

Publishing for Impact: Interdisciplinary Reflections

I. INTRODUCTION

THE TERM research impact is variously defined in academic scholarship, by national and international research funding bodies, publishers, and other relevant entities, although common definitional elements exist. Concise definitions describe the term as relating to academic research that directly and or indirectly guides policymaking processes, by enabling evidence-based decision-making and or improving understanding of a given subject area or areas [1]. Underlying this and all definitions of research impact is the fundamental assumption that the outcome(s) of university research will serve the “public good” [2, p. 1368].

The Australian Research Council [3] defines research impact as “the contribution that research makes to the economy, society, environment or culture, beyond the contribution to academic research,” providing underlying principles for measurement. These principles encompass recognition of the significance of research excellence and the disciplinary and sectoral distinctions that exist in exhibiting impact, among other principles [3]. This definition is aligned with that of other funding bodies, such as the National Science Foundation (NSF). The NSF [4] defines impact for the public good as “broader impacts” considering elements of society, the economy and discovery, while also noting variability in conceptions of impact based on disciplinary perspectives. Similarly, and according to the U.K.’s Research Excellence Framework (REF), impact is defined in view of impact types, and impact types and measurable impact, change or benefit to “quality of life,” independent of the academic setting [5].

The IEEE [6] provides a comparable perspective regarding impact, specifically that which is integrated into the IEEE Strategic Plan 2020-2025, and encompasses knowledge contributions, operationalization, and real-world application toward “the benefit of humanity”, educational contributions, and professional development, in addition to technical, community and policy impacts. Publisher Taylor and Francis [7] concurs with respect to the identified categories of impact, and additionally emphasizes the “effects” of research, linking impact to funding priorities that may be specific to agencies and or schemes. For instance, health and medical funding bodies will naturally privilege and fund research that seeks to achieve health benefits as the primary objective. The demonstrable effects of research can also denote outcomes and benefits stemming from the adoption and adaptation of the research, and the extent to which research is utilized as the basis for future projects [8].

The Dutch Research Council (NWO) has dedicated processes for the various forms of impact, distinguishing between social

(including economic) and scientific impact, recognizing emerging social challenges as requiring corresponding scientific and collaborative responses in pursuit of “a healthy science and innovation system” which integrates multiple stakeholders in this system beyond “knowledge institutions” [9]. The distinction between social and scientific impact is executed through numerous impact programs and processes. For instance, the Impact Scout program is an NWO and university collaborative that seeks unforeseen prospects to generate social impact [10]. Additionally, The Impact Outlook Approach, also termed the Cycle of Curiosity-Driven Research, is intended for research with predominantly scientific impact and knowledge utilization (as opposed to social impact), with the purpose of discovering unforeseen, innovative opportunities [11].

Within these definitions of impact, research publications are typically considered important elements in the broader impacts process. That is, the research pipeline can be conceptualized in view of the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and benefits, where publications are regarded as academic outputs that can potentially lead to defined outcomes and benefits – i.e., impact – from social, economic, cultural, health and or environmental perspectives, among others [12]. This process can be described as a “path to impact”, with funding bodies such as The Dutch Research Council stating the importance of monitoring and evaluating its activities through such strategies [13, p. 63], while promoting “learning through research on research” [p. 64].

Consequently, engagement post publication and beyond academia is key to realizing the practical, policy and other benefits of research [14]. However, the notion of research impact, and research in general, has been vastly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The resultant effect has altered dynamics within the research impact ecosystem, with disproportionate implications for various disciplines, creating instability, uncertainty, and increased levels of risk in some instances, whilst concurrently providing opportunities in other instances. An example of this can be observed in fields such as information systems / information management, where it has been asserted that the pandemic has generated opportunities for the discipline to demonstrate leadership in impactful research, given the discipline’s attention to digital developments and orientation toward practice and practical implications [15]. However, this does not apply across the board, nor is it a consistent observation for interdisciplinary research and impact.

A. Interdisciplinary Impact

In the context of design studies, Cash poses the question “What drives research impact?” [16, p. 113]. The answer to this question is consequential and dependent on the field or

discipline under consideration. A case in point is the relatively new field of supply chain management (SCM) that emerged in the early 1980s. SCM specialists have grappled with defining their research agendas when compared with disciplines such as law, medicine, and economics, among others, and are yet to settle on the best means of collecting evidence in support of impact evaluations and assessments [17]. As such, it may be particularly challenging for researchers in nascent fields to accurately formulate a response to questions about the drivers of research impact.

The answer to the question is also influenced by the degree to which research achieves practical and or scientific impact, which is typically measured from a single disciplinary perspective and against discipline-specific evaluation criteria. The ability to demonstrate both practical and scientific impact simultaneously, can be challenging in some contexts. This especially holds true for research that intersects or bridges multiple disciplinary perspectives in seeking true interdisciplinarity in both research / project design and implementation. As a representative example, consider design studies, whereby impact is difficult to demonstrate from the perspective of how this type of impact can be comprehended. Design studies often challenge the rigidities posed by theory driven versus contextualized research and their relative importance including the (perceived) “lack of predictive power”, where there is seemingly the persistent requirement to boost the impact of the field to ensure its continuance, which has been met with controversy [16, p. 130].

B. Foundational Questions

Given the presented background outlining the research impact landscape, there is an evident need to investigate the current state of play when considering *publishing for impact*, which may include accounts of academic and non-academic outcomes, and offer guidance regarding the publication process. This need is two-fold. First, there is a general lack of consensus regarding the definition and nature of research impact, particularly across disciplinary boundaries, and within and external to the academic setting. Second, the irregularities found in the execution of research impact strategies by various stakeholders in an ecosystem, result in ambiguity with respect to research design. There is thus the requirement for goal prioritization (ends), while developing research impact strategies with available resources (means) to ensure actions are implemented. Stakeholders therefore need to carefully navigate through a series of tensions that are present and or emerge within that ecosystem to fulfil their mission.

A series of questions are posed and reflected upon in this Editorial and variously addressed in the Special Issue papers: What are the major considerations in publishing high quality articles that are in themselves considered impactful? Can we publish for impact in a way that bridges the divide between scientific impact, knowledge-based impact, and practical impact? If so, how do we achieve this? What are the preliminary considerations for interdisciplinary research in this regard? And importantly, what are the tensions that we need to be cognizant of when designing, implementing, publishing, and evaluating our research activities and projects as we strive for impactful research?

To lay the foundations for an operative perspective of publishing for impact, Section II describes the method employed in this Editorial to capture the major considerations and distil them in the form of an interdisciplinary reflection. Section III offers first-hand editorial reflections, positioned as dedicated contributions, authored by experienced editors from multiple disciplines, including engineering, law, operations management, information systems, marketing, and management. This is followed by Section IV that synthesizes select research and scientific impact literature (from Sections I and II) and the editorial reflections (from Section III) to present a series of tensions intended to prompt interdisciplinary discussion regarding the state of the art of publishing for impact. The Editorial concludes with an overview of Special Issue papers in Section V, and an invitation to contribute to this rich and multi-dimensional dialogue, in the interest of advancing our understanding of interdisciplinary impact and the implications on the academic publishing process and the academy, in general.

II. INTERDISCIPLINARY REFLECTION: CAPTURING THE MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS IN PUBLISHING FOR IMPACT

Publishing high quality academic output generally requires commitment from one or more researchers as they embark on a journey of articulating their research and demonstrating its value, with the intention of successfully progressing through the peer review process to publication. This journey requires, as a foundation, a rigorous end-to-end research process, supported by an understanding of the publishing and general research impact landscape, in addition to awareness of what constitutes impactful research. This may include both academic and non-academic impact. Furthermore, the landscape or ecosystem is inherently complex and involves multiple stakeholders, each of whom have specific interests driven by explicit objectives. For example, when considering the objective of research quality and publishing for impact in reputable outlets, the complexities and competing interests are manifest in processes such as peer review, among others.

Existing scholarship attempts to explore successful navigation of such processes, with the intention of guiding researchers. For instance, the introduction to this Editorial offers a descriptive review of research impact scholarship with the intention of covering the breadth of representative voices from a definitional perspective. Other examples include literature that seeks to clarify the desk rejection process to understand reasons for desk rejection [18], [19]; and those that pertain to acknowledging the multiple and differing views on theory [20], in addition to others.

