubt ask for a third review or get a third opinion (a colleague - usually quite quick) (probably outside of the system). Also few referees accept without any changes, so most papers that we accept in principle are 'accept subject to minor changes' or 'accept subject to major changes'. The changes have to be specified in a letter to the authors. We tend to say things like "the Editors agree with referee No XX on point X and ask you to particularly address these issues in your revision". Ask for the any revision to be returned by a specific date and ask authors to specify the changes they have made and how they address the referees comments.

- ISJ is particularly concerned that papers reflect an ‘international’ view including the references. So papers with a purely parochial set of references, e.g. just US, should be encouraged to look at a wider literature.

- It is of **great importance** that relevant and appropriate papers already published in ISJ are referenced by authors in the SI. We believe that a SI should develop upon the literature already published, and if some of this has been in ISJ then this should be acknowledged. We often find that authors do not do this and it is the responsibility of GEs to ensure they do. The standard review document asks for referees to check this. Relevant papers in ISJ can be easily searched for using the Wiley InterScience website – see above.

6 Acceptance of papers

On receipt of revised papers make decisions (All decisions are subject to the approval of the ISJ Editors and so any communication should only talk about “potential acceptance subject to the approval of the ISJ Editors”. Acceptance should be based on the reviews received, i.e. any decision can be justified, but it also depends on the balance of the proposed issue – see below. The GE needs to make sure that papers are adequately referenced. We are very keen to be seen as an international IS journal so the literature referenced needs to be international.

Ensure papers are of required length. Our stated maximum is 7,000 words. However, papers often come in longer than this so we usually ask authors to reduce the word length as part of the revision process. In certain circumstances we may allow longer papers, for example if it is a review paper or there are special factors.

In communication with authors do not make absolute commitments. Say something like we wish to accept this paper for the special issue of ISJ “subject to the agreement of the Editors”. The Editors of ISJ have the final decision on the contents of the SI. The ISJ Editors are happy to advise on any decisions.

7 Rejection of papers

Rejection should be handled sympathetically. Try and emphasise any positive as well as the negative elements. Any papers that are thought to be of high quality but not relevant to the special issue, or that cannot be accommodated, should be forwarded to the Managing Editor for consideration for a normal issue of the ISJ. No commitments to publication should be given to the authors.

8 Construction of the SI

The SI as a whole needs to be balanced. Papers should not all be on the exact same topic within the general area of the SI. Normally there are five papers in an issue (sometimes only 4 if they are substantial, but we prefer 5). Each issue of ISJ is around 116 pages and should not be exceeded. The size of an issue in terms of number of papers, number of words, etc. should be communicated to the SEI (who will consult with the ME) as soon as it is known. Paper size and overall issue size is a key constraint. Before accepting papers the Managing

Editor should be consulted as to publication requirements, copyright agreements, etc.

9 Write the Editorial

It is the responsibility of the GEs to write the Editorial for the SI, which can be an extended Editorial, i.e. more than just a summary of the papers but a review and positioning Editorial. The Editorial is normally 3 to 5 pages and attempts to look at the importance and content of the area of the theme and then positions the contents of the SI as a contribution to the area. Normally the Editorial will include key references in the area, i.e. it is a brief review of the area of the special topic (Please particularly ensure that relevant articles published in ISJ are referenced). Also the Editorial should contain a brief summary of each paper and its particular contribution (each paper summarised should be referenced at the end of the editorial). You might take a look at recent previous SI Editorials in ISJ. The GEs also need to each complete a Copyright Form in respect of the Editorial they write.

10 Feedback to Referees

GEs should upon completion of the process, i.e. when all papers are accepted or rejected, provide feedback to referees. This normally means providing all reviews of a paper to all reviewers. Accepted papers can have the author names revealed to the reviewers at this stage but not if rejected.

11 Progress Reporting

The SIE should be kept informed of progress, e.g. number of submissions received, number rejected without review, number sent for review, number accepted, names of referees used, etc. The first progress report should be provided shortly after the deadline for submissions has passed giving information on the number of submissions received. Any problems should obviously be communicated immediately.

12 Editorial Review of SI

Once the issue has been put together it should be sent together with the Editorial to the SI Editor for approval. As mentioned above the ISJ Editors reserve the right of veto.

After this the Managing Editor (ME) and the ISJ Office take the issue through to publication, liaising with the Blackwell-Wiley and the printers. All GEs will receive copies of the Special Issue upon publication.

NB: We try to brand the journal as 'ISJ' so any calls for papers or anything you send out should use 'Information Systems Journal (ISJ)' in the first reference and then ISJ thereafter. Also please use the ISJ logo on communications (see image above).

We hope the above does not look too daunting. Good luck and we look forward to an excellent special issue. Please contact me if you have questions or wish to discuss anything.

We would like to thank all our GEs for their great efforts and the contribution they make to the success of ISJ. We are very grateful to them. If GEs have any comments

regarding this document, and in particular ways to improve it, please provide your comments to me. Many thanks.

Jan Ondrus (ondrus@essec.fr)
Special Issues Editor

ISJ Editors: David Avison & Guy Fitzgerald
Managing Editor: Philip Powell (mnspp@management.bath.ac.uk)
Administrator: Kathryn Baxter (isj@brunel.ac.uk)

ISJ Editors Website – <http://www.isj-editors.org> - See information on Special Issues in various places on the site

Document Updated 04/08/10