Professional Development Workshop (PDW)

Creating a more reliable and cumulative knowledge ecosystem:
Meeting senior editors of five leading journals

Submission: 11527 | Sponsor(s): (AAT)
Scheduled: Sunday, Aug 7 2016 12:45PM - 3:45PM
Anaheim Marriott in Platinum Ballroom 2

Primary Sponsor: All-Academy Theme
Interested Groups: All AOM Members

Chair and Organizer:
Victor Zitian Chen
University of North Carolina-Charlotte

Confirmed Panelists:

Kris Byron
Georgia State University
Associate Editor, Academy of Management Review

John A. Cantwell
Rutgers University
Editor-in-Chief, Journal of International Business Studies

Gilad Chen
University of Maryland
Editor, Journal of Applied Psychology

Christopher Marquis
Cornell University
Associate Editor, Administrative Science Quarterly

Arun Rai
Georgia State University
Editor-in-Chief, MIS Quarterly

Truth is found neither in the thesis nor the antithesis, but in an emergent synthesis which reconciles the two.
-- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

Abstract

Senior editors of five leading management journals (AMR; ASQ; JAP; JIBS; MISQ) discuss potential editorial policies that help to create a reliable and cumulative knowledge ecosystem. The focus is on six growing concerns about the reliability and accumulation of management knowledge: (1) weak fulfillment of original scientific and interdisciplinary missions outlined in the 1950s; (2) limitations of single disciplines in their narrow theoretical focus; (3) inevitable convergence to only the “interesting” and “counterintuitive” knowledge; (4) lack of motivations for replications and synthesis; (5) over-generalizations of theories and findings; (6) lack of objective views of research subjects due to disciplinary-related value biases.

Represented journals: AMR, ASQ, JAP, JIBS, MISQ
**Background**

Management is a subject of practice, rather than a discipline of liberal arts, sciences or humanities. Researchers started studying management as a way to understand how to improve managerial performance and how to incorporate such an understanding into better management education and training. Historically, knowledge about management was generated inductively, based on insights of practitioners and concerned with concrete, real management problems (for instance, see Taylor (1911)). While this approach is very effective in finding patterns and generating propositions based on rich observations and narratives, scholars started questioning the quality of our knowledge based only on such approaches. Starting in 1950s, in response to the growing questioning as to the quality of incidences, cases, and descriptions of existing practices as the primary knowledge source, one major mission of management education and scholarship has been the introduction of more scientific and discipline-based theories, discoveries, and methodologies into the management field (for background reviews, see, for instance, Gordon and Howell (1959) and Pierson (1959), sponsored respectively by Ford and Carnegie Foundations).

While no one would deny that management is partially an art and practice, featured by particularities, idiosyncrasies, and even luck, there was a strong demand in academia for creating rigorous, scientific outlets for people to share their arguments and tests about general principles and theories of management as a science. Indeed, pursuing the generalizable and theorized portion of management knowledge is much more grounded within the founding mission of the university, where scholars and educators are hosted — that is, “teaching universal knowledge” (Newman, 1852, p. i). In this particular context, many new refereed academic journals were created, including notably *Administrative Science Quarterly* (ASQ) in 1956, *Academy of Management Journal* (AMJ) in 1958, *Journal of International Business Studies* (JIBS) in 1970, *Journal of Management* (JOM) in 1975, *Academy of Management Review* (AMR) in 1976, *MIS Quarterly* (MISQ) in 1977, *Journal of Operations Management* (JOPM) in 1980, *Strategic Management Journal* (SMJ) in 1980, and *Organization Science* (OS) in 1990. Although these journals disagree on some of the scientific principles such as generalizability, reductionism, and abstraction, they unanimously position themselves in part as a hub and reservoir for knowledge flows from related fundamental disciplines (e.g., economics, political science, psychology, and sociology, etc.) and basic sciences (e.g., behavioral sciences, mathematics and statistics, etc.) into the management field. These journals have maintained very strong influence in the management field. In fact, only these nine journals have been ranked as top 10 journals by Journal Citation Reports® (JCR) in the category of management for at least five times in the last 10 years. All of them but JOM are also listed in *Financial Times 45 Journals* (FT45) and University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) Ranking, both of which are widely used to measure journal quality by elite business schools worldwide.