The current academic landscape is such that researchers are also increasingly required to address global challenges through multi-, inter-, and trans- disciplinary collaborations and projects. For instance, the embedded nature of information systems (IS) as an illustrative example, necessitates a degree of engagement with other disciplines to understand phenomena, enhance the respective disciplines and contribute to complex research problem solving activities [21]. Challenges thus exist as to how cross-sectional research should be published, with an added challenge pertaining to the existence of

TABLE I
OVERVIEW: EXPERIENCE-BASED EDITORIAL REFLECTIONS

#	Editorial Reflections	
	Editors	Contribution Title
1	Katina Michael and Roba Abbas	Publishing Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Papers: Navigating the IEEE Publishing Landscape
2	Kieran Conboy	Publishing in the European Journal of Information Systems (EJIS)
3	Rameshwar Dubey	Of Research Questions, Gaps, Theory and Method
4	Yogesh K Dwivedi	Avoiding the Quick 'No': Common Triggers for Journal Desk Rejections
5	Marijn Janssen	Toward Social and Scientific Impact
6	Thanos Papadopoulos	Knowing Your Field and Referencing Accordingly
7	Cleopatra Veloutsou	Understanding the Academic Publishing Landscape and Being a Life-Long Learner

very few highly ranked interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary publication venues. This is significant as interdisciplinary research is now considered the default standard, particularly within the scientific community [22], and much of this research contains mix-method approaches requiring multiple sources of evidence and corresponding data analyses that demand diverse skillsets converging to satisfy a singular aim.

The publication process is one characterized by interactive learning, despite its asynchronous nature. It is therefore also important to learn from experience, to improve the chances of successfully publishing for impact. Inspired by the “How to Publish in High Quality Journals” panel held at the *ISDSI-Global Conference in December 2021* and hosted by the Indian Institute of Management Nagpur in India [23], this Editorial builds on the narrative review of research impact and publications literature, to present an experience-based editorial reflection (see Table I for an overview and the following section for the distinct contributions within the editorial reflection). This narrative is then supplemented by a collection of Special Issue Papers that explore and present the elements that define high quality publications and what constitutes high impact research outputs. This Special Issue’s Call for Papers invited manuscripts that covered a multitude of topics, examples of which included: establishing meaningful collaborations in pursuit of quality/impactful research; navigating the peer review process; elements constituting impactful / quality research; and seeking and providing mentorship towards quality/impactful research outcomes.

This Special Issue (refer to Table II for an overview of accepted papers) is set against an interdisciplinary backdrop, where there may be a misalignment in perspectives of publishing for impact, but where there is also the need to derive generalizable insights that may be applied across multiple disciplines, and in the context of interdisciplinary research. The intention is to promote interdisciplinary discussion, and provide doctoral students, early career, and established academics a resource containing multiple perspectives regarding research impact and the publishing process, drawing

TABLE II
OVERVIEW: SPECIAL ISSUE PAPERS

#	Special Issue Papers	
	Authors	Contribution Title
1	Marijn Janssen	Publishing as a Science and as an Art – An Integrative Approach to Knowledge and Creativity in Research
2	Sara Dolnicar	Demystifying the Journal Review Process: An Editor’s Observation
3	Jon Billsberry	A Stepwise Strategy for Upgrading Publication Outcomes to A* in Management
4	Savvas Papagiannidis, Maureen Meadows, Panos Panagiotopoulos	Training the Next Generation of Doctoral Researchers in Data Science: The Impact on Publications and Beyond
5	Ilias Pappas, Polyxeni Vassilakopoulou, Leona Chandra Kruse, Sandeep Purao	Practicing Effective Stakeholder Engagement for Impactful Research

on the experience of researchers who are also editors, and other members of the academy.

III. PUBLISHING FOR IMPACT: AN EDITORIAL REFLECTION

This section presents the main presentation outcomes of the panel dedicated to the question of “How to Publish in High Quality Journals”, providing an interdisciplinary editorial reflection. This has since been updated to accommodate the focus of the identified Special Issue topics, and the current state of research impact. The purpose is to present and synthesize perspectives toward the establishment of a set of tensions with a view to provide guidance regarding publishing for impact, and from an interdisciplinary (and potentially transdisciplinary) perspective.

A. Publishing Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Papers: Navigating the IEEE Publishing Landscape by Katina Michael and Roba Abbas

1) *Target the Appropriate Outlet:* When contemplating publishing high quality research, the initial step is to understand the diverse outlets available and consider which is best suited to a particular project, specific strategy for impact and the category of research impact. For interdisciplinary research, this includes recognition of the position of respective outlets regarding interdisciplinary (including transdisciplinary) projects, manuscripts, outcomes, and impact. This may be a challenging exercise given that definitions of interdisciplinary scholarship and interdisciplinarity vary depending on outlet, academic institution, funding body, and publishing house, among other stakeholder categories.

Consider the IEEE as an illustrative example. The not-for-profit Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) is the largest professional technical association globally. Examples of peer-reviewed outlets include but are not limited to Conference Proceedings, Magazines, Journals, Transactions, Letters, Reviews and Scientific Proceedings.

Each outlet demands distinct requirements for manuscript submission. As part of the initial step of determining the most appropriate outlet, adequate research and planning is required, as the choice of outlet will dictate scope, stylistic elements, among other considerations, and there needs to be compatibility between the manuscript and the selected publication type [24]. It is paramount that the research aligns to the scope of the selected publication, as failure to align will constitute a desk rejection.

For instance, in the context of the *IEEE Transactions on Technology and Society (TTS)*, the outlet publishes socio-technical research papers that explore the intersection of STEM disciplines with socio-ethical and regulatory implications [25]. *IEEE TTS* has an interest in professional ethics and social responsibility in addition to the impacts of developments in the STEM disciplines on individuals, businesses, industry, and society. Furthermore, the outlet is transdisciplinary and one of several publications of the IEEE Society on the Social Implications of Technology (IEEE SSIT), and one of the few transactions within the IEEE that traverses both the technical and the non-STEM domains; another being *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*. *IEEE TTS* is not dedicated to a single technical domain (e.g., signal processing, photonics, or robotics and automation), but cuts across the vertical technical specializations binding them together through a broad societal and thematic analytical framework.

IEEE TTS covers a range of emerging and other technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, robotics, and other topics in view of both the social and technical considerations. The publication outlet encourages and seeks to advance interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and requires that the socio-technical implications are addressed explicitly and in a balanced way. It does not suffice for socio-technical issues to be bolted on as an afterthought during a discussion or conclusion section. Rather, the research work must demonstrate the incorporation of the socio-technical embedded in the framing of the project from the outset. As such, purely technical papers, irrespective of their rigor, are not considered within the scope of the *IEEE TTS*. It should be emphasized here that when seeking to submit to a given publication it is imperative to study previously published papers by that outlet, for their shape and form but also for their thematic contribution and the adopted methodological approach. The older the publication, the greater the attention that should be paid to the advancements that have already been made in the area through the lifetime of the publication outlet. Seeking related publications is also a good practice, as a contingency measure, for suitable literature and exposure to diverse approaches.

2) *Review Special Versus General Issue Opportunities:* Once an author has determined that their manuscript is within scope to a given publication outlet, a secondary consideration is whether the work should be submitted to a relevant Special Issue call, if available, or a general issue of that publication. It is worth reviewing current Call for Papers (CFPs) for applicability, as this serves to validate that a manuscript is within scope and may also allow for development and engagement opportunities with a given Guest Editorial team. Irrespective of whether a special versus general issue is elected

for submission, it is suggested that authors strictly adhere to additional requirements as stipulated by the outlet. This includes ensuring the article is submitted as the correct “type”, that relevant templates are utilized, and that the author(s) familiarize themselves with other submission details and portals. For example, IEEE outlet templates differ depending on the publication type (Transactions, Journals, Letters, as opposed to Magazine and Conference Templates), the publication outlet in question, the article type within that publication outlet, and the format [26].

