

Association for Information Systems (AIS)

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Abstract

The Association for Information Systems (AIS) is a professional organization whose membership is made up primarily of business school academics who specialize in information systems (IS) development, implementation, and evaluation. The current membership is 3965, which is over 50% saturation of the overall population of an estimated 7000 IS academics worldwide.

The Association for Information Systems (AIS) is a professional organization whose membership is made up primarily of academics who specialize in information systems (IS) development, implementation, and evaluation. As the majority of early academics in the field were housed in business schools, much of our research still has a focus on the “bottom line”—the business consequences of IS choices. This special perspective is reflected in the mission statement of AIS:

To advance knowledge in the use of information technology to improve organizational performance and individual quality of work life.

Worldwide, most recently, there are also many members housed in computer science and information science programs as well, but the organizational perspective remains.

OBJECTIVES OF AIS

The purpose of AIS is to serve as the premier global organization for specialists in IS in order to:

- Create and maintain a professional identity for IS educators, researchers and professionals, researchers, and educators;
- Promote communications and interaction among members;
- Provide a focal point for contact and relations with bodies in government, the private sector, and in education that influence and/or control the nature of IS;
- Improve curricula, pedagogy, and other aspects of IS education;

- Create a vision for the future of the IS field and profession;
- Create and implement a modern, technologically sophisticated professional society;
- Establish standards of practice, ethics, and education where appropriate; and
- Include professionals worldwide.

To these ends, AIS conducts conferences and meetings, publishes books, journals, and other materials; cooperates with other organizations interested in the advancement and practice of IS, stimulates research; promotes high professional standards and promotes the growth of IS and the profession’s quality throughout the world.

BACKGROUND ON IS IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS

The IS area developed in business schools in the late 1960s with an initial focus on programming business applications of computers, often through the use of COBOL, a business-oriented computer programming language. This addition to business curricula was controversial with some faculty arguing that business students would never become computer programmers and others arguing that managers needed to be informed “end users,” to understand the nature of the tasks that analysts and programmers perform, and to develop a realistic awareness of the capabilities and limitations of computer “solutions.”

This programming emphasis rapidly shifted to one that emphasized the “fit” between computer systems and the business enterprise as illustrated by the development of planning processes for deciding how computer systems could best be used to aid in the achievement of business goals.

HISTORY OF AIS

In the early days of IS in business schools, most academics in the area came from other disciplines such as economics, accounting, organizational behavior, operations research, and management science. Because of this, most IS academics had professional affiliations in other underlying disciplines. Thus, some did not see IS as a distinct professional field even though they were teaching and researching IS topics.

Nonetheless, as the field grew explosively in the 1970s and 1980s with ever-greater demands for new IS programs and class offerings, the notion of IS as a professional field of study and practice grew. Many IS academics saw the need for an organization that could represent the professional values and aspirations of IS business-school academics. Although the focus differs somewhat from region to region, the predominant approach was, and still is, to recognize the different needs of IS academics from those of faculty in computer and information science.

Interestingly, the first major effort in this direction came in 1980 with the creation of a major international research conference—the annual International Conference on IS (ICIS)—a nonprofit organization with a governing executive committee that was responsible for site selection and choosing the conference chair and other key positions for upcoming conferences. This conference was created through a grass-roots effort by senior IS academics, primarily from North America. It rapidly became a major focal point for the research interests of academics across the world.

As ICIS grew and prospered, various informal groups met there to discuss the need for a professional organization to more broadly represent the interests of IS academics. Several studies and surveys were conducted with mixed results and little action.

Finally, a study was planned by a group of senior people who met informally and commissioned Dr. William R. King, University Professor at the University of Pittsburgh to organize a task force to comprehensively study the issue of creating a professional organization, and to assess the level of support for the idea. King contacted numerous senior people to get their ideas; he found that they almost unanimously favored the creation of such an organization. So, rather than leading a study, King formed an organizing committee of about 40 senior academics from around the globe. While this group was creating the general design for a new organization, King attended academic conferences held by related professional organizations and regional IS conferences that had recently been initiated. At those conferences, he held information sessions to discuss the objectives of the proposed organization and to solicit ideas.

