

Forums For Accounting Information Systems Scholars

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Abstract

Previous studies ranking the quality of journals as a measure of the research contributions of accounting faculty have not served accounting information systems faculty well due to one or more of four problems: (1) the ranking included several highly-ranked accounting journals that publish few, if any, articles in the systems area; (2) the results did not include a separate ranking for those who teach in the systems area; (3) the survey did not include a sufficient number of journals from the information systems area that afford quality publishing opportunities for accounting faculty; and (4) the survey was completed by many accounting faculty who have little knowledge of or interest in the accounting systems area.

This study was undertaken to produce a ranking of journal quality specifically suited to judging the research contributions of accounting systems faculty. The survey methodology addresses each of the four problem areas cited above, resulting in rankings that are substantially different from other studies. Rather than the Accounting Review and Journal of Accounting Research leading the list of ranked journals, this study reveals that, for accounting information systems faculty, a top-ranked publication would appear either in MIS Quarterly or Management Science, both non-accounting journals, as well as Journal of Information Systems (Accounting) or International Journal of Accounting Information Systems (formerly, Advances in Accounting Information Systems).

1.0 Introduction and Motivation

*A*ssessing the quality of an accounting professor's publications is an important aspect of both the promotion and tenure and the annual performance evaluation process. While a number of factors may be considered in each case, one input that is often used is a peer ranking of journal quality. In recent years several studies have been published that render such a ranking for particular disciplines.

While these studies have provided a useful tool for those who must judge the quality of a faculty member's research performance, from the perspective of those who teach in the area of accounting information systems, previous studies in the accounting area have suffered one or more of four limitations:

- The ranking included several highly-ranked accounting journals that publish few, if any, articles in the accounting systems area.
- The results did not include a separate ranking for those who teach primarily in the accounting systems area.
- The survey did not include a sufficient number of journals from the information systems area that afford publishing opportunities for accounting faculty in view of the intersection of the two disciplines.
- The survey was completed by many accounting professors who have little knowledge of or interest in the accounting information systems area.

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Brown and Huefner (1994) found that the top five ranked journals were *The Accounting Review*, *Journal of Accounting Research*, *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, *Contemporary Accounting Research* and *Accounting, Organizations and Society*. While this ranking may be useful in evaluating the research of accounting faculty, generally, a study by Doney (1998) suggests that it may be unrealistic to expect that many AIS professors would publish in these highly-ranked journals. In reviewing the articles published in each of these journals for the years 1993-1997, he found only seven of 622 articles with AIS content. *The Accounting Review* had two of the articles, and *Journal of Accounting Research*, one. Three articles appeared in *Accounting, Organizations & Society*; one in *Contemporary Accounting Research*; and none in *Journal of Accounting and Economics*.

Earlier studies by Arnold (1993) and Hull and Wright (1990) also placed these journals high in the rankings. Both ranked *Journal of Accounting Research* as number one and *The Accounting Review* as number two. Neither the Arnold nor the Hull and Wright study included *Contemporary Accounting Research*, and ranked *Accounting, Organizations and Society* as either number six or seven.

In addition to reporting the ranking for all respondents, Hull and Wright also reported separate rankings for respondents whose area of specialization was either financial, managerial, auditing or tax. In each instance *The Accounting Review* and *Journal of Accounting Research* were ranked either number one or two. There was some difference among the specializations in the inclusion of the three other journals making up the top five. There was no separate tabulation for those specializing in AIS, though by 1990 AIS courses were commonly included in the accounting curriculum. Brown and Huefner also included separate rankings for financial, managerial, auditing and tax with no separate ranking for AIS.

Arnold included several rankings in view of respondent characteristics, including rank, doctoral versus master/bachelors degree granting, and accredited versus overall. Most importantly, Arnold provided a comparison of the overall ranking versus the ranking of those respondents who indicated that their primary research area was information systems. This is a notable contribution of the Arnold study from an AIS perspective.