3) *Adopt the 3Ps of Publishing Mindset:* There are three Ps to publishing that underpin high impact publications, irrespective of the journal: preparation, presence, and persistence.

Preparation, in this instance, refers to the pre-review process and constituent stages that ensure a given manuscript is ready for submission, consideration and rigorous peer review. This first P of Publishing encompasses the time spent researching the publication outlet that will be targeted, in addition to relevant justification as to why that outlet is suitable. It may involve asking fundamental questions about the research itself and why it is significant. It involves knowledge of a given journal’s review process, fundamentals like the format and template of the work, the style of writing, and the audience. It also requires an in-depth understanding of the previous studies that have been published and the domains of interest.

However, not all high impact publishing includes traditional peer-reviewed outlets. There are informed commentaries, that if syndicated may reach a mass audience in the millions of readers, standards that have the potential to affect industry processes, media contributions that inform members of the public in a time sensitive manner, among other publications. Relevant questions during the preparatory phase therefore become: How is impact defined? How can it be measured? How is it recognized by a variety of institutions? Does the research require something more sophisticated like empirical evidence based on sound theory and method? In the context of *IEEE TTS* for instance, there is a requirement for the latter, while recognizing the importance of blurring disciplinary boundaries toward transdisciplinary impact and discourse.

The second P is *presence*. If the article is being submitted to a high-quality outlet that receives over one thousand manuscripts per annum and can only publish 10 percent of these on average given page count limitations, then what will make a manuscript stand out to the editorial board? This includes reviewers, senior editors and associate editors handling manuscripts, and editors-in-chief faced with annual budgeted page counts and a journal’s vision in practice. Articles submitted to A or A* outlets must have presence. Articles in Transactions type publications outlets within the IEEE similarly need to be authoritative. One way to institute this presence is through an original contribution that is relevant to both theory and practice. Sometimes presence is also interpreted as novelty; but it is more than that. Presence has to do with offering something complete, holistic, well organized, nuanced, logical in flow, meaningful to the audience of the journal, and connecting the dots between previous studies. It may be an evident contribution to the journal’s trajectory and scope, presenting scientific outcomes using original diagrams, figures and tables that are captioned appropriately.

Presence may similarly mean that additional details have been provided and addressed, such as and where appropriate the inclusion of research funding support, human research ethics review/approval information, a clear Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) statement stipulating which authors contributed to which part of the research publication, among other details.

Finally, the third P is *persistence*. A paper that receives a rejection should not be abandoned entirely, but feedback garnered from the reviewers and editorial board members, should be used to improve the paper and redirect it to a suitable outlet accordingly. Authors should utilize feedback as continual development opportunities to shift the work positively to new potentialities. Papers may also receive a first-round major revision, but not make it through subsequent rounds of review if authors do not comprehensively address reviewer recommendations. Clarification can always be sought, if necessary, on how much of a revision to make, but sometimes these endeavors can take between 1-3 months of time in rewriting, repositioning, and restructuring, presenting the work in a more coherent fashion. In the same vein, minor revisions should not be underestimated. But certainly, authors need to continue to believe in their work, even if a given publication outlet does not recognize the value of the paper under review, or they simply do not have space to publish the work for any number of reasons.

Publishing high quality manuscripts in general, within the IEEE and in *IEEE Transactions on Technology and Society* more specifically, ideally requires that authors address a real-world challenge, demonstrate rigor, contribute to existing knowledge, reach the intended audience, and seek demonstrable real-world impact.

B. Publishing in the European Journal of Information Systems (EJIS) by Kieran Conboy

1) *The Importance of a Unique and Original Contribution:* The *European Journal of Information Systems (EJIS)* receives a high volume of submissions because it is now ranked as a four in the ABS list and A* in the ABDC, and is part of the Information Systems senior scholar's list of premier journals [27]. Some people might have a perception that for some journals there is almost a formula to be followed to publish in them; but this is not the case. In *EJIS* we do focus on interesting, good quality research, but are not bounded in terms of what that means. While we welcome the usual paper structures, theories, methods, and styles one would typically associate with leading IS journals, we do pride ourselves on encouraging intellectual diversity. In fact, we particularly welcome papers that adopt a contrarian perspective—that intentionally challenge the prevailing theories, methods, and perspectives of the day.

2) *Keep a Paper Focused to One Narrow Story:* In terms of advice for publishing in *EJIS* and other high-quality journals, there are some main points to present herein. The first one is telling your story clearly and simply. The most common reason for rejection is underpinned by a lack of clarity, where there is too much going on. As an editor you are trying to find exactly what the focus is and where exactly the contribution is.

Authors love writing about “stuff” and the immense amount of work they have done, attempting to squeeze all their outcomes and insights into one paper. But very often the papers that tell one narrow story and tell that story well and consistently throughout are the best to read. It is vital to keep the story to that focus, to remain steadfast to the aim of that paper and to make tough and emotional decisions to remove parts that have often taken significant time and energy.

3) *Including Nested Motivations and Counter Arguments:* The second point is in the use of nested motivations and taking counter arguments head on. As authors, we all think that our work is great, but one tip is to assume that the person reviewing your manuscript may: i) be unfamiliar with your field of interest, and have chosen instead to examine, say the methodology section given their expertise; ii) not see the value of your research; iii) disagree with the fundamental premise of your paper. One strategy is to hope you get a kind reviewer. Another perhaps more fruitful strategy is to take counter arguments head-on, from the outset.

Overall, we suggest authors take the position and assume that reviewers are not really a big fan of the area of research, and remain unconvinced about the arguments you make, the theories you use and the methods you employ. And even if they are, they may think your research has been done already. Most reviewers are positively hopeful upon reading a submitted paper, but imagine they are not—then you must tackle the potential arguments, head on. Use nested motivations, where you propose four to five clear and distinct arguments for this study. The reason for nested motivations is that most people usually throw out one big motivation. For example, “we are in a very fluid and dynamic world and AI is an emerging technology and we have no way of dealing with this”. Instead of just one overall motivation, think of the three, four, or five reasons why this study needs to be done. The advantage of taking this approach is that if a reviewer does not like any point out of the four or five, then the simple response is to either improve it or remove it. However, where an author has one long rambling motivation section, then in my experience a negative reviewer tends to make a single overall judgement that the motivation section is too weak and therefore the paper should be rejected.

Most reviewers form a very strong opinion on a paper on the first page or two of reading. If authors only have one counter argument in the paper and the reviewers do not buy it, you are not off to a great start. However, if you give them three or four or five reasons why this is an important study, even if some of them are small, then the reviewer might knock number one, even knock your second reason but it is very unlikely they are going to be able to remain unconvinced. If authors maintain good references and arguments, it is very unlikely they are going to be able to knock all the arguments for a study. So do not put all your eggs in one basket. Think of the three or four reasons for this study and make sure you say it very clearly. Say that there are four reasons for this study. And now force them to dismiss each one of them in turn. It is very hard for a reviewer to have energy to do that all four times.

4) *Make Sure Your Paper Is Coherent and Ties to the Storyline:* The third point has to do with coherence, which ties into the story mentioned earlier. Some papers lack coherence

between sections in the paper. Perhaps the paper's methodology does not link back to other sections the paper. Some authors simply say, "here's the methodology" and what was achieved, without the commensurate links to the whole story from beginning to end. It is very easy to denote when a method section or even a theory section was simply dropped in, in isolation. These are the simplest papers, as a reviewer, to pick apart. Reviewers can begin to stipulate things you have not cited, things that have not been done and alternative frameworks that could have been used. But if an author shows from the very beginning, "look I know there are many frameworks out there, and I know there are many concepts", then a reviewer will often notice.

When it comes time to write the cover letter the authors can identify their motivations and be explicit that they are willing to see other viewpoints if a reviewer thinks there is a better option. But at least in this manner, you can clearly identify the motivations as linked to the story, and if a reviewer comes back and believes you should have chosen another, you can consider this. In any case you have justified your position from the outset, and you have shown your story and how this piece fits. However, if you leave it wide open and just drop in the method and the theory, that will be obvious and allow the reviewer to pick on all kinds of problems and arguments and alternatives that could have been chosen.