**Embracing sciences and interdisciplinary perspectives as a founding mission**

Our elite management journals today were founded on a mission of embracing sciences and interdisciplinary perspectives. Specifically, in the first issue of ASQ, drawing analogues of applied sciences, the founding editor James Thompson (1956, p. 110) notes that “[e]ffective channels have been built for funneling new knowledge [from biology and physical sciences] into medicine and engineering. By contrast, administration is relatively isolated from the basic social sciences.” In the first editorial preface of AMJ, the founding editor Paul Dauten (1958, p. 6) positions the journal in part “for a sound application of the scientific method to the solution of managerial problems”. Slightly differently, JIBS has been positioning itself not only as a funnel to

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1 I should note that initially I also included two other highly regarded management journals, *Management Science* (MS) and *Journal of Applied Psychology* (JAP). But they do not seem to be appropriate comparisons because they were not direct responses to the 1950s’ scientific- and interdisciplinary movement for the general management field. Specifically, JAP was created mainly as a psychology outlet by American Psychological Association (APA) in 1917, and MS mainly an outlet focusing on operations research and management science by Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS) in 1954 – both fields were considered frontier disciplines themselves outside general management. Both journals, however, have been active channels between their frontier disciplines (psychology and MS/OR respectively) into certain levels and dimensions of management studies.
welcome disciplinary knowledge, but also as a bridge to close gaps between related disciplines (for a recent assessment of selected management journals’ impact on bridging disciplines, see Cantwell, Piepenbrink, and Shukla (2014)). Notably, the 1959 founding Constitution of the Association of Business Education in International Business (AEIB) (the predecessor of Academy of International Business (AIB) and the creator JIBS) defines its objective to be “[transcending] the boundaries of single academic disciplines and management functions to enhance business education and practice” (AIB, 1959). Although JOM did not explicitly stress the importance of sciences and disciplines in its founding editorial statement, its first issue closes with a review article of graduate business education (Wheelen & Hunger, 1975), which applauded Fredrick W. Taylor (1911)’s *The Principles of Scientific Management* as a core mission of management academicians. In AMR’s first *Editorial Comment*, Max S. Wortman Jr. (1976, p. 4) defines the first category of welcomed submissions as “theoretical synthesis, […] which integrates the field of management with other non-management disciplines”. Although positioned initially as a communicator among both practitioners and academicians, MISQ from the beginning has included a major section focusing exclusively on theoretical and testable scientific research (Dickson, 1977). In fact, since 1999, MISQ excluded the Application Section and started focusing primarily on publishing research articles. JOPM was built on founding objectives that emphasize “enhancement of interdisciplinary research” (Krajewski, 1980, p. vi) and “capitalize on our close relations with MS/OR” (Buffa, 1980, p. 3). Calling for research that is “logical”, “testable”, “generalizable” and “rooted in scientific method” is also found in SMJ’s founding editorial policies (Schendel, Ansoff, & Channon, 1980, p. 5). The last journal in the list, OS explains in its founding editorial essay that the challenge of the journal “is to uphold the tradition of rigorous science, while simultaneously embracing multiple disciplinary perspectives and methods” (Daft & Lewin, 1990, p. 8).

**Growing concerns about the lack of reliability and accumulation of our knowledge**

The first concern is about the actual fulfilment of the original mission, that is, the formation of scientific, tested or testable knowledge about management and how effective our management research has embraced new knowledge generated in related frontier disciplines. In fact, as a proxy for knowledge source of management publications, only a small fraction of citation sources of the publications in 2014 in the aforementioned nine leading management journals were peer-reviewed journals outside management/business (Chen, 2015) (see Figure 1). Among these cited non-management/business peer-reviewed journal articles, the vast majority were published more than 10 years ago (Chen, 2015) (see Figure 2).

**Figure 1. Knowledge Inflows in ASQ, AMJ, AMR, OS, SMJ, JIBS, JOM, JOPM, and MISQ by Discipline, Volume 1990 vs. Volume 2014**

![Knowledge Inflows Diagram](image)

Notes: Inner circle is for year Volume 1990; External circle is for year Volume 2014.
Source: Chen (2015).
Figure 2. 2014 Cites by ASQ, AMJ, AMR, OS, SMJ, JIBS, JOM, JOPM, and MISQ Made to Non-Management/Business Disciplines, by Knowledge Newness

Notes: Only 34.41% of cites from non-management/business peer-reviewed journals were articles published in the last 10 years (2005–2014). Given that 66.7% of all cites by top 9 journals were made to frequently-visited peer-reviewed journals and only 39.5% of these were made to non-management/business journals, only 9.07% of all cites were made to articles published in the last ten years (2005–2014) in frequently-visited non-management/business peer-reviewed journals.