The Hull and Wright study included 79 journals. Of this total, four could be regarded as information systems journals. Similarly, the Brown and Huefner study, which included 44 journals, included a single journal that could be characterized as a systems journal. On the other hand, the Arnold study included at least a dozen information systems journals among the 80 included in the study. Nevertheless, most of the journals were in the areas of accounting and finance, including several that were specifically in the area of taxation.

The Hull and Wright rankings were based upon 278 responses. The respondents came from a list of participants selected from Hasselback's *Accounting Faculty Directory*. Included were all faculty with an earned doctorate or LLM and teaching at a U.S. institution. Brown and Huefner based their rankings on 181 responses. The respondents came from a sample of senior faculty at institutions named by the 1991 edition of *Business Week* as the best 40 MBA programs. Only full and associate professors were surveyed to ensure that all respondents were experienced academics.

Arnold's study was based upon a total of 138 responses. The respondents were drawn from the Information Systems/Management Advisory Services section of the American Accounting association. The *Accounting Faculty Directory* (Hasselback, 1992) was used to eliminate section members who were graduate students, publishing company representatives or accounting practitioners. Presumably, the faculty members included were of all ranks and included some masters as well as doctorally qualified individuals.

Each of these earlier studies made a valuable contribution to the task of evaluating the research productivity of accounting faculty. But from an AIS faculty member's perspective each suffered from one or more of the limitations initially enumerated. All three studies included *The Accounting Review* and *Journal of Accounting Research*, which earned a rank of one and two, respectively, in all three studies. The *Journal of Accounting and Economics* and *Accounting, Organizations and Society* were also ranked highly in all three of the studies. *Contemporary Accounting Research* was included in one study and also gained a high ranking. Since Doney found at least some evidence that these journals do not appear to be inclined to publish items in the AIS area, it benefits AIS professors lit-

tle to be judged on the basis of whether or not they have published in the “top five” journals in accounting as reported in these studies.

Two of the studies, while providing a separate ranking for financial, managerial, auditing and tax, did not provide a separate ranking for AIS faculty. Given the substantial differences between the traditional accounting areas and systems, these separate rankings provide little benefit to the AIS educator. One study, the Arnold piece, addressed AIS faculty exclusively, and is notable in that respect.

The study by Arnold included a limited number of systems-oriented journals in the list of journals to be ranked, but several others could have been included. With a couple of exceptions the other two studies limited the list of journals to accounting journals.

Finally, two of the studies included respondents from all of the accounting specialty areas. Again in view of the substantial differences between the traditional accounting areas and systems, there may be some risk that the survey was completed by many who had little knowledge of or interest in the accounting information systems area, limiting the usefulness of the ranking for AIS faculty.

2.0 Research Methodology

In view of the above limitations of the prior studies, this study was structured to:

1. Omit certain highly ranked accounting journals that have published very few systems articles in recent years;
2. Limit the study so that the results are relevant to AIS faculty;
3. Include a sufficient number of journals from the information systems area which afford publishing opportunities for AIS faculty;
4. Survey only AIS faculty.

2.1 Journal Selection

An initial list of accounting journals to be used in this study was compiled from the three articles previously discussed. An initial list of MIS journals was obtained from a study of journal rankings for MIS researchers compiled by Hardgrave and Walstrom (1997). The total journal listing that resulted was pared by eliminating duplicates, removing the previously cited A “top five” accounting journals, and eliminating specialty journals in the areas of tax, finance and economics, which are not likely outlets for AIS items.

Using information available in the current issues of *Accounting and Tax Index*, *Cabell’s Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Accounting*, and *Cabell’s Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Management*, many but not all journals which were not blind refereed were stricken from the list. These sources also supplied information with respect to both newer and other appropriate journals that were added to the list from both the accounting and IT areas. The resulting tabulation of journals resulted in a collection of over eighty items.

At this point, the authors decided that the list of journals to be ranked should be limited to fifty items to facilitate the responses of those queried. To delete more items from the list, the above sources were again used, examining the stated publishing interest of the journals. On this basis additional journals were removed resulting in the desired tabulation of fifty items.