The organizing committee conducted an electronic constitutional convention to agree on a constitution for

the new organization and appointed King to be its first Executive Director. Operating out of his university office with the help of his assistant and a doctoral student, he proceeded to solicit members and had a membership roster of 1800 charter members within 6 months. The charter members elected King as the first President of AIS in an election that also filled various officer and council slots.

GOVERNANCE OF AIS

The Association for IS is led by a president who is annually elected from one of three world regions—the Americas, Europe and Africa, and Asia-Pacific—on a rotating basis. The governing Council is made up of elected functional vice-presidents and other officers and council members who are elected in the three world regions. There are also some appointed positions, such as secretary and treasurer. Thus, AIS is truly a global organization that can reflect the diverse interests and needs of business-school academics all over the world.

EVOLUTION OF AIS

The Association for IS was initially operated out of a single office at the University of Pittsburgh with only one part-time paid employee, King's administrative assistant, and many activities conducted by member-volunteers. In 1997, it became apparent that more professional management was necessary, and the Council circulated a request for proposals for a permanent site and staff. Georgia State University submitted the winning proposal and the organization operated from there, with Dr. Ephraim R. McLean of Georgia State as Executive Director for 10 years. Currently, AIS has a paid Executive Director and a small number of staff members and contractors to handle membership, conferences, technology, and finances. Some degree of outsourcing allows AIS to reduce its dependence on volunteers.

In spite of professionalizing many operations, AIS still involves a great deal of volunteer work. There are several elected positions, including that of the President (and Past-President and President-Elect), Regional Representatives, and VPs. The VPs cover technology, communications, chapters, meetings and conferences, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), member services, and accreditation. Holding one of these positions carries with it an expectation of traveling to one or two meetings per year, responding to communications throughout the office-holder's tenure, and, most importantly, being innovative, and responsive to emerging issues and challenges.

Special Interest Groups began to be created in 2001. In November 2000, VP of Member Services Dennis Galletta conducted a survey of 11 other professional associations, and AIS fortunately compared favorably to those

associations when considering dues amount and services to members. One of the most striking services in many of those associations was in the area of SIGs, not yet offered by AIS at that time. After evaluating 12 proposals, a first slate of six were created. As of early 2009, there are 33 AIS SIGs. Many SIGs serve as valuable resources to members, as many of them provide valuable research and teaching resources, as well as newsletters, pre-conference activities, and conference tracks. With funding (actual and in-kind) from AIS, SIGHCI (Human-Computer Interaction), Syracuse University, and the University of Pittsburgh, Council has just created the first *Transactions* journals: *AIS Transactions of HCI (TOHCI)*, edited by Dennis Galletta and Ping Zhang, and *AIS Transactions on Enterprise Systems (TES)*, edited by Norbert Gronau. If these journals are a success, Council will entertain proposals from other SIGs for further *Transactions*.

Given the costs inherent in AIS initiatives and operations, it is important for AIS to generate revenue to cover a wide range of activities. Fortunately, one of the most important AIS activities is that of conferences, which both provide benefits to members and generate funds for the Association. Currently, 70% of the \$1.6 million AIS budget is funded by conferences. Based on strategic planning exercises initiated by President Michael Myers in 2006, Council has begun to explore ways in which the organization can use its intellectual capital to fund more of the costs of AIS. The recent move to expand memberships to practitioners will also broaden our base of revenue.

Milestones in the Evolution of AIS

The details of the evolution of AIS, as well as its truly global nature, may best be characterized by describing the foci of each president's term. As well, such a description may provide a useful case-study of the creation and development of a successful academic professional organization. The accomplishments are not necessarily reflective of a particular president but of the timing of the milestone. In many cases, the initiatives were accomplished over several presidential terms. Also, the affiliations of the President at that time are provided; in some cases they have either moved to other universities or retired.

1995 (Bill King, University of Pittsburgh, United States of America)

Bill King's administration represented the culmination of a history of imagining and planning. As described earlier, years of discussion about creating the Association were put into place at that time. Initial meetings were held to determine what the name of the organization would be (which was surprisingly difficult because of the diverse language structures and cultures), what services it would provide, what its structure would be, and to develop a strategic plan for its future development.