Source: The author’s calculation based on Web of Science.

The second concern is about the limitation of any disciplinary perspective in its relatively narrow theoretical focus and incomplete explanatory power, in contrast to the practical need for a holistic understanding of management. Litchfield (1956, p. 4) raised in the first issue of ASQ two concerns about the import of non-management disciplines that “most of the new thought has come from the fields of mathematics, engineering, anthropology, sociology, or some one of the emerging behavioral sciences” and that “these additions to our knowledge have been concerned with selected parts of administration and not with the whole”.

The third concern is about the inevitable convergence to only the “interesting” and “counterintuitive” parts of management rather than unfolding the complete reality (Bettis, Ethiraj, Gambardella, Helfat, & Mitchell, 2015). As Thompson predicted in the founding issue of ASQ (1956: 110-111), “[a]tention tends to be caught by those items of our experience which are not usual, expected, or obvious. Those activities or procedures within administrative practices which ‘work perfectly well’ are seldom noticed. Yet if they are analyzed and described in abstract, theoretical terms, they may well form the backbone of a comprehensive theory which will help immensely in discovering other, currently unknown, relationships. It is through understanding of the known elements that the construction of the periodic table was possible, and this in turn permitted chemists to predict the existence of unknown elements, some of which are only now being found. An administrative science must explain the obvious as well as the rate of difficult relationships.”

The fourth concern is about the lack of motivations for replications and synthesis of fragmented knowledge into an integrated knowledge system (Bettis, Ethiraj, Gambardella, Helfat, & Mitchell, 2015). Chen (2015) has examined all the empirical studies published in the aforementioned nine elite management journals.
in 1990 and 2014 and found that (excluding meta-analyses) only about 30% in 1990 and 43% in 2014 have used publicly available data or have made their data publicly available for reproduction or integration with other data. In addition, as a proxy for knowledge synthesis, only 1.58% and 0.79% of research articles published between 1991 and 2014 in these journals were systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses respectively.

The fifth concern is about over generalizations of theories and findings which are in fact based on contingent samples or contexts. They lack a rigorous contextualization by specific institutional boundaries such as human values, cultures, economic systems, and legal-political regimes (Bettis et al., 2015).

The sixth concern is about the lack of a positive-theoretical and objective view of research subjects due to disciplinary biases of the researchers. Researchers tend to impose the values and end goals that are relevant to their training backgrounds rather than those that are most salient to the research subjects (Campbell, 2004). For instance, scholars with the economics training tend to choose financial-economic goals (i.e., a rational choice-based, calculative, net cost-benefit logic) as the dependent variable to measure the overall performance of an organization, whereas under the organization under their study, the collective interest from an positive-theoretic and objective view should be a reconciled reflection of various internal struggles among different types of shareholder- and stakeholder interests, including economic values (e.g., financial blockholders, diffused public shareholders), socioemotional wealth (e.g., individual, and family blockholders), socio-political and public interests (e.g., government blockholders), as well as joy, self-actualization, and social recognition of employees and so on.

Interests to ATT: Time for a reappraisal and institutional reform?

This session seeks to revisit the mission of our scientific journals in management and to discuss potential editorial policies that help to create a reliable and cumulative knowledge ecosystem. Given the scope of the panel and the quality of participants, this panel is of interest to all members at AOM.