Twenty of the journals included in the final list of journals to be ranked can be classified as accounting journals. Another twenty-four can be typed as information technology journals. The remaining six journals can be appropriately described as dual-purpose journals, falling in the intersection of AIS and IT. Using this classification, the final list of journals was compiled and is included in Table 1.

Table 1- Journals Included in Survey**Accounting Journals**

Accounting Educator's Journal
 Accounting Horizons
 Accounting Systems Journal
 Advances in Accounting Information Systems
 Advances in Accounting
 Auditing: A Journal of Practice and Theory
 Behavioral Research in Accounting
 CPA Journal
 Internal Auditing
 Internal Auditor
 Issues in Accounting Education
 Journal of Accountancy
 Journal of Accounting and Computers
 Journal of Accounting Education
 Journal of Accounting, Auditing and Finance
 Journal of Information Systems (Accounting)
 Journal of Management Accounting Research
 Management Accounting/Strategic Finance
 New Accountant
 Review of Accounting Information Systems

IT Journals

Academy of Management Journal
 Academy of Management Review
 Behavior and Information Technology
 Communications of the ACM
 Computers in Human Behavior
 Expert Systems with Applications
 Information and Management
 Information Resources Management Journal
 Information Systems Journal
 Information Systems Management
 Information Systems Research
 Interfaces
 Journal of Computer Information Systems
 Journal of Data Base Management
 Journal of End User Computing
 Journal of Information Systems (Education)
 Journal of Information Technology
 Journal of Information Technology Management
 Journal of Intelligent Information Systems
 Journal of Management Information Systems
 Journal of Strategic Information Systems
 Journal of Systems and Software
 Management Science
 MIS Quarterly

Cross Disciplinary Journals

Academy for Information and Management Sciences Journal
 Accounting, Management and Information Technologies
 Decision Sciences
 Harvard Business Review
 International Journal of Intelligent Systems in Accounting, Finance and Management
 Journal of Applied Business Research

The fifty journals were presented on the survey instrument in alphabetical order, without regard to category, to preclude any response bias related to either discipline or listing order. In addition to rating each of the journals on a scale of 1 (lowest) – 5 (highest), each respondent was asked to supply and rate up to three journals that should have been included. Respondents were also asked to name their top three journals for AIS articles.

3.0 Results**3.1 Demographics**

The population of respondents included senior accounting faculty who teach and research in the systems area, as identified in the current electronic version of Hasselback (2001/2002). In addition to associate and full professors, those who identified themselves as deans, directors or chairs were also included as were those who identified their area specialty as computer. The respondent group was limited to senior faculty on grounds that they were more likely to have compiled a list of journal publications in the systems area as well as more likely to be involved in rank and tenure and periodic performance evaluations.

In what proved to be a case of bad timing the initial mailing to 470 was mailed in early September, 2001. Only 63 useable surveys were returned over the next eight weeks. The returns reflected a shortfall of responses from the East Coast, probably reflecting the frightening anthrax problems in post offices in that area. Accordingly, a follow-up mailing was made in January of 2002. This mailing rendered an additional 38 responses, for a total of 101 responses. The resulting total number of respondents was judged adequate to provide useful information to the probable users of the journal rankings that the responses would yield.

In addition to rating each of the fifty journals, respondents were asked to supply additional information, including: rank, AACBS accreditation, highest degree offered, years teaching AIS course, chair re-

sponsibilities, and number of refereed publications. Table 2 provides a summary of the demographics of the respondents. A little over 60 percent were associate professors. Almost 12 percent had administrative responsibilities. The vast majority (88%) were from AACSB accredited schools. The authors were pleased to note that the mean years teaching AIS was 11.2 years, and that the mean number of blind-refereed publications was 17.9.

