



INTRODUCTION

Alternative genres in information systems research

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Abstract

In this special issue, we advocate a critical stance toward the presentational conventions that we – as authors, reviewers, and editors – accept as the academic article genre. We seek to highlight and illustrate the generative capacity and the significant role of genres in the production of knowledge. Furthermore, we wish to encourage Information Systems (IS) scholars to leverage a wider array of alternative genres to present their research in order to develop new insights on subject matters of interest to the IS discipline, as well as expand on how contemporary and emergent phenomena of interest are conceived and studied. Adopting a broad view of alternative genres, we solicited articles that apply unconventional presentational modalities to expand or challenge the prevailing modus operandi of communicating IS scholarship and practice. Six articles survived a rather lengthy and challenging review process. We briefly discuss the nature of the academic article genre and the role of alternative ways of writing. We also introduce the six exemplars of alternative genres in the special issue, namely conversation, French new novel, meditation, memoir, allegory, and crowdsourced research. We highlight key insights and contemplate their implications for current and future IS research.

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Background and aspirations

The construction of meaning is tightly related to genres of communication. A haiku is a Japanese poem or verse consisting of 17 syllables divided into three lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables, respectively. Although the restrictive structure and compressed form of this poetic genre have enabled rich modes of expression, they have also limited the tone, complexity, and rhetorical impact of haikus. Similarly, albeit with greater degrees of freedom, a scholarly article in a peer-reviewed journal is expected to conform to a normatively prescribed genre that is defined in terms of structure and content. Subsequently, at least in part, the scholarly genre confines what the article can say and how it can say it.

However, the academic article genre does not merely structure how research results are communicated; it also regulates how research is done by shaping how researchers frame and investigate the phenomenon of interest and how they interpret empirical data. With this *EJIS* special issue, we therefore advocate a critical stance toward the presentational conventions that we – as authors, reviewers, and editors – accept as the academic article genre. By exploring alternative ways of presenting

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Information Systems (IS) research, we seek to raise awareness of the significant role the journal paper genre plays in what and how we know in the IS discipline.

In this special issue, we seek to highlight and illustrate the potential role of genres in the production of knowledge within IS. Furthermore, we wish to encourage IS scholars to leverage the possibilities of the ever-increasing array of technological developments to present research in new ways, and in so doing, expand how contemporary and emergent phenomena of interest are conceived and studied.

The academic article genre

A genre is a typified communicative act that is characterized by an agreed-upon substance and form. Furthermore, a genre is enacted in response to a recurring situation (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). Examples include a novel, a letter of recommendation, and a meeting. As typical rhetorical practices, genres satisfy an objectified communicative need. The patterns of substance (i.e., purpose, rationale and content) and form (i.e., structure, medium and language system) evolve over time in a process that adapts these genre attributes to the needs of the communicating parties.

In the case of the academic article genre, substance includes the dissemination of new knowledge to academic and practitioner audiences that are typically associated with a given discipline. Form elements include the use of references to back up claims, formal language (e.g., third person to distance the author from the phenomenon being described), typified headings (e.g., abstract, literature review, method, findings, discussion), and length restrictions specified in terms of word or page counts.

A key benefit of genres is efficient and effective communication. The genre rules provide authors with guidelines for how to present the content they want to impart to others, and readers know where they are likely to find the content that is of interest to them (without having to read the entire document). As a typified structure that enables and constrains the communication of new knowledge within a discipline, the academic paper genre thus aligns readers' and writers' expectations.

However, unlike literary genres, the scientific article genre involves making claims of representing reality, describing facts, and articulating knowledge. This belies the notion that writing is a performative act that does not only describe events and phenomena, but also produces them (Austin, 1962). By naming events and phenomena, we constitute the reality that we purport to describe (e.g., Butler, 1997; Callon, 1998; Thrift, 2003). The everyday work of writing research is thus a practice that is constitutive of social life (Schultze & Orlikowski, 2010).