5) *Fluidity*: There is something important about fluidity in a paper, that is engrained in history but is also able to capture the evolution of thought to today's application. A tendency of many papers is to talk about the new world that is so dynamic and so fast-paced and fluid, as if everything that preceded it is irrelevant. The "this is now what we need to look at as a result of COVID" is very dangerous because it ignores what came before. Change and dynamism were here before COVID, and it was just as much a fluid and dynamic world before. So, if you are going to put forward papers based on this idea of, we are now living in a time of change that is so fast that nothing before is worthwhile, it is generally not going to fly. I would make sure you point back to older research and show how it is not worthwhile in the current context. An overall assumption that change suddenly started happening in late 2019, might be a little tenuous or even outright flawed, unless you can demonstrate otherwise.

C. Of Research Questions, Gaps, Theory and Method by Rameshwar Dubey

1) *Identifying Major Gaps and Research Questions*: Associate editors face severe challenges when it comes to the introduction and discussion sections of papers going through the review process. There is an increasing trend toward data analysis, such as structural equation modelling, without commensurate philosophical underpinnings. There is in fact a major gap when it comes to the philosophical understanding of the research. Getting back to basics is critical. Saunders et al. provide an excellent understanding of resultant frameworks that may be applied to research projects. A paper that has not systematically presented a choice of method pertaining to a research question with corresponding gaps, does not provide

a convincing argument. At times, top journals may go forward in publishing these kinds of disconnected articles but this is a flawed practice. If the story is missing, then the paper remains unconvincing to the associate editor and reader. Authors must reflect on the research questions that need to be answered to fill a gap in the literature.

2) *Understanding Theory and Its Application and Misuse*: Secondly, while we are usually preoccupied with the *what*, *why*, and *how*, the question of *when* becomes important as the role of the moderating construct. In fact, in most of the articles we have seen that there is an increasing trend of the theory. In operations and information management especially, and those in the strategic management and marketing fields, have been using organizational theories for almost a decade. But in recent years, there is an increasing trend toward the adoption of theory. But the question is posed here: "do people really understand the boundaries of their chosen theory?" This is something which is very important. More recently some have posed resource-based views coming together in an integrated view such as combining the resource-based view, knowledge-based view, and dynamic capability view! How is it possible simply to integrate these theoretical perspectives together when they come from a similar code. So, the misuse of theories is a real issue.

3) *Being Aware of Common Method Bias*: And the most important aspect that we must understand is that every time researchers claim that they perform some of the data analysis, and rely on a single informant questionnaire, the common method bias cannot be rectified. One might ask why researchers are not designing a multi-informant questionnaire? And many other articles have raised the issue that the common method bias problem cannot be resolved. The question that then follows is: why do we persist in using the same method, and perpetuating the same problem? There is no point of writing these details down in the limitations section because they are not only known issues but insurmountable. Some of these issues simply pass through the editors' fingertips without action which only acts to propel the same problem, again and again. The problem is the choice of structural equation modeling. Unfortunately, people do not focus much attention because what happened in the era of SPSS is that everybody believed that they understood statistics. That is very easy. But again, you need to know when to use certain methods. Are you trying to create a new theory, or are you trying to test a theory?

4) *Shortcomings in Papers*: These are the fundamental issues out there. And unfortunately, in the discussion section we find that it is like people have lost their way, one might even say exhausted their entire energy by the time they reach that section of the article. And the discussion ends up being sketchy, and it reads like a kind of formality. So, there is almost something akin to a ripple effect: no apparent match between the introduction section and the choice of method(s), and little, if any, connection to the discussion section. The paper unfortunately, by that stage is in tatters.

By this stage you also believe that if people are not comfortable with the quantitative method, they will lean toward the qualitative research method. The opinion of some editors is that qualitative research methods should only be cautiously

used when either theoretical debate is being advanced, or new theory is being developed. And so, questions should be addressed before the selection of relevant cases.

If an associate editor is looking for the fine ties between methodology and philosophical orientation then possibly only 5 or 6 papers will qualify out of 100 submissions, and the rest are unpublishable, despite that some of these articles somehow still get through the review process and are published.

Associate editors who handle papers rely on good reviewers and if they are not forthcoming, and they fail to take care of all the issues, then that can be challenging for all concerned. A good review report does not mean that a manuscript with identifiable flaws can be easily “fixed”; rather a paper must go through multiple rounds of revision. It is the fundamentals that authors need to get right while drafting an article that are the bigger issues.

D. Avoiding the Quick ‘No’: Common Triggers for Journal Desk Rejections by Yogesh Dwivedi

The submission rate for highly ranked journals has increased substantially in recent years. A significant proportion of these submissions are typically desk rejected. Only a small fraction of papers undergo review, and an even smaller percentage of the reviewed submissions are accepted for publication [18]. All the quality journals suffer from this problem with a reliance on reviews, while reviewers are a scarce resource, especially those who are skilled in the craft of reviewing. Thus, the number of manuscripts that undergo the peer-review process are minimized. The primary task of a handling co-editor or handling associate editor is to screen out publications that are seen as having flaws preventing them from getting through the review process.

1) *On Similarity Index Thresholds:* One of the most common reasons for rejecting an article is based on similarity, either of the authors’ own previous work, or someone else’s. Journals vary with their thresholds of similarity, some not allowing more than 10% similarity, while others allowing for up to 30% inclusive of full references [18]. If a chunk of text is found to come from previous works, most editors would reject the manuscript instantly from the review process. Authors really need to study the general guidelines of the journal before they submit their article. It is recommended that authors carefully study the journal’s web site, especially “information for authors”.

2) *Aligning to the Journal’s Scope:* Although this may sound very simplistic, authors must align their article to the scope of the journal to have any hope of being considered. Often, editors-in-chief receive submissions that have nothing to do with their journal. But obviously, if a journal is dedicated to information management, papers relevant to human resources or marketing or finance or operations research would not be deemed relevant. Such papers are said to be “not within the scope of the journal”. They are simply disregarded because the papers are suitable for another audience and readership. It’s also crucial to tailor submissions according to the methodological preferences of different journals. This is because not every journal considers all types of methodology and data. For instance, some journals favor qualitative research,

others lean towards quantitative, while still others might prefer mathematical methodologies or other approaches [18].

3) *Poorly Structured Articles:* Articles that are poorly structured and developed will not get through peer review process unscathed. If a key section is missing or underdeveloped, for example, the Introduction, then the paper has little hope of progressing to the next stage. Reviewers will search for novelty in the paper. If the authors are only presenting the research gap and not highlighting the research problem itself, then general editors would be unlikely to be convinced to review the paper. Authors must present the problems very clearly: business problems or research problems. And then the authors should highlight the research gap and how that problem has not been addressed [18].

4) *The Importance of Novelty:* Authors need to ensure novelty with respect to the central focus of a paper’s topic, in addition to theory. Editors-in-Chief look for both theoretical and topical novelty [18]. If either of these are lacking, it will likely be a downside. For example, the topic of investigation might be new, but then an author may be testing the same theory that has already been tested hundreds of times. For example, some theories have been exhaustively tested in a variety of contexts and situations and one more application of that theory will not be sufficient to further educate. And therefore, those kinds of papers are likely to be desk rejected.

5) *Quantitative/Qualitative Theory Development:* On another point, when it comes to theoretical contribution, it does not matter if the paper is a quantitative paper or qualitative paper. If it is a quantitative paper, reviewers generally like to see the theory development at the front end of the paper; and if it is a qualitative paper, then reviewers generally like to see strong theory development at the back end [18]. Even if it is a literature review paper it is insufficient to just present the descriptive review. We would like to see a very strong theoretical contribution or theory development at the back end. So unless the manuscript demonstrates these elements, it is very difficult for us to push the manuscript to the reviewer because we know that reviewers will pick up these issues and reject the paper, which will then waste the editor’s time, reviewer’s time and more importantly the author’s time, because the manuscript is with the editors for up to three months, and then a rejection ensues. It would be better to target papers to a more appropriate journal in the first place. For these reasons top quality journals generally try to desk screen and desk reject papers as quickly as possible. It is also important to note that submissions based on single-study cross-sectional data lack adequate rigor [28]. Similarly, many submissions focus on examining “Intention” as the main dependent variable, which has recently been criticized [29]. For these reasons, such submissions are frequently desk-rejected by high-quality journals.