Table 2- Respondent Demographics

Rank	61.4% Associate 38.6% Full
Accreditation (AACSB)	88.3% Yes 11.7% No
Highest Degree Offered	3.2% PHD 55.9% Masters 40.9% Bachelors
Percentage Chairman, Dean, or Director	Chairman, Dean, Director 11.8%
Years Teaching	Years Teaching AIS Range (0-35) Mean 11.2
Number of Blind Refereed Publications	Publications (blind review) Range (0 – 150) Mean 17.9

3.2 Journal Familiarity

Table 3 provides information on the survey respondents familiarity with the journals listed in the survey. As discussed in the section on research methodology much care was taken in determining the list of journals to include. The most familiar journals were generally those with an accounting perspective including *Accounting Horizons* and *Journal of Accountancy* tied for the top at 89%. Also, the AAA published journal *Issues in Accounting Education* was familiar to 84% of respondents. Beyond accounting, however, several other journals were familiar to over two-thirds of respondents including *Harvard Business Review* (80%), *Decision Sciences* (77%), *Management Science* (70%), and *MIS Quarterly*

(68%). Among the least familiar were *Journal of Intelligent Information Systems* (19%), *Journal of Systems and Software* and *Journal of Information Technology Management*, both at 21%.

3.3 Journal Ratings

The ranked listing of overall journal ratings is provided in Table 4. Interestingly, there is not a direct correspondence between familiarity and ratings. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), the highest ranked journals were not accounting journals. *MIS quarterly* was ranked first, followed by *Management Science* and *Decision Sciences*. The two most familiar journals, *Accounting Horizons* and *Journal of Accountancy*, were rated relatively lower in the overall journal ratings. The highest rated accounting journal was *Journal of Information Systems (Accounting)*.

Most of the journals were perceived to be of at least moderate quality with one exception. The *New Accountant* was clearly the lowest rated journal (1.82 on a 5 point scale) having a fair degree of separation from the next lowest journal the *Journal of End User Computing* (2.71).

Respondents also were given an opportunity to list any journals they felt should have been included in the survey but were not. For the most part it appears as if our selection process described in the research methodology section was successful. A total of thirteen additional journals were listed as provided in Table 5. However, eight of the thirteen journals were listed by only one individual. Of the five journals listed by multiple respondents, three are the traditionally top ranked journals (*Journal of Accounting Research*, *Contemporary Accounting Research*, and *Accounting Review*), which were intentionally omitted from this survey since they do not tend to publish systems articles. The remaining two should have been included. *Advances in Accounting Behavioral Research*, a relatively new journal, was mentioned by three individuals. The most frequently listed journal was *International Journal of Accounting Information Systems*, cited by approximately 5 percent of respondents. This journal is the successor journal to *Advances in Accounting Information Systems*. In hindsight, the authors should have dual listed this journal under both names.

Table 3-Journal Familiarity

Rank	Journal	Percentage Familiar
1	Accounting Horizons	89%
1	Journal of Accountancy	89%
3	Issues in Accounting Education	84%
4	Harvard Business Review	80%
5	Auditing: A Journal of Practice and Theory	79%
6	Decision Sciences	77%
7	CPA Journal	74%
7	Journal of Information Systems (Accounting)	74%
9	Journal of Accounting Education	71%
10	Management Science	70%
11	Accounting Educator's Journal	69%
12	Journal of Accounting, Auditing, and Finance	68%
12	MIS Quarterly	68%
14	Advances in Accounting Information Systems	64%
14	Behavioral Research in Accounting	64%
16	New Accountant	60%
16	Advances in Accounting	60%
18	Communications of the ACM	58%
18	Journal of Management Accounting Research	58%
20	Internal Auditing	56%
20	Internal Auditor	56%
22	Review of Accounting Information Systems	52%
23	Journal of Applied Business Research	51%
24	Academy of Management Journal	50%
25	Academy of Management Review	46%
25	Information Systems Research	46%
25	Journal of Management Information Systems	46%
28	International Journal of Intelligent Systems in Accounting, Finance, and Management	44%
28	Management Accounting/Strategic Finance	44%
30	Interfaces	42%
31	Journal of Accounting and Computers	41%
32	Information Systems Journal	40%
33	Accounting, Management and Information Technologies	37%
33	Accounting Systems Journal	37%
35	Journal of Computer Information Systems	36%
35	Journal of Data Base Management	36%
37	Information and Management	35%
38	Expert Systems with Application	34%
39	Journal of Information Systems (Education)	32%
40	Journal of End User Computing	28%
41	Journal of Strategic Information Systems	26%
41	Information Resources Management Journal	26%
43	Information Systems Management	24%
44	Academy of Information and Management Sciences Journal	23%
44	Computers in Human Behavior	23%
46	Behavior and Information Technology	22%
46	Journal of Information Technology	22%
48	Journal of Systems and Software	21%
48	Journal of Information Technology Management	21%
50	Journal of Intelligent Information Systems	19%