King arranged for AIS to support existing nascent conferences in Europe and Asia (ECIS—European Conference on Information Systems; PACIS—Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems) and asked Dennis Galletta to organize the Inaugural Americas Conference on IS (AMCIS) in Pittsburgh in August of 1995. The strategy for the conference was for it be complementary to ICIS in being inclusive, with a higher acceptance rate than that of ICIS (which is normally significantly lower than 20%), and with more of a focus on teaching. The first AMCIS generated 239 paper submissions and 149 were accepted by the program committee (chaired by Hugh Watson of the University of Georgia), representing a 62% acceptance rate. The 587 attendees in that first Americas regional conference enjoyed keynote talks by Tom Davenport, Herbert Simon, and James Wetherbe.

Attendees enjoyed a dinner/dance riverboat ride on the three rivers of Pittsburgh to kick off the Inaugural Conference. Such amenities were common at ICIS and AMCIS carried on this tradition. The conference was innovative in several ways: it featured electronic submissions and reviewing, electronic registration via Web site, teaching workshops, technology briefings, tutorials, and software demonstrations. Since 1995, the conference has been held each year in August, and attendance has risen to around 1000 attendees as membership in AIS has risen to nearly 4000.

Before the Inaugural AMCIS conference was held, there was some controversy as some Council members feared that regional conferences would erode the popularity of ICIS, which was generally perceived to be of such high quality that it constituted a "crown jewel" of the field. The fears proved to be unfounded as ICIS continued to attract 1000–1500 participants, and as all regional conferences have prospered.

The Association for IS began by making arrangements with several existing journals to provide a discounted subscription to a journal of choice to each member. Currently, members deal directly with any of 32 journals and provide their membership number to obtain the discount.

1996 (Niels Bjorn-Andersen, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark)

President Bjorn-Andersen worked to make sure that AIS was established as a true global organization. When he took office, his main efforts were aimed at stimulating support in the various regions through traveling to the major regional conferences. His message was that the field needed a global organization, and that AIS was not exclusively run by Americans. He garnered more members from the non-American regions and worked to make sure that officers represented all regions.

Council established membership for researchers from developing countries at a very affordable level, and Bjorn-Andersen initiated a series of negotiations on enlisting already existing local IS faculty organizations as chapters.

He stimulated improvements in the faculty directory service and integrated a European directory of faculty into the global directory done so well by Dave Naumann and his colleagues at the University of Minnesota.

1997 (Ron Weber, University of Queensland, Australia)

Several key milestones were reached in 1997. The seeds for a merger of AIS, ICIS, and ISWorld were planted. Discussions were held about making the *MIS Quarterly* available to all AIS members electronically. Also, two electronic AIS journals were begun: *Journal of the AIS* and *Communications of the AIS*. The first editor of the *Journal of the AIS* was Philip Ein-Dor, and the first editor of the *Communications of the AIS* was Paul Gray, both of whom developed the journals into the highly-ranked publications that they are today. Key decisions that year include the formation of an audit review committee, keeping the new journals in an electronic-only format, the development of strategic planning for AIS, and the genesis of the first AIS chapter (Southeastern United States of America).

1998 (Gordon Davis, University of Minnesota, United States of America)

Much of the complexity involved in building a global association was exhibited in this time period, as many initiatives took several years to come to fruition. For example, merger discussions between AIS and ICIS reached a crescendo during 1998. Also, trying to normalize many conference procedures as AMCIS began to mature, and ICIS continued in its 19th year. Significant attention was paid to conference and AIS finances, as there were some difficulties with an outside contractor who handled funds and conference implementation. During this period, relationships were cultivated with organizations worldwide for potential alliances.

1999 (Bob Galliers, University of Warwick, United Kingdom)

During 1999, plans for new Lyons Electronic Office (LEO) and Fellow awards were drafted to honor contributors to the field. Named after the world's first commercial application of computing (The LEO), the purpose of the LEO Award is to recognize truly outstanding individuals in the IS community, both academics and practitioners, who have made exceptional lifetime contributions to research in and/or the practice of IS. As of 2009, 21 LEO awards have been conferred.