The generative role of alternative genres

The term alternative genres refers to new or unconventional forms of communicating. In research, an alternative genre relates to innovation with respect to semantic framing (Bateson, 1972), literary or representational styles (Jermier, 1985; Schultze, 2000; Mathiassen *et al*, 2012) – including drama (Avital & Vandenbosch, 2000), monologue (Kautz & Jensen, 2013) and narrative (Boland & Schultze, 1996) – as well as media of expression (Sousanis, 2015). As unconventional forms of contemplating, conceiving, experiencing and communicating research, alternative genres thus reflect new modalities of inquiry that serve as a source of inspiration, innovation and insight generation in our discipline.

Alternative genres are generative. By disrupting both how research is written and read, alternative genres rejuvenate how we embrace phenomena of interest and ultimately reshape how we understand and constitute the world. Overall, the application of alternative genres is a generative act (Avital & Te'eni, 2009) of reframing that provides authors and readers alike with an opportunity to take a fresh look at phenomena of interest, to challenge the normative status quo, and to generate new insights and gain deeper understanding thereof.

The exploration of alternative genre is in part propelled by resistance to the commodification of research outputs in contemporary academic life. There is ever-growing institutional pressure, reinforced by administrators and members of promotion and tenure committees who need to assess research productivity and research impact – often without deep domain knowledge to which the research contributes – to quantify, metricize and standardize. These trends have legitimated the pervasive standardization of research communication that is manifested by normative research article genres. Furthermore, both increased globalization as well as advances in information and communication technology have been contributing factors to the increasing standardization of scholarly genres (Swales, 2004).

This commoditization and standardization of how research is communicated, which finds its expression in rigorous enforcement of the academic article genre, has been criticized repeatedly (Fairclough, 1992, 2006). Key arguments include that poor genre variety cultivates myopic conformity and inhibits attempts at interdisciplinary research. The materialization of entrenched disciplinary norms in genres of representation impedes boundary spanning that is likely to lead to more holistic understandings of phenomena, as well as new insights.

Currently, the discourse that challenges the prevailing genre of communicating scholarships is growing. One approach to mitigate genre straightjackets is the development of journals with a unique and non-traditional approach to representation. For example, in efforts to challenge the uncompromising emphasis that Academy of Management journals place on theory and hypothesis formulation, the *Academy of Management Discoveries*

(AMD) journal aims to “promote exploratory empirical research of management and organizational phenomena that our theories do not adequately explain” (aom.org/amd). Advocating abductive reasoning (Van de Ven, 2016), AMD provides a premier outlet for data-driven “studies at the pre-theory stage of knowledge development, where it is premature to specify hypotheses” (ibid).

Another example is *Visible Language* (visiblelanguage-journal.com), a journal that is concerned with the unique role and properties of visual communication. Clearly, in this case, traditional text-based articles would be a poor vehicle to communicate related research. Subsequently, a basic tenet of the journal is that visual forms should be defined and explored on their own terms. The legitimization of visual forms in articles nurtures a thriving community of visual communication researchers.

In part, these reorientations toward alternative genres are fueled by shifts in the media landscape, particularly the pervasiveness and affordability of mobile devices and high-resolution screens. Publishers pay careful attention to the changing nature of media and continuously experiment with new formats that leverage emerging technologies to meet the changing needs of researchers. Examples include publishing digital-only journals (e.g., JAIS, CAIS, AMD), offering authors open access options, publishing manuscripts digitally prior to their appearance in print, making printed paper’s lengthy appendices or author presentations available online, and facilitating community-based discussion of published articles (Van de Ven, 2016).

Publishers are also looking into interactive and dynamic Data Viewers, direct access to contextual data and references, as well as multimedia-rich content presentation formats. Elsevier’s “Article of the Future” initiative is one such example (Pérez-Llantada, 2013). However, despite the clear benefits of these technology-based enhancements (Avital & Cyr, 2011; Gaskin *et al*, 2016) and the pioneering efforts of the publishers to embrace them, we have witnessed very slow diffusion of technology-enhanced genres and perplexing resistance to change from scholars.