Table 4-Journal Ratings [1(lowest)-5(highest)]

Rank	Journal	Mean Ratings
1	MIS Quarterly	4.43
2	Management Science	4.31
3	Decision Sciences	4.25
4	Information Systems Research	4.24
4	Journal of Information Systems (Accounting)	4.24
6	Communications of the ACM	4.23
7	Auditing: A Journal of Practice and Theory	4.20
8	Journal of Management Information Systems	4.13
9	Harvard Business Review	3.94
10	Journal of Accounting, Auditing, and Finance	3.90
10	Journal of Management Accounting Research	3.90
12	Issues in Accounting Education	3.87
13	Academy of Management Journal	3.86
14	Behavioral Research in Accounting	3.81
15	Advances in Accounting Information Systems	3.80
15	Information Systems Journal	3.80
17	Accounting Horizons	3.79
18	Academy of Management Review	3.78
19	International Journal of Intelligent Systems in Accounting, Finance, and Management	3.61
20	Advances in Accounting	3.55
21	Accounting, Management and Information Technologies	3.47
22	Expert Systems with Application	3.47
23	Information and Management	3.46
24	Journal of Accounting Education	3.44
25	Journal of Computer Information Systems	3.42
25	Journal of Strategic Information Systems	3.42
27	Interfaces	3.40
28	Journal of Applied Business Research	3.39
29	Journal of Intelligent Information Systems	3.37
29	Behavior and Information Technology	3.27
29	Journal of Accountancy	3.27
32	Information Systems Management	3.25
32	Journal of Information Systems (Education)	3.25
33	Journal of Data Base Management	3.22
35	Review of Accounting Information Systems	3.21
36	Academy of Information and Management Sciences Journal	3.17
37	Accounting Systems Journal	3.14
38	Journal of Information Technology Management	3.10
39	Journal of Information Technology	3.09
40	Internal Auditor	3.07
40	Journal of Accounting and Computers	3.07
40	Management Accounting/Strategic Finance	3.07
43	Accounting Educator's Journal	3.06
44	Journal of Systems and Software	3.00
45	Computers in Human Behavior	2.96
45	Information Resources Management Journal	2.96
47	Internal Auditing	2.93
48	CPA Journal	2.88
49	Journal of End User Computing	2.71
50	New Accountant	1.82

Table 5-Journals Added by Survey Respondents

Journal	Number Mentioned
International Journal of Accounting Information Systems	(5)
Accounting Review	(4)
Advances in Accounting Behavioral Research	(3)
Contemporary Accounting Research	(3)
Journal of Accounting Research	(2)
Journal of Research on Computing Education	(1)
Accounting Organization and Society	(1)
Communications of the Association of Information Systems	(1)
Journal of Accounting and Finance Research	(1)
Journal of the Association of Information Systems	(1)
Journal of Managerial Issues	(1)