6) *Other Types of Submissions:* Over the past few years, we’ve seen a surge in submissions focused on bibliometric analysis, descriptive reviews, and sentiment analysis [18]. These submissions often lack clear theoretical contributions, which is a requisite for many high-quality journals, making them unlikely to pass initial desk screening. Submissions centered on bibliometric analysis would be better suited for niche journals that specialize in such research. While descriptive

reviews provide insights into current research topics, they do not present theoretical advancements crucial for guiding subsequent research. Despite the rise in meta-analysis studies, many remain descriptive and thus often do not pass the desk screening of high-quality journals. Such submissions should be confirmatory and adhere to the guidelines discussed in the literature [30]. Another emerging trend involves manuscripts that analyze user data from social media using sentiment analysis. Unfortunately, these often lack a strong theoretical foundation, reducing their research value. Guidance on building and testing theories in sentiment analysis research has been recently provided by [31], [32]. In summary, authors focusing on bibliometric and descriptive review submissions should consider specialized journals, while those submitting meta-analysis and sentiment analysis articles should adhere to the guidelines presented in recent guidance articles and/or editorials published in the target journals [18].

Finally, it's generally not professional, nor does it comply with publishing terms and conditions, to submit the same manuscript simultaneously to two different publishing outlets. Such practices harm both authors and the review process for various reasons. Therefore, authors should avoid submitting the same paper to multiple journals at the same time.

E. Toward Social and Scientific Impact by Marijn Janssen

If there was a formula for publishing high impact research in high impact outlets, it would be straightforward for authors to follow certain steps, and then arrive at a great paper. But publishing is not a series of solvable equations but an art, a creative process. One might have success with a given work, in a given period, in a given outlet, but there is no guarantee the same approach will work twice. Writing a paper is a long-term investment. If an author wants to have a high-quality paper, they need to dedicate attention to it. Authors must get stuck into the details of the paper, and really take time to develop it, end to end. Papers cannot be rushed, and often take several years of endeavor.

1) *Taking a Longer-Term View of Paper Development:* Authors must keep motivated throughout the whole paper development process. Setbacks are commonplace, for example, with the data collection in the first draft of the article. But authors need to remember that this is a piece of work they should be ultimately proud of and feel a sense of accomplishment when it is finally published. Different authors will want to achieve different types of impact, but some of the strongest are achieving both societal impact and scientific impact. Taking the longer-term view helps to place things in perspective.

2) *The Importance of Getting Data Collection Right:* From the outset, authors need to think strategically about the kind of contribution they want to make, as this will impact the kind of data that is to be collected, and the kind of publication outlet they want to target. Sound data collection is required, independent of the research being conducted. Also, different journals will accept different data types: some journals like more subjective data, whereas others more objective data. Some journals allow for a single source of data collection particularly with

exploratory research, while other journals require more than one source of evidence. Think about what is really needed to make your paper argument sound. And you need to think about all of this from the start because it is impossible to repair it in the end.

3) *Domain-Specific Journals: Government Information Quarterly (GIQ)* is a domain-specific journal. And what do domain journals require? Contribution to the domain, which also means making a societal contribution to the practice of government, in the case of *GIQ*. What is required for that? Deep insight into the domain. When you are an author who has typically written for generic information systems journals and attempt to submit to *GIQ*, the chances of acceptance are quite low if the authors have made no accommodations. It is very clear to the handling editors and reviewers of domain-specific journals when authors are being opportunistic and simply trying their hand at a domain journal. Authors should ask themselves: how can they contribute to the domain with their paper, or even whether they know the domain sufficiently to make a meaningful contribution. When authors do not understand the ins and outs of a domain-specific journal, it becomes obvious the paper must be rejected. It is not enough to pay lip-service to *GIQ* at the end of a paper; it must be embedded into the very foundation of the paper. If this embeddedness is absent, handling editors will say at its core the manuscript is irreparable.

4) *Theorizing:* Theorizing is one of the most important parts of what academics do. But it is also the most difficult activity to engage in, and why so many papers do not theorize at all. In the ideal situation authors want to develop a new theory, but that takes time, albeit years, and requires a long-term view. So that is quite difficult and challenging. But that can be what authors aspire to, a type of ambition. Theorizing often contributes also to societal impact in the long term. And vice versa, societal impact might be an inspiration for theorizing.

5) *Knowing Your Target Journal:* Authors should know the key authors and papers in a given field. One of the fastest ways to be rejected is to submit a paper that is like a previously published paper in the target journal, completely unaware of what preceded the newly submitted work. So, a clear message here is that authors need to know their literature, and more precisely need to know the published papers in a given journal. That activity cannot take place "after the fact" of a paper having been submitted; it must begin in earnest at the beginning of a research project. Authors cannot conduct a study that they have felt like doing, then once at the write-up stage, reverse engineer to see what the most relevant papers are from that publication venue. That would be doing things the wrong way round and would not be building on previous research. This also helps authors to recognize their limitations. Some of these are unacceptable to top tier journals, so if authors are doing adequate reading, they would know whether it was worthwhile submitting their research to that publication in advance.

6) *Focus on a Single Message:* It is important to focus on a single message and to avoid confusing messages. The message needs to be clear and simple. This does not mean, however, that there is only one main driver or one contribution or one motivation to the paper. The paper must also be decomposed

into parts to increase readability and comprehension among its readers. Claims about contributing in all domains, at large, is a recipe for a paper rejection. For example, authors should not say: “I have contributed to AI using this theory” because that is just impossible to achieve. Claims must be attainable and involve specificity.

7) *Do Not Rush to Submit a Manuscript:* Submitting one’s research too hastily can lead to an equally fast rejection. Numerous iterations are needed in the drafting process, sometimes in the dozens. PhD candidates are especially eager to get their work published and they want to submit their work for consideration given their enthusiasm, as fast as possible. But a good supervisor will prevent them from trying to publish their work in this manner. The paper should be put away for several weeks, and then on return thought about carefully.

8) *Consider Contacting the Editors of the Target Journal:* Authors should feel that they can approach editors-in-chief right from the conception stage of their research project. Experienced editors can provide suggestions at the early stages of a study. Finishing a paper, for example, and then seeking advice as to whether the paper is a good fit for the journal will only lead to one of two responses: either yes or no. At that stage it is too late. Take opportunities to go to panel sessions and ask questions on how to develop work. You may also become familiar with the reviewers in your field, or those on main editorial boards whose advice may also be equally critical to your research. And again, this cannot be a last-minute thing.

9) *Know Your Domain and Foundation:* The domain you play in is your field of interest. You need to know that field and play in that field and know the experts. In other words, you should know your foundations. Authors should use opportunities to also learn from their peers in a collaborative spirit, working together with people who are more experienced, for further developing their skillsets. That is very important because that will also raise your academic ability. Learn from the experience. It is an art. It is a profession. So, you must practice that, and you can practice with people who already do it well.

10) *Presence and Originality:* If authors follow a standard approach, they will end up in a standard journal. The message here is there is no recipe for ending up in a high-quality journal with a high-quality paper. Authors need to work on papers that stand out, because even if you have a high-quality paper, it does not mean a journal with limited space can include your paper- there may be other reasons for its rejection. But if your paper is original and it has presence, then the editorial board will take note.

F. Knowing Your Field and Referencing Accordingly by Thanos Papadopoulos

There has been a lot of discussion on the impact factors of journals as indicators of quality. Where a journal is abstracted and indexed is also important as a quality indicator, though there are many different bibliometrics that can point to a high-quality outlet. Two examples of excellent publication venues include: the *British Journal of Management* and *The International Journal of Operations & Production*

Management. Both have a relatively high impact factor commensurately for the field of management. They are also listed in the CABS4 category in the U.K.

