Information Systems Journal Call for Papers

Special Issue: Frontiers in Digital Transformation Research

Special Issue Editors:

- Abayomi Baiyere, Copenhagen Business School
- Elaine Mosconi, Université de Sherbrooke Business School
- Lauri Wessel, European New School of Digital Studies
- Marta Indulska, University of Queensland Business School

Background

'Digital transformation' has become a key concern with impactful consequences for business leaders, individuals, and policymakers alike (Pappas et al. 2019; Schneider & Kokshagina 2021, Sebastian et al. 2017, Zimmer et al. 2020). While these impacts are undoubtedly important to the actors involved and may indeed transform them in diverse ways, an important question is to what extent 'digital transformation' can usefully inform or reorient existing knowledge or create new frontiers in IS research? After all, the IS discipline has brought to the fore a rich arsenal of theoretical toolkits, methods, and philosophical approaches suited to study technology-related changes. Is digital transformation so or sufficiently new that it calls for us to revise or even rethink these theories? Or is it perhaps a more nuanced question about to what extent these prior theories apply and to what extent we can learn something new from studying digital transformation through prior lenses?

Some answers have begun to emerge in recent IS research. For example, it has been argued that digital transformation calls for new logics of business process management (Baiyere et al. 2020) and that digital transformation differs from IT-enabled organizational transformation in that the former alters value propositions and identities of organizations in a different fashion (Wessel et al. 2021). In addition, research suggests that the value perceived, generated, or delivered in the digital transformation journey could motivate organizations to become more purpose-driven (Bordeleau et al. 2021). Others, in turn, have proposed to understand digital transformation using more established toolkits and methods rooted in research on organizational change (Vial 2019). In other words, there are a set of issues emerging that are related to the larger topic of 'digital transformation'. While these are important issues that should be considered from organizational, societal and individual perspectives, there is a plethora of unexplored topics that call for investigating new frontiers in research on digital transformations. We herald a shifting baseline (Davison and Tarafdar 2018), where the digital phenomena that occupy us gradually overflow our conventional concepts and models (Baygi et al. 2021). Hence the need for studies and theorizing that opens up new frontiers in our conceptualization, content, level of analysis, and process of digital transformation.

Conceptualization frontiers: To a casual observer, digital transformation is merely a new name for IT transformation. The question remains as to what extent – if at all – this is conceptually and analytically accurate or useful? If they are the same, what value does such an exercise bring if we are merely pouring old wines in new bottles? Recent research has argued that digital transformation should be considered distinct from IT transformation (Baiyere et al. 2020; Wessel et al. 2021). However, we lack the conceptual vocabulary for capturing what is distinctive about digital transformation.

Content frontiers: Digital transformation is often linked to the adoption and integration of new digital technologies. However, digital transformation goes beyond just technology (Kane 2019, Wessel et al. 2021) and encompasses a holistic understanding of the metamorphosis of an organization (Chanias et al. 2019, Warner and Wäger 2019). Furthermore, recent studies show us that, on its own, implementing or adopting a technology does not equate to digital transformation (Ross et al. 2019). Rather, it is the leverage of digital technology in a particular context, which may also necessitate changes in organizational/societal structure, culture, etc., that allows people to define new ways to create value in an emerging and continuously changing environment (Baiyere et al. 2020, Bordeleau et al. 2021). Even then, the role of digital technologies in digital transformation is beset with paradoxes and impositions (Wessel et al. 2021, Wimelius et al. 2020). Nevertheless, we have only just begun to scratch the surface in terms of the essence and polycentric role of digital technology in relation to other pivotal components (e.g., the people) of digital transformation.