The AIS Fellow award recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the IS discipline in terms of research, teaching, and service. A Fellow need not have excelled in all three categories. Nonetheless, she

or he is expected to have made exceptional contributions in at least one of these categories and to have made significant contributions in the other two categories. A Fellow is also expected to have made significant global contributions to the IS discipline as well as outstanding local contributions in the context of their country and region. As of 2009, 48 Fellow awards have been conferred.

2000 (Mike Vitale, University of New South Wales, Australia)

During 2000, final consolidation of AIS and ICIS was planned. Attorneys drew up the necessary paperwork, and the AIS constitution and other legal documents were thoroughly reviewed and updated to reflect the new non-profit corporate structure. Also, functions and procedures were refined for the office in Atlanta. Also that year, it was decided that a periodic member survey would be conducted and that AIS would become involved in curriculum and accreditation efforts.

2001 (Blake Ives, Louisiana State University, United States of America)

The consolidation of AIS and ICIS was finally completed and celebrated in New Orleans, Louisiana, in December 2001, complete with a wedding cake inscribed with "AIS + ICIS." Also that year, AIS became involved in *MIS Quarterly's* Policy Committee by having its VP of Publications as a member of the Committee, by appointing a member, and by choosing the Committee's chair every other term. Also, a contract was signed with *MIS Quarterly* and *MISQ Executive* to offer them both free to AIS members electronically. The Minnesota IS Faculty directory was integrated into the "ISWorld" online portal. That year, AIS responded formally to Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, the premiere accreditation agency for academic business programs, which had omitted MIS from its business program accreditation guidelines; AACSB subsequently "fixed" its guidelines and added a requirement for business programs to include MIS. This one initiative has led several schools to create a required MIS course, or to make sure that the required course was retained despite any curriculum innovations. Heavy membership discounts were offered to IS academics in "non-rich" countries. Finally, AIS began studying accreditation as a possible avenue for program development.

2002 (Phillip Ein-Dor, Tel Aviv University, Israel)

Budgetary integration of AIS and ICIS was accomplished for the first time in 2002, which was largely accomplished by AIS Treasurer Richard Elnicki. Also, global geographical integration was encouraged. New affiliations were struck with German and French IS Societies. An

agreement was reached with *MISQ Executive* to provide the journal electronically to all members. The electronic version of the *MIS Quarterly* was built. Previous ICIS and AMCIS proceedings were also provided online.

2003 (K.K. Wei, National University of Singapore)

In 2003, memberships from Region 3 achieved a greater than twofold increase, thus making AIS into a truly global community. A large number of chapters were created in 2003, including new chapters representing Chinese-speaking individuals and also those spanning different continents including Europe (Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, and United Kingdom), Middle East (Israel and Morocco), and Asia (Pakistan). Wei initiated a new strategic planning function for AIS. A new Code of Research Conduct was adopted by the AIS Council. A member survey was undertaken, which indicated a high degree of member satisfaction. Particular areas were noted for future decision making.

2004 (Richard Watson, University of Georgia, United States of America)

In 2004, two successive losses exceeding \$200,000 underscored the importance of cost cutting. Establishing the financial viability of AIS monopolized action during this term. The budget was scrutinized, and the cycle of losses was turned into more than a \$100,000 surplus. A number of actions were taken to establish the long-term financial health of AIS, including an analysis of the operations of AIS by the Finance Committee, chaired by Joe Valacich, and a review of the financial contributions of AMCIS and ICIS by a committee chaired by Malcolm Munro, VP of Meetings and Conferences.

Also, AIS replaced its in-house Web site system with an open-source content management system to reduce costs and improve the currency of the site.

2005 (Claudia Loebbecke, University of Cologne, Germany)

The e-library was enhanced in 2005 by allowing cross-searching of all AIS conferences. Also, new conferences were added to the e-library (those from conferences in Australia/Asia (ACIS), Bled, and Europe (ECIS)). Internationalization efforts continued, and hundreds of new members from China marked the success of that initiative. Also, membership fees in developing countries were lowered again to broaden the membership of AIS. The open source Web site was implemented. Model curricula were approved in conjunction with IEEE and ACM. The Distinguished Member award was initiated for honoring deceased members. As of 2008, there are three such members (Claudio Ciborra, Gerardine DeSanctis, and Heinz Klein). Finally, a new conference management firm was appointed to help with conference negotiation, planning, and execution.