1) *Weak Theoretical Contributions Lead to Rejections:* A weak theoretical contribution with a very narrow focus is one of the first things that editors see that would lead to an almost instantaneous rejection in a high-end journal. At times, the rejection may not come in the first round, but in the second or even the third round of review if refinement is not made to address the comments of reviewers or the editorial board. Authors really need to think and reflect on the theoretical contributions that are being called for in a relevant journal. Have the authors done their homework appropriately; familiarized themselves with the journal in question; approached the editors to receive feedback, and incorporated this feedback in their submission? Have the relevant citations from that journal been incorporated, and from other relevant publication outlets?

2) *How to Deal With Paper Rejections:* It is important that authors develop a thick skin. *You win some and you lose some*, and the more you persist the more successful you will be in the longer run, as the finer points of publication are learnt over time. Younger researchers can sometimes become overly disheartened by rejections. This is predominantly due to the effort exerted to develop papers from scratch, the hundreds of hours spent writing and drafting throughout the research process, the pressure to publish, and frankly inexperience. Experienced researchers can remember their first paper rejections which likely took a few days to overcome. But as time goes on, this period of mourning a paper’s exclusion gets shorter and shorter, until one’s stature develops to not only welcoming good feedback but wishing to act on it almost immediately and try again. The longer-term view means that you can give the rejection a few days to simmer, absorb the commentary, and then go forward.

The best way to move forward is to begin with incorporating all the reviewer and editor suggestions, if possible. If you do not and you try to resubmit the paper in a competing journal, the chances are you may well come up against the same handling associate editor and even reviewer. If they are the domain experts, then it is likely they may well end up with your specific paper again, at which point if there has been no progress made, the reviewers will become frustrated and likely give an even more negative report than the initial one. Take the time to refine the literature review, justify your underpinning theoretical framing (if any), collect more data, improve your analysis, better the discussion, and the original contribution as directed.

3) *Relevant Referencing:* Different reviewers will have different opinions about relevant referencing. Some will note that your references are outdated because you have begun with a historical view of your field, while others will focus on the fact that you have not incorporated the great voices of the field itself. More often than not, it is the former that is pointed out, as reviewers search for qualification on the current gap of the research. Thus, citing papers from before 2000, while important, is perhaps what you should not be focused on but rather a review of papers that are more recent. This helps to provide proof for the relevancy of your research and the importance to the academic field at large.

4) *Methodological Robustness*: What constitutes a good paper? Well, fit, addressing *why* and *how* questions. Methodological robustness is very important. Are authors retesting existing theory or are they contextualizing? The latter does not get authors published in high quality journals. If authors are taking a Resource Based View (RBV) then what is being contributed if anything? In effect, what is the brief? Authors need to make sure that they contribute something and are not just using it for the sake of using it. These are key factors in gaining paper acceptance.

5) *Mounting Pressures of Tenure*: COVID-19 has brought with it a whole host of individual pressures in academia. However, the pressure to publish in highly ranked journals is something that has also changed over the last 20 years or so. University departments are stipulating their own rules and policies over what constitutes a research active academic. The story goes that if an academic, especially a tenure-track academic or one on probation, is not published in 3-4 star journals, e.g., in the U.K., then they will not gain tenure after three or five years of service. Of course, this is different for different fields.

Younger researchers must publish to gain a permanent position, and this is even more reason why they need to do their homework before embarking on a publication route. The academic fraternity is a very small community. Yes, it is global, but also very small, and people are known to each other over time. It is best to write complete papers that will be taken seriously than to develop a reputation for knee-jerk submissions that are half-baked. Authors need to read, re-read, continue to do their homework, and network in a sober fashion, all the while believing that their work is important to the field. A paper rejection does not mean that one's work is useless, but academics should continue to strive to do their best seeking development opportunities.

G. Understanding the Academic Publishing Landscape and Being a Life-Long Learner by Cleopatra Veloutsou

Advice for authors that is likely the soundest of them all, is that every day is a learning opportunity. No matter how experienced an individual is in an academic setting, they too should perceive themselves as a learner; a life-long student with respect to publishing. Academics learn from one another; their students; even the papers they read during the review process for a journal. This learning process enables them to recognize changes in the academic publishing landscape, which are reflected on below in the context of publishing in management and are supplemented by commentary on the significance of vision and the importance of an author finding their voice.

1) *Changes in Academic Publishing: Output Quality vs Quantity*: In the last 20 years the motives of engaging with academic publishing in management have changed significantly. From publishing to satisfy academic curiosity, a personal edge to add to the body of knowledge and for personal satisfaction, academics now primarily publish because it has become a job requirement to enter, remain and build a career through promotions in academia. The pleasure of discovery and knowledge production has been transformed to

pressure to produce output motivated by the hope that this output will increase the chance of employment in high quality academic institutions. What remains the same is that academics, as individuals, want to establish a reputation and be respected in their field and for their notable research work.

Notable research work is currently demonstrated through a high-performance publication portfolio established with the output's quality and number. However, there is lack of clarity on what defines high output quality and what is considered a reasonable number. The balance between quality and quantity is also fuzzy when assessing a research output portfolio. The lack of clarity has led to interesting developments in academic publishing and behaviors from academic researchers, which need to be considered and academics should reflect on.

In terms of the perceived quality of academic output, there are changes. For many years things were relatively simple. Publishing in a highly ranked academic journal, derived from the objective citation rankings or subjective lists offered at the national or School level, used to be enough to signal high quality in the produced outputs. Other indicators, such as the publishing house, the editorial board members, and the profile of contributors to or the niche focus of an academic journal were also used as quality indicators for a given journal. This approach has been heavily challenged in the last few years, with the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) recognizing the need to improve the ways in which researchers and the outputs of scholarly research are evaluated, suggesting that outputs should be examined as individual entities in their own rights, with an increasing number of top Universities embracing these principles [33]. Specific aspects are used in some countries or from some institutions or individuals to assess the quality of the output. As an example, in the U.K., a system assessing the excellence of research is available, where originality, significance and rigor for each submitted academic output is measured [34].

Although the assessment of academic output quality seems to be moving into the assessment of individual outputs (papers/reports), rather than the publication outlet (journal/publisher), the top ranked journals still get an increased number of submissions. The quality processes these journals are using to select the individual outputs they publish is seen as a factor supporting quality, since many use multiple reviewers, many rounds of review and accept in the end a very small proportion of the originally submitted work – as little as 5%. Publishing in the journals seen as top quality still carries a lot of prestige and is desirable for individual academics. In addition, there is no clear directions on how individual outputs can be assessed. Objective indicators such as citations of individual outputs and the output influence score (Eigenfactor) are used to some extent, but these indicators are sometimes partly shaped. The pressure for increased citation and volume is making some question the degree to which principles of ethics in research are followed, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that reviewers push their own output to be cited, even when it is irrelevant.

Furthermore, the pressure to produce both quality and quantity of academic outputs has consequences on academics, their work and their choices. The time pressure makes it increasingly challenging to engage with service in the academic field,

such as reviewing for academic journals. In addition, academics are uncertain about the balance between quality and quantity. Different institutions and recruiters do not see quantity as a good indicator and research indicates that the inclusion of outputs published in lower ranked journals in a list of outputs published in highly ranked journals in an academic curriculum vitae (CV) reduces the evaluation of an academic CV from academics participating in recruitment panels in top Universities [35].

Great care should be given to the outputs produced and increasing quantity or tampering with citation-based quality are to be avoided. Those of us who work in academia are educating others, and our behavior should be signaling good and fair practices. The introduction of better guidelines on what constitutes high performance in academic research is something that we should try to push for as we attempt to realize our respective and collective vision for research.

2) *A Vision for One's Research:* There is no doubt that academics have emotional ties with the papers they write, given the length of time they spend developing them; some might even say an emotional attachment can form with the subject matter, and even the process of publication. Each paper might even be considered as a unique idea that says something new about the world. That there is a vision for the research work that is being developed; that there is an underlying foundation to the research work being conducted with a hope in its completion to help some cause. There needs to be a deliberate decision made around the data to be collected, and the theories to be applied to a given application context. But projects should be sparked by an idea, a future contribution, and not what the output might look like and who would find it amenable toward publication. The presented data is important as is the analysis, and a cross-check is required to ensure that the data satisfies the original vision sought. Independent of the journal's ranking, authors need to believe in their work. If that is a four-star journal great. If it is a three-star journal great. If it is a two-star journal, great. There have been many papers published in a variety of levels that are highly citable.