Level of analysis frontiers: Much IS research is centered on exploring technology-related questions in organizations. However, computing is increasingly shifting outside organizations (Yoo 2010) as our everyday lives have become permeated by technologies that produce vast amounts of data. This leads to questions that address how digital transformation plays out in organizing outside of organizations – for example, in ecosystems (Tan et al. 2020) and in processes of societal change (Majchrzak et al. 2016) or going about our everyday lives. For example, how digital technologies affect individuals in their lives and blur personal and professional aspects have been a topic of interest in IS research (Ayyagari et al. 2011; Jensen 2018; Tarafdar et al. 2014). However, individuals often have little control over the digital transformation and digital disruption of their context, since the nature of work is changing in many sectors and training and upskilling are now a lifelong learning matter. Many questions are still open, such as: Is digital transformation leading to a more inclusive workforce/economy, or is it exacerbating existing socio-economic and geo-political divides? How can workers and employees in sectors that are becoming completely digital be supported? In essence, as the dominant level of analysis of transformation in IS research has historically been the organization, questions emerge as to how our existing theories apply at other levels of analysis, such as individuals, society or ecosystems. We suggest that this provides an opportunity to open new frontiers.

Process frontiers: How digital transformation unfolds is a process question that holds the key to unpacking the antecedents, inner-workings, and outcomes of concern to both scholars and practitioners (Chanias et al. 2019, Wessel et al. 2021). Uncovering the frontiers of digital transformation from a process perspective calls attention to understanding different conceptualizations, content, and levels of analysis. However, there is a dire need for conceptual and practical toolkits to make sense of the different facets of the digital transformation process. Studies in this area should enlighten us on the impetus, challenges, and configuration of attributes that underpin a digital transformation process.

Expectations

In this call, we motivate research that shifts the frontier of knowledge on digital transformation. Specifically, we seek papers that present new ways of conceptualizing, studying, and understanding digital transformation. In addition, papers accepted in this issue should have the potential to mobilize future research on specific aspects of digital transformation. In this regard, the papers should seek to chart a path for how we as a community should think about digital transformation going forward.

Illustrative focus areas

We welcome papers that engage with digital transformation from different theoretical perspectives, different levels (individual, organizational, societal, etc.), and across different contexts. Different methodological and theoretical approaches are encouraged.

Some potential topics that could be relevant for this special issue include, but are not limited to:

- Delineating digital transformation and IT transformation from different levels of analysis
- Unveiling the underlying practices and process of digital transformation
- Exploring multiple value options in digital transformation contexts
- Relationship with related concepts such as digital innovation, digital entrepreneurship
- Uncovering the essence of digital technology in digital transformation
- Conceptual and theoretical perspectives on digital transformation
- Critical perspectives on digital transformation
- Unintended consequences, paradoxes, trade-offs arising during and from digital transformation
- Impacts of digital transformation on work - individuals, organizations, industry and societal perspectives (workforce, competence, culture)

Indicative Timeline

| Submission deadline | 30th June, 2022 |
| Reviews due | 31st October, 2022 |

Associate Editors

- Amany Elbana, *Royal Holloway University of London*
- Christoph Breidbach, *University of Queensland*
- Daniel Furstenau, *Copenhagen Business School*
- Dirk Hovorka, *University of Sydney*
- Felix Tan, *University of New South Wales*
- Hannes Rothe, *ICN Business School & Digital Entrepreneurship Hub*
- Ida Asadi Someh, *University of Queensland*
- Ina Sebastian, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*
- Janina Sundermeier, *Freie Universität Berlin*
- Jan Recker, *University of Hamburg*
- Kai Riemer, *University of Sydney*
- Likoebe Maruping, *Georgia State University*
- Nigel Melville, *University of Michigan*
- Ning Su, *University Of Western Ontario*
- Panos Constantinides, *University of Manchester*
- Paul Drews, *Leuphana Universität Lüneburg*
- Samuel Fosso-Wamba, *Toulouse Business School*
- Sebastian Boell, *University of Sydney*
- Shirley Gregor, *Australian National University*
- Stefan Henningsson, *Copenhagen Business School*
- Thomas Hess, *Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München*
- Yogesh Dwivedi, *Swansea University*

References

Ayyagari, R., Grover, V., & Purvis, R. (2011). Technostress: Technological antecedents and implications. *MIS Quarterly*, 831-858.