2006 (Michael Myers, University of Auckland, New Zealand)

In 2006, a key event was a strategic planning meeting for AIS Council to provide a clear vision and direction for the future growth and development of AIS. This meeting marked the inauguration of a firm strategic planning function within AIS. Strategies were developed by AIS Council for internationalization, communications, journals, chapters and SIGs, conferences, accreditation, corporate sponsorship, and membership growth, amongst other things. Council developed a vision to transform AIS into a more professional association. An orientation program was established, whereby all new Council members are introduced to the principles of association leadership, the state of the association, the strategic plan, and the opportunities and challenges of their particular role whether it be vice-president or region representative. The AIS Technology Committee met and had its own strategic planning session. Recommendations that were adopted by AIS Council were the following: 1) Scholar One was adopted as the electronic review system for all AIS journals and conferences; 2) A revamped AIS Web site was launched, including regularly updated content on AIS SIGs and chapters; and 3) AIS Council agreed to fund an AIS association management system, an AIS e-library system and to bring together into one unified portal the AIS Web site and AISWorld. An affiliation of *Information Systems Journal* with AIS was approved. Two new journals were launched: an AIS Journal in Spanish and the Pacific Asia Journal of the AIS. Finally, a VP of Technology was introduced and the position filled by presidential appointment.

2007 (Dennis Galletta, University of Pittsburgh, United States of America)

During Galletta's term, a task force explored how to increase membership value and another worked on issues of member diversity. In a bold move to increase membership, Council decided to include practitioners as an important additional membership category. This move enables student chapters to provide a "membership path" for future members, and for graduates to serve as contacts for us and our current students. We also adopted a German language journal into the e-library, and Council insisted that full German text be included rather than only incorporate English abstracts. To address the enrollment downturns that had been experienced in the early twenty-first century, a committee maintained an AIS wiki for storing materials and strategies for student recruitment. A brochure "Picture yourself studying IS" was created for co-branding with interested schools. Further, a student video competition was held, and a Second Life half-island was purchased. To increase value to members, an AIS

discussion forum was created entitled “What in the World can AIS do for you?” AIS adopted the Senior Scholars’ “Basket” of six top IS journals and featured it prominently on the AIS Web site. Including six journals in the basket was seen as a solution to enhance the promotability of academics in a relatively new field in which the quality assessments of journals was previously highly variable across universities. The basket includes our own *Journal of AIS*, providing welcome recognition of the journal’s quality. Finally, the AISWorld and AIS Web sites were integrated based on a design contest that was won by Dave Haseman and Craig Claybaugh of University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee.

THE FUTURE OF AIS

The next two Presidents as of 2009 are David Avison (2008) of ESSEC Business School in Paris, and Bernard Tan (2009) of National University of Singapore. The member initiative, run by David Avison during 2007, and continued by Bernard Tan after Avison took over as President in July 2008, is a key component in determining the future of AIS. He has found that there is no shortage of ideas for extending the impact of AIS and broadening its reach. As of early 2009, the current membership is 3965, which is estimated to be over 50% saturation of the overall population of an estimated 7000 IS academics worldwide. Tables 1–3 provide details of the current AIS membership.

Conferences, journals, and associations are contacting AIS on an accelerating basis to explore partnering or merger. The international organization is taking on more regular roles in providing AIS plenary presidential addresses to all three regional conferences (AMCIS, ECIS and PACIS) in addition to ICIS. The Association for IS’ intellectual capital is recognized to be one key to improving the ability of AIS to become more self-sustaining and to reduce fund-raising pressure on conferences.

The Association for IS has come a long way from having nearly all operations completed by volunteers to having a professional staff and bank of consultants. The “professionalization” of the office has been gradual but dramatic. Memberships have grown over the years on a healthy basis. The decision to include practitioner members and student chapters should take AIS to a new level.