3) *Authors Have a Voice, Not Just Reviewers:* The review process may seem on the side of the editorial board and respective reviewers in a review system, but authors could correspond with a board, despite the disproportionate power dynamic. Editors after all may perceive themselves to be the gatekeepers to a journal that they have been entrusted with to maintain for a set period. Editors and editorial boards must listen to authors, read paper submission cover letters studiously, offer balanced feedback, and wait to read the future correspondence of authors, round after round of paper revisions. Papers can go through anywhere between five or more revisions over a 2-year period or more. Often handling co-editors or associate editors need to weigh up the feedback offered by reviewers, and either seek further reviews despite having reached the minimum or make a call on the summaries provided. Whatever the case, authors need to respect the immense effort that has gone into the review process and respond accordingly to the criticisms.

Editors certainly do not blindly follow the advice of reviewers; they work as a buffer to the mechanical process. Some reviewers are stricter, some reviewers are more lenient. Some

editors look at the potential pool of papers that are submitted to a journal, and then try to make a call on reviewer comments on which are best suited for a given Special Issue, or annual year. As difficult as it is to come to terms with this, there are some papers that will simply never be published, and authors need to be able to face that challenge when it comes; but so long as the authors have the power to amend, update, correct, address weaknesses, there is always hope in the publication process, whether a high-end journal publication or in fact, a peer-reviewed institutional conference paper.

IV. REVEALING THE DOMINANT TENSIONS

This section synthesizes select research impact literature and the editorial reflection with a view to present a preliminary set of tensions to guide discussions of publishing for impact, specifically interdisciplinary impact. The intention is to provide guidance for researchers regarding contemporary perspectives of research impact and provoke thought toward recognizing and addressing the identified tensions. In the context of this Editorial, the employed definition of a tension is "a difficult situation caused by the opposite needs or effects of two different ideas, desires, etc." [36]. Notably, the tensions reflect individual and collective friction that may cloud or influence publication and or research related decisions and opportunities, and therefore obstruct the pursuit of impactful research in the broad sense of the term, including publishing in quality outlets and the achievement of policy and or societal benefits.

A. Tension 1: Academic Versus Non-Academic Impact

A preliminary tension relevant to the theme of this Editorial is the (perceived) friction between academic impact and non-academic impact. This tension is attributable to many factors, including lack of definitional precision and the relative value of the terms when considering contemporary notions of impact. This distinction is particularly pertinent with respect to the phrase *publishing for impact*, which principally incorporates the academic form but may also extend to and imply (explicitly or otherwise) non-academic impact or broader impact pathways such as those identified in Section I. To clarify, academic impact, as it is known today, can be linked to the emergence of citations in the 1950s; to evidencing academic impact through double blind peer review and post publication processes; and to forms of analyses such as the H-Index, and other indices and quantitative measures such as bibliometrics, journal impact factors, and interdisciplinary journal and country rankings [17], and altmetrics. As for the non-academic form of impact, this refers to categories of public knowledge dissemination, in an accessible form, and that transcend the academic setting, and which also incorporate a temporal element represented as sustained effects of research over time [17].

The distinction between the two forms of publication can and has been framed in other ways, such as: knowledge based versus practical contributions, and scientific versus practical impact. It is important to note that this framing, and the two positions regarding impact, do not account for indirect impact; for instance, the subsidiary impact derived from educating

students at various levels to allow them to meaningfully contribute when they join the workforce. Irrespective of terminology, this tension emerges in a range of situations, such as: when the two forms are not accurately defined; when there is a misalignment between an institution's mission or vision and their corresponding performance frameworks (e.g., a mission or vision that favors interdisciplinarity through non-academic impact while the performance frameworks emphasize only academic forms of publishing); and where specific research is organically driven by a scientific challenge versus a societal or practical challenge, among other challenges.

B. Tension 2: Research Quality Versus Policy Effect

Tension 2 is interconnected with Tension 1 given the need for prioritizing research quality versus making contributions to policymaking. It is in these circumstances that the linking of quality academic research outputs to real-world impact is a necessity (and vice versa). This idea is expounded when considering the relationship between research and impact in the health sphere, which is frequently described as "indirect, non-linear and not well understood and depends on complex interactions and collaboration across the health innovation system" [8]. The same applies beyond the health context, where a broader ecosystems perspective is not always assumed, and direct linkages between research quality and related policy implications are difficult to both plan for during the research planning / design process and depict post research completion, depending on the discipline in question.

It is here that a distinction between research quality and research impact needs to be made, the former referencing excellence in scholarly contributions intended for predominantly academic audiences (although in some instances, this definition and its applicability is somewhat expanded), while the latter is focused on impact in view of a broader reach external to academia [37]. Donovan [37] maintains that some definitions of impact embrace a distinct demarcation, while others are encompassing of both quality and impact, with a redefinition incorporating the categories of impact previously identified in this Editorial, in addition to the quantitative and qualitative methodologies and approaches required to obtain and depict such impact. Failure to account for the latter equates to a skewed and outdated perspective of research impact. Furthermore, failure to appreciate this distinction and the inconsistent, non-linear relationships can be problematic on several fronts; from demonstrating that performance requirements are being met and maintaining a status as an active researcher, to becoming tenured, and to applying for national and international competitive grant schemes with a competitive track record.

C. Tension 3: Me Versus We

Resulting from Tension 2, where the relationship between quality academic research and the policy impact was not always evident, is a noteworthy constraining dynamic that can potentially inhibit both disciplinary and interdisciplinary collaborations. This is reflected in a tension pertaining to the individual versus collective foci, resulting in the current environment where the former is predominantly encouraged.

This emphasis is fallacious considering that societal challenges require a collaborative interdisciplinary effort. The position that solo publication is to be favored, especially for tenure-track academics, may result in a counter-effect on the pressing societal challenges that need to be addressed. This has the capacity to negatively influence academic culture, at the departmental and institutional levels. It also generates an unrealistic and skewed perspective of the factors influencing academic research and performance whereby vital organizational influences are disregarded.

This characteristic emphasis on an individualistic perspective, fixed on the role of the individual researcher, whereby declarations of singular research impact programs are encouraged, inadvertently or otherwise disregard the importance of the organizational context being integrated in the impact strategies of universities [1]. Rather than focusing on the individual researcher, which can be prohibitive and not accurately capture contextual factors, such as the structural, operational, cultural, and managerial influences within academic institutions, an appreciation of organizational influences allows for more authentic representation of the research impact landscape [1], capturing the real-world experiences of researchers [2]. Recognition of the organizational context is essential from the perspective of delivering suitable support mechanisms for researchers to pursue projects and initiatives that are relevant to policy, while also inspiring and positively influencing organizational culture toward impactful research [1], and interdisciplinary projects.

D. Tension 4: Research as Urgent Outcomes Versus Research as Art (Temporality)

Integrating the organizational context nevertheless requires a broader cultural and general mindset shift in how research impact is interpreted as a concept, given the equivocal nature of research impact. The definitional distinctions have been introduced in this Editorial. Moreover, it is critical to recognize the various ambiguities that are inherent in real-world impact, and that inevitably influence individual researcher choices. Current and historical definitions of research impact might not acknowledge such ambiguities. In recent years, there have been calls to "reconceptualize research impact in a way that acknowledges the subtle influences of research and reflects the nebulous nature of real-world impact" [2, p. 1368].

In the context of this Editorial and Special Issue dedicated to publishing for impact, a reconceptualization would assist in supporting informed choices about research activities, ensuing publication decisions, and the associated research outcomes and impact. Decisions would also address the underlying notion of temporality embedded within this tension. For example, this may refer to the time constraints imposed on doctoral students, early career academics or those seeking career progression that propagate the perspective of research as urgent outcomes, as opposed to research as a deliberate art form. The product of this temporality is that doctoral researchers, early career academics and potentially researchers seeking tenure or promotion may prioritize outcomes over impact, while other, more established researchers may not face similar limitations providing them with the opportunity to invest in more creative pursuits, passion

projects and research initiatives that privilege real-world impact and interdisciplinary collaboration while also seeking outcomes but not as an urgent priority.