Now more than sixty years after the 1950s scientific/disciplinary movement in management sponsored by, for instance, Ford and Carnegie Foundations, is it time now to assess our journal institutions (e.g., research cultures, norms, and formal editorial policies, etc.) against the original mission and to discuss concrete and feasible ways of institutional changes regarding the emerging concerns today? For instance, first, to better funnel new knowledge from frontier, scientific disciplines, shall we organize joint issues with non-management journals? But what benefits can frontier disciplines gain from interacting with the management scholarship? Second, to curb the knowledge distortion by the “interesting” and “counterintuitive” bias, shall we, and how shall we, construct a knowledge backbone system (like physics and chemistry, etc.), in which a complete management knowledge structure is laid out first for both “usual” and “interesting” knowledge to link itself into the same system? Or how to let this complete system spontaneously emerge? Third, to address the limited theoretical and explanatory power of single disciplines, shall we invite more phenomenon- or topic- (as opposed to discipline-) driven issues that specifically call for cross-disciplinary insights? Fourth, to address the lack of replication and synthesis problem, shall we institute a formal editorial policy for mandating replicability and data disclosure, like many frontier disciplinary journals do?2 Shall we also build a central data depository in which all data used by accepted/published papers are aggregated, organized, maintained, and accumulating for future public uses? How should we define the property rights of such data and the transaction policy if public

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2 For instance, quoted from the editorial policies of Econometrica, a leading economics journal, “Econometrica has the policy that all empirical, experimental and simulation results must be replicable. Therefore, authors of accepted papers must submit data sets, programs, and information on empirical analysis, experiments and simulations that are needed for replication and some limited sensitivity analysis. (Authors of experimental papers can consult the more detailed posted information regarding submission of Experimental papers.) This material will be made available through the Econometrica supplementary material web-page. Submitting this material indicates that you license users to download, copy, and modify it; when doing so such users must acknowledge all authors as the original creators and Econometrica as the original publishers.”
uses are not a viable option? Shall we also centralize all the theoretical constructs and logic flows into a digitalized and virtualized knowledge network so that scholars doing systematic reviews can more easily find, combine, and compare theoretical constructs and their logic relations in a one-stop shop? Shall we also use this knowledge network to automatically spot contradictions and paradoxes? Lastly, while we should continue advancing our knowledge about human natural-and social universals and how they apply in managerial behaviors, shall we at the same time require all publications to have careful discussions on contextual boundaries not only as a ceremonial, limitation statement but as a technique problem that should be taken care of into research designs?

Format

The PDW will take the format of a moderated roundtable discussion among the editors, followed by a genuine interaction with the audience (i.e., meet senior editors). We propose to include 15 minutes opening presentation by Victor, one-hour roundtable (about 10 minutes on each of the six concerns) and another hour and 45 minutes’ interaction with the audience — opinions from junior researchers are especially welcomed. The editor roundtable and audience interaction can be infused together. Different from other editorial events at the AOM Meeting, which typically focus on orientations of each particular journal’s existing policies, the purpose of this workshop is to try to discuss suggestions among leading journals as a field on new editorial policies that foster and maintain knowledge accumulation and to suggest actionable work plans. The purpose is both more comprehensive and more forward-looking.

Confirmation Letters

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: Belle Rose Ragins [mailto:ragins@uwm.edu]
Date: 2015 12 9  22:49

Dear Victor

Thank you so much for the invitation to join the panel! I’m already at my PDW limit - but per your note below — let me pass the invitation along to my team of AEs to see if they can help!

Best

Belle

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: Kris Byron <kbyron@gsu.edu>
Date: Wed, Dec 16, 2015 at 10:00 AM

Dear Victor,
I am happy to represent AMR on this panel.

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: Arun Rai <arun.rai@eci.gsu.edu>
Date: Tue, Dec 15, 2015 at 6:40 PM

Dear Victor,
Thank you very much for the invitation. I apologize for the slow response.
The PDW sounds interesting. I will be happy to participate. Thank you for the initiative.

Best regards,
Arun

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: Jerry Davis <gfdavis@umich.edu>
Date: Tue, Dec 15, 2015 at 10:55 AM

Chris Marquis would be delighted to attend on behalf of ASQ.
Jerry

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: Christopher Marquis <cmarquis@cornell.edu>
Date: Tue, Dec 15, 2015 at 12:02 PM

Thanks Victor and look forward to the future communication!
Best,
Chris

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: Gilad Chen <giladchen@rhsmith.umd.edu>
Date: Wed, Dec 9, 2015 at 4:15 PM

Victor,
Happy to participate in this session, so long as it does not conflict with AMJ's board meeting.
Thanks,
Gilad

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: John Cantwell <cantwell@business.rutgers.edu>
Date: Wed, Dec 9, 2015 at 3:09 PM

Hi Victor

I'd be happy to join this PDW, so long as it doesn't clash with the panel we were also planning to have(!).

John

References