Table 1 Membership by category

Academic	2609
Student	1273
Professional	59
Retired Academic	24
Total	3965

Table 2 Membership by region

The Americas	2038
Europe and Africa	1289
Asia Pacific	638
Total	3965

Table 3 Top ten membership levels by country

United States	1768
Canada	170
Germany	165
United Kingdom	161
Australia	156
France	132
China	98
Taiwan	90
Sweden	79
Italy	74
Total top ten	2893

Appendix 1 AIS chapters

Name	Abbreviation	Web address
Australia and New Zealand	AAIS	http://www.aaisnet.org/
Benelux	BENAIIS	http://www.benais.nl/
Bulgaria	BulAIS	http://bulais.fmi.uni-sofia.bg/
China	CNAIS	http://cnais.em.tsinghua.edu.cn/cn/
Chinese-Speaking IS Community	Chinese Speaking Chapter	http://chinese.aisnet.org/
Egypt	EAIS	http://mis.aast.edu/EAIS/EAIS.htm
Greece	HeAIS	http://heais.uoa.gr/
Hong Kong	HKAIS	http://www.hkais.org/web_main/index.htm
Ireland	IAIS	http://www.iais.ul.ie/
Israel	IL-AIS	http://ilais.openu.ac.il/
Italy	ITAIS	http://www.itaais.org/
Japan	JPAIS	http://www.jpais.org
Japan (Nippon)	NAIS	http://nais.kcg.jp/
Korea	KrAIS	http://www.kmis.or.kr/english_1/KraisEvent.asp
Latin America and Caribbean	LACAIIS	http://lacais.aisnet.org/
Lichtenstein	LAIS	(to be announced)
MidWest United States of America	MWAIIS	http://www.mwais.org
Morocco	AIS Maroc	http://www.esigmaroc.com/aismaroc
Pakistan	AIS Pakistan	http://www.pais.org.pk/
Peru	PeruAIS	PeruAIS Web site
Poland	PLAIIS	http://www.plais.org/
Scandinavian	IRIS	http://www.cs.aau.dk/IRIS/
Slovenia	AIS Slovenia	http://ecom.fov.uni-mb.si/ais/index.htm
Southern United States of America	SAIS	http://sais.aisnet.org/
Spain	SPAIS	http://www.cc.uah.es/ie/org/spais/

Source: Adapted from the AIS Web Site.

Appendix 2 AIS SIGs

- SIGABIS (Agent-based Information Systems)
- SIGADIT (Coming Soon)
- SIGCCRIS (Special Interest Group on Cross-Cultural Research in Information Systems)
- SIGDSS (Decision Support, Knowledge and Data Management)
- SIGEBIZ (e-Business)
- SIGe-Culture (e-Culture)
- SIGe-Gov (Electronic Government)
- SIGGlobDev (ICT and Global Development)
- SIGED: IAIM (Education)
- SIGENTSYS (Enterprise Systems)
- SIGGIUIT (Global Improvements Using IT)
- SIGGTM (Grounded Theory Methodology)
- SIGHCI (Human-Computer Interaction)
- SIGHealth (IT in Health Care)
- SIGIQ (Information Quality)
- SIGISAP (IS/IT Issues in Asia Pacific)
- SIG IS-CORE (Information Systems—Cognitive Research Exchange)
- SIG ISO (IS Outsourcing)
- SIGITPM (IT Professional Management)
- SIGITProjMgmt (IT in Project Management)
- SIGLEAD (Leadership in IT)
- SIGMAS (Modeling and Simulation)
- SIGODIS (Ontology Driven Information System)
- SIGOSRA (Organizational Systems Research)
- SIGPAM (Process Automation and Management)
- SIGPhilosophy (Philosophy and Epistemology in IS)
- SIGPRAG (Pragmatist IS Research) coming soon
- SIGRLO (Reusable Learning Objects)
- SIGSAND (Systems Analysis and Design)
- SIGSEC (Security)
- SIG-ASYS (Accounting Information Systems)
- SIGSEMIS (Semantic Web and Information Systems)
- SIGSVC (Services)

Source: Adapted from the AIS Web Site.