This tension is compounded by the temporal considerations inherent in decisions pertaining to favoring quality over quantity, and vice versa, and the institutional and other pressures that dictate and or encourage a particular choice. Such pressures can, in turn, influence and or result in often undesirable behaviors within the academy, from both individual and collective perspectives. The product of these dynamics could very well be a schism between disciplines due to perceived competitiveness emerging from a lack of comparability of outcomes, among other factors, that have the potential to stifle interdisciplinary dialogue and progress.

E. Tension 5: Disciplinary Norms Versus Interdisciplinary Expectations

The final tension relates to the lack of alignment between disciplinary norms and interdisciplinary expectations regarding impact. While there are regular calls for interdisciplinary research to solve both scientific and societal challenges, there remain expectations to publish in conformance with disciplinary norms. The latter is understandable given the specialized education models of tertiary institutions, with some exceptions, and the requirement for discipline or field-specific quality indicators and evaluations to guide the selection of a reputable and high-quality publication outlet. However, this is challenging with respect to striving for impactful interdisciplinary research, that simultaneously achieves research quality and broader policy / societal impact, with challenges stemming from the lack of clarity regarding internal (institutional) performance expectations and quality indicators for interdisciplinary research. These challenges, and the related pressures, are indeed evident in projects with multiple disciplines represented, where each project member is adhering to their own benchmarks for quality and where there is rigidity and lack of alignment between the two (or more) disciplines. The result is either commitment to an interdisciplinary publication outlet that may not be perceived as high quality or impactful in one, several, or all of the disciplines / fields represented by the researcher(s); or the declaration of a dominant discipline and subsequently a decision to publish in a reputable outlet within that dominant field.

V. IN THIS SPECIAL

The papers in this Special Issue are presented in this section and contribute to the interdisciplinary reflection regarding publishing for impact, while selectively reinforcing and or addressing the identified tensions.

The first paper is by Professor Dr. Marijn Janssen of Delft University of Technology who is Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Government Information Quarterly*. Janssen's article is [A1] and begins our special by acknowledging that a single and definitive formula to writing a good paper does not exist. Janssen contends that the stylistic, structural, or thematic mimicking of impactful and respected academic papers does not guarantee a manuscript's success or that the resultant paper will be well received by the academic community. In fact, the outcome might be counter to this. Despite this,

the author states that there are some heuristics that might serve as guidelines to the development of a good paper. These include an in-depth understanding of the field, originality and novelty, sound research, knowledge contributions and appropriate theorizations to drive the research. Furthermore, Janssen stresses that creativity is key to elevating papers and ensuring high-quality outcomes in reputable journals.

The second paper in this special is by Professor Dr. Sara Dolnicar of the University of Queensland, who is Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Annals of Tourism Research*. Dolnicar's paper is [A2]. The author emphasizes the importance of trusting in the peer review system and challenging myths (new and old) that have clouded the process and undermined its credibility. Dolnicar, who is the Slovenian Ambassador of Science, the highest honor the Republic of Slovenia bestows on expatriate Slovenian researchers in recognition of global excellence, impact, and knowledge transfer, highlights the importance of clearly and transparently explaining how the review process works in a given journal. The underlying message of this article is intended for both editorial boards of journals and authors. Dolnicar systematically dispels common myths, such as (1) editors are more focused on rejecting papers than accepting them; (2) that compliance with research ethics does not matter and that no one will audit the process that has been followed; (3) that putting a senior author on the manuscript will somehow influence the chances of publication; and (4) that if you get through a first round review, an author is almost assured of the paper's acceptance; among other myths. Dolnicar provides a call to academics, to revert to curiosity-driven research, as she recounts her first-hand experience in receiving manuscripts that lack originality, and clearly demonstrate a "significant loss to the scientific community and society more broadly".

The third paper is by Dr. Jon Billsberry who is a senior professor at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Jon has previously served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Management Education* and has numerous A* publications, including papers that feature in the *Academy of Management Journal* and *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. Billsberry's related work includes a paper on the top ten tips to avoid desk rejection [19]. In this Special Issue, Billsberry contributes a paper [A3] providing insight into publishing in highly ranked journals which the author maintains is increasingly important for scholars' career progression. Billsberry's article is intended to aid academics who have not previously published in top ranked journals "make the leap" to A* using a stepwise strategy. While the author does not recommend that true research inquiry be dismissed, Billsberry suggests that targeting A* journals for future publications requires a sound research question that such journals want answered. He strongly encourages researchers to become acquainted with the published studies of a journal, and to create new research projects that are not only driven by knowledge and passion (internal drive) but are also evidence-based and will build on previously published works (external drive).

The fourth paper is by Professor Dr. Savvas Papagiannidis of Newcastle University Business School, Professor Maureen Meadows from the Centre for Business in Society at Coventry University and Dr. Panos Panagiotopoulos of Queen Mary

University of London. Their paper is [A4] and provides a rich inquiry into the developments in data science methods that have changed social science research. As a result, there is increasing demand for data science methods with respect to training researchers to develop advanced data skills. The authors call on all doctoral and early career researchers (ECRs) to undergo training so that they can bolster their career opportunities and potential for success, especially in pursuing research projects across disciplines. The authors present the Learning-Leading-Linking framework encapsulating their main recommendations.

The fifth paper is by Ilias Pappas, Polyxeni Vassilakopoulou, Leona Chandra Kruse who are professors at the Department of Information Systems, University of Agder in Norway, and Sandeep Purao of Bentley University in the United States of America. Their paper is [A5] and explores the importance of achieving direct societal impact through research. While the authors acknowledge that societal impact usually is achieved after a process of stakeholder engagement, real-world problem situations do provide a direct path to societal impact, despite the time lag. The authors indicate that structured engagement with delineated research phases – problem definition, solution design, and solution evaluation – is the best route to achieving longer-term societal impacts. In highlighting the stakeholder engagement process, Pappas et al. describe three interventionist research approaches to stakeholder engagement inclusive of Action Research, Clinical Research, and Action Design Research. The authors maintain that selecting from these alternatives may lead to favorable conditions that generate positive outcomes that drive societal impact.

This Editorial and Special Issue presented a deliberate interdisciplinary editorial reflection, an introductory set of tensions, and a collection of papers intended to inform discourse on interdisciplinarity with a focus on the research impact and publishing for impact landscape. This is largely in response to the need for clarity regarding the definition and nature of research impact for various stakeholders within a given ecosystem, inclusive of members of the academy. It is also in recognition of the need to address a range of questions regarding: (i) what constitutes high quality and impactful publications; (ii) how we address the friction between the different categories of impact and scholarship; and (iii) ways in which we can demonstrate interdisciplinarity in action within this context, given the complexities introduced as a result of the tensions. We call on diverse stakeholders, inclusive of academic, industry and government stakeholders, to contribute to a timely topic in the interest of addressing contemporary societal and socio-technical challenges, engaging in true interdisciplinary (toward transdisciplinary) research, and publishing for impact and in the public interest.

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APPENDIX: RELATED ARTICLES

- [A1] M. Janssen, “Publishing as a science and as an art—An integrative approach to knowledge and creativity in research,” *IEEE Trans. Technol. Soc.*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 219–226, Sep. 2023.
- [A2] S. Dolnicar, “Demystifying the journal review process: An editor’s observation,” *IEEE Trans. Technol. Soc.*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 227–233, Sep. 2023.
- [A3] J. Billsberry, “A stepwise strategy for upgrading publication outcomes to A* in management,” *IEEE Trans. Technol. Soc.*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 234–241, Sep. 2023.
- [A4] S. Papagiannidis, M. Meadows, and P. Panagiotopoulos, “Training the next generation of doctoral researchers in data science: The impact on publications and beyond,” *IEEE Trans. Technol. Soc.*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 242–248, Sep. 2023.
- [A5] I. O. Pappas, P. Vassilakopoulou, L. C. Kruse, and S. Purao, “Practicing effective stakeholder engagement for impactful research,” *IEEE Trans. Technol. Soc.*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 249–255, Sep. 2023.

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