Baiyere, A., Salmela, H., & Tapanainen, T. (2020). Digital transformation and the new logics of business process management. *European Journal of Information Systems*, *29*(3), 238-259.

Baygi, R., Introna, L., & Hultin, L. (2021). Everything Flows: Studying Continuous Socio-Technological Transformation in a Fluid and Dynamic Digital World. *Management Information Systems Quarterly*, *45*(1), 423-452.

Bordeleau, F. È., Santa-Eulalia, L. A., & Mosconi, E. (2021, January). Digital Transformation Framework: Creating Sensing, Smart, Sustainable and Social (S^ 4) Organisations. In *Proceedings of the 54th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (p. 4610).

Chanias, S., Myers, M. D., & Hess, T. (2019). Digital transformation strategy making in pre-digital organizations: The case of a financial services provider. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, *28*(1), 17-33.

Davison, R. M., & Tarafdar, M. (2018). Shifting baselines in information systems research threaten our future relevance. *Information Systems Journal*, *28*(4), 587-591.

Jensen, T. B. (2018). Digital transformation of work. *Scandinavian Journal of Information Systems*, *30*(2), 27-40.

Kane, G. (2019). The technology fallacy: people are the real key to digital transformation. *Research-Technology Management*, *62*(6), 44-49.

Majchrzak, A., Markus, M. L., & Wareham, J. (2016). Designing for digital transformation: Lessons for information systems research from the study of ICT and societal challenges. *MIS Quarterly*, *40*(2), 267-277.

Pappas, I. O., Mikalef, P., Dwivedi, Y., Jaccheri, L., Krogstie, J., & Mäntymäki, M. (2019). *Digital transformation for a sustainable society in the 21st century*. Springer International Publishing.

Schneider, S., & Kokshagina, O. (2021). Digital transformation: What we have learned (thus far) and what is next. *Creativity and Innovation Management*. 30 (2). 384-411

Sebastian, I. M., Ross, J. W., Beath, C., Mocker, M., Moloney, K. G., & Fonstad, N. O. (2017). How Big Old Companies Navigate Digital Transformation. *MIS Quarterly Executive*, *16*(3), 6.

Tan, F. T., Ondrus, J., Tan, B., & Oh, J. (2020). Digital transformation of business ecosystems: Evidence from the Korean pop industry. *Information Systems Journal*, *30*(5), 866-898.

Tarafdar, M., Pullins, E. B., & Ragu-Nathan, T. S. (2015). Technostress: negative effect on performance and possible mitigations. *Information Systems Journal,* 25(2), 103-132.

Vial, G. (2019). Understanding digital transformation: A review and a research agenda. *The journal of strategic information systems*, *28*(2), 118-144.

Warner, K. S., & Wäger, M. (2019). Building dynamic capabilities for digital transformation: An ongoing process of strategic renewal. *Long Range Planning*, *52*(3), 326-349.

Wessel, L., Baiyere, A., Ologeanu-Taddei, R., Cha, J., & Blegind-Jensen, T. (2021). Unpacking the difference between digital transformation and IT-enabled organizational transformation. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, *22*(1), 102-129.

Wimelius, H., Mathiassen, L., Holmström, J., & Keil, M. (2021). A paradoxical perspective on technology renewal in digital transformation. *Information Systems Journal*, *31*(1), 198-225.

Yoo, Y. (2010). Computing in everyday life: A call for research on experiential computing. *MIS quarterly*, 34(2), 213-231.

Zimmer, M. P., Baiyere, A., & Salmela, H. (2020). Digital Workplace Transformation: The Importance of Deinstitutionalising the Taken for Granted. In *European Conference of Information Systems*.