3.4 Journal Rankings

Finally, respondents were given an opportunity to provide their rankings of the top three journals. These results are provided in Table 6. Overwhelmingly, *Journal of Information Systems (Accounting)* was perceived to be the top ranked. Over a third of respondents listed it first and a total of over 60% placed it in the top three ranked journals. A non-accounting journal, *MIS Quarterly*, was a somewhat distant second with over 38% ranking it in the top three journals. Almost one-third (29%) of respondents listed *Advances in Accounting Information Systems/International Journal of Accounting Information Systems* as a top journal. The next highest ranked journal, *Decision Sciences*, was perceived to be a top journal by about 20% of respondents. Comparing these results to familiarity in Table 2 and the ratings listed in Table 3 yields some interesting results. *Journal of Information Systems (Accounting)* was only familiar to 74% of respondents, somewhat lower than other journals. It was tied for fourth in overall ratings, but in the respondent listing of the top three ranked journals, it is clearly the perceived top journal. *MIS Quarterly* was only familiar to about two-thirds of respondents yet in overall ratings it was the top journal. However, in the respondent listing of the top three ranked journals, it fell below *Journal of Information Systems (Accounting)*. The top two most familiar journals, *Accounting Horizons* and *Journal of Accountancy*, were listed by only 7.1% and 5% of survey respondents, respectively. Finally, the other significant accounting systems journal is the *International Journal of Accounting Information Systems* (formerly *Advances in Accounting Information Systems*), only 64% were familiar with the journal. In the mean ratings, it was perceived well (in the top third of journals in our survey). However, in the final rankings of top journals, it was ranked quite high. Overall, it was in the top three journals and second only to *Journal of Information Systems* in accounting journals.


Table 6-Top-Three Ranked Journals

Journal	Ranked 1 st	Ranked 2 nd	Ranked 3 rd	Total
Journal of Information Systems (Accounting)	37.5%	10.9%	12.5%	60.9%
MIS Quarterly	14.1%	18.8%	5.4%	38.3%
Advances in Accounting Information Systems/International Journal of Accounting Information Systems	7.9%	14.0%	7.1%	29.0%
Decision Sciences	3.1%	6.3%	12.5%	21.9%
Information Systems Research	6.3%	7.8%	1.8%	15.9%
Review of Accounting Information Systems	3.1%	7.8%	3.6%	14.5%
Issues in Accounting Education	0%	3.1%	7.1%	10.2%
Journal of Management Information Systems	6.3%	0%	3.6%	9.9%
Management Science	4.7%	3.1%	1.8%	9.6%
Journal of Information Systems	4.7%	3.1%	0%	7.8%
Accounting Horizons	0%	0%	7.1%	7.1%
International Journal of Intelligent Systems in Accounting, Finance, and Management	0%	1.6%	5.4%	7.0%
Journal of Accountancy	1.6%	1.6%	1.8%	5.0%
Accounting, Management and Information Technologies	0%	3.1%	1.8%	4.9%
Auditing: A Journal of Practice and Theory	0%	3.1%	1.8%	4.9%
Communications of the ACM	3.1%	0%	3.6%	3.7%
Accounting Educator's Journal	0%	0%	3.6%	3.6%
Behavioral Research in Accounting	0%	0%	3.6%	3.6%
CPA Journal	0%	0%	3.6%	3.6%
Harvard Business Review	0%	1.6%	1.8%	3.4%

4.0 Conclusions

Accounting information systems as a specialty area in accounting education is in its third decade and the most recent issue of the *Accounting Faculty Directory* identifies 844 faculty who identify themselves as systems faculty in the U. S. Nevertheless, in many institutions systems faculty struggle to be recognized as a specialty having research characteristics and publishing opportunities that are quite different than those who specialize in auditing, tax, financial or managerial accounting. One of the difficulties in gaining this recognition has been a suitable ranking of journals that could be used to evaluate the quality of their research.

This study provides a ranking of journals suitable to evaluating the published research of AIS faculty. As anticipated by the authors, the rankings produced by this survey are strikingly different from the previously published rankings of accounting journals that are suitable for evaluating the research of faculty in auditing, tax, financial and managerial accounting, but not for those in the systems area.

It is the hope of the authors, that the results of this study will provide those who must evaluate the research of AIS faculty with a tool that is not only more suitable, but also more fair in making such judgments. 

The authors believe that the results of this study will give those charged with the responsibility of evaluating the research of accounting information systems faculty a more suitable vehicle for making those judgments.

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Notes