Exemplars of alternative genres

This *EJIS* special issue was conceived during an ICIS panel on alternative genres in IS research (Avital *et al*, 2012), the presentations at the Visual Media Track in ICIS 2011 & 2012, and the Alternative Genre Track in ECIS 2012. Aiming to escape the “tyranny” of the prevailing genres, we envisaged alternative genres as an opportunity to rejuvenate IS research and to expand its boundaries (Rowe, 2012).

Adopting a broad view of alternative genres for this special issue, we solicited articles that apply unconventional presentational modalities to expand or challenge the prevailing *modus operandi* of communicating IS scholarship and practice. The call for papers invited both theoretical essays and empirical studies. We particularly

encouraged submissions that challenge or reframe our taken-for-granted assumptions, perceptions and practices related to (re)presenting IS research.

Six out of the 55 articles that were submitted to the special issue survived the rather lengthy review process. The non-conventionality of the submissions presented a challenge for authors, reviewers and editors given the ambiguity around the publishability of articles written in an alternative genre. The papers included in this special issue are thus the product of intense collaborative work among authors, reviewers and editors. We are grateful to all involved and particularly the authors’ perseverance.

As is customary in editorials that introduce a special issue (no alternative editorial genre here ☺), we now provide a brief summary of each paper, highlighting the rhetorical or literary genre it applies, to what end and to what effect. We then contemplate the potential of each of these genres for IS research.

Conversation

In their paper on the limits to language in systems design, which was conceived 25 years ago, Boland & Lyytinen (2017) conjure up a technology (i.e., the Memex) in order to bring six philosophers – some living, some dead – into a social setting where they can engage in a conversation with one another. The reader is invited to listen in on the roundtable discussion where each luminary thinker speaks in his own voice on his “positions on language, limits, systems, and design.” Their conversation revolves around the problematic that this *EJIS* special issue is concerned with, namely that the limits of our language are the limits of our world (Wittgenstein, 1922). The debate that unfolds reveals the extent to which the philosophers (dis)agree with one another.

The authors describe their research as performative in the sense that it is practice-led (Haseman, 2006). However, it is also performative in the sense that it is produced in the ‘doing’ (Barad, 2007) of the roundtable discussion. The content and insights of this manuscript are emergent as the conversation and the characters take on a life of their own. This implies that the authors are compelled to partially relinquish control over the text. While they channel the philosophers’ voices, they also wait “to see what happens.”

What emerges is a fluid exchange of ideas that meanders rather than follows a pre-determined trajectory. As any conversation, the interaction is replete with the non-sequiturs, interruptions, unanswered questions and personal expressions. Its dialogic nature stands in contrast to the monologic quality of conventional academic papers. Nevertheless, as if to give the academic journal genre its due when it comes to communicating a coherent message, the authors leave the reader with a conclusion of sorts; the conversation closes with a summary of the discourse offered by two of the philosophers.

French new novel

While the conversational genre as employed by Boland & Lyytinen (2017) enriches philosophical text by breathing life into their philosopher-authors and turning them into characters, Avison *et al* (2017) advance a genre for presenting qualitative IS research that decenters human actors. This is achieved by stripping the text of the author's voice and all actors' character traits. By removing the researcher's interpretation from empirical descriptions and limiting the text to what can be seen – particularly objects and actions – readers are confronted by rich accounts that they have to interpret themselves. While this shifts the effort of imagining, narrating and theorizing to the reader, it also opens the text to multiple possibilities.

This genre of (re)presentation is inspired by the French new novel, which developed as a critical reaction to the conventional novel that was characterized by an omniscient narrator, unchanging character, a well-defined and coherent plot, and chronological development of time and space. While these properties made the novel easy to read and an escape from the vagaries and uncertainty of everyday life, these simplifications also risk producing unreflective readers that are ill equipped to deal critically with life's complexities and inconsistencies. The purpose of the French new novel genre was thus to engage the reader as a truth-seeking detective.

Avison *et al* (2017) argue that similar critiques can be levied against case study research in IS, which favors narrative coherence over empirical comprehensiveness. As a challenge to the conventional case study genre, the authors thus offer us a bricolage of three meetings (and communications related to them) that were observed during one of the authors' field studies. This (re)presentation contains multiple sources and types of empirical materials, ambiguities, unresolved differences in points of view and interview quotes of doubtful truthfulness. The key objective of this style of writing is to keep the text open for readers to develop their own plot lines and theories, and to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of the phenomena of interest.

Meditation

In contrast to Avison *et al* (2017) reliance on a genre that strips the text of things that are not observable (e.g., emotions), Bødker (2017) employs a genre that allows him to elicit and (re)present felt experience (i.e., bodily sensations, affect), which is typically unobservable and difficult to articulate given the limits of language. Bødker (2017) argues that to pursue the experiential research agenda (Yoo, 2010), the field of IS needs to move beyond asking what people *do* with technology (i.e., the practice perspective) to what it feels like to be increasingly entangled with ubiquitous technology (i.e., the felt experiential perspective). Since affect and the sensory are generally treated as excessive and outside of IS research, this paper uses the question 'what else is there beyond practice?' as a leitmotiv.

To access embodiment and affect, Bødker (2017) draws on meditation as a genre for generating and representing his own everyday encounters with his smart phone. Meditation is both a practice and a genre of writing that brings deep introspection of our embodied sensations (i.e., affective introspection) together with empathetic accounts (e.g., the passion of Christ) instructing readers how to feel. In this latter sense of impacting the readers, meditation is dually affective and creates an opening for embodiment and affect to constitute researchable entities.

By means of three meditations of his personal, lived experience of being entangled with his cell phone, Bødker (2017) demonstrates how IS might approach the embodied and sensory dimensions of experiential computing and what 'going beyond practice' might look like. He invites IS researchers to become attuned to their bodily sensations in their engagement with technology (e.g., goose bumps, slight premonitions, concern for the device's well-being) in order to push the experiential computing agenda forward.

Memoir

Like Bødker (2017), Prasopoulou (2017) draws on auto-ethnographic data of everyday life with technology in order to offer insights on experiential computing. By drawing on her personal experience with wearable technology, specifically an activity tracker, she seeks to problematize prevalent organizing visions of a data-driven life as people increasingly live in the Internet of Things. Furthermore, highlighting the central role the sensate body plays in experiential computing, Prasopoulou (2017) seeks to critique the IS discipline's recent materialist turn (e.g., Orlikowski & Scott, 2008), which is largely devoid of human bodies (Jones, 2014).

Adopting the non-fictional, literary genre of the memoir, which entails the narration of and analytic reflection on the author's own lived life in his/her own voice, Prasopoulou (2017) anchors her research in a childhood experience of enchantment, where a burn that temporarily changed her body resulted in her meeting the world in new, surprising and unforeseen ways. Her sense of embodiment was 'turned up and recharged' as she interacted with others, objects and space through her altered body. Compared to this intensely affective childhood experience, her initial use of a fitness tracker, which likewise represented a change (i.e., addition) to her body, was disappointing. It was only with repeated, persistent use of and experimentation with the devices over a two year period that a new relationship with her body and the space it inhabits emerged. In other words, enchantment was an effortful accomplishment.

This paper demonstrates the possibilities that memoir as a presentational genre offers research on experiential computing. Not only does the memoir allow us to draw on past embodied experience to gain insight into the body's contemporary entanglement with technology, but by encouraging the author to reflect on past experience,

it also accommodates the dual nature of the body as simultaneously passive and agential. It is these qualities that render memoir conducive to examining how individual users negotiate the entanglement of digital technologies in their everyday lives.

Allegory

While both mediations and memoirs are non-fictional genres that promote self-reflection and self-revelation on the part of the researcher, Kaarst-Brown (2017) illustrates the use of allegory, a fictional tale, to develop coherent metaphors and symbols capable of illuminating multiple truths that are otherwise inaccessible in either organizational life or the realist tales told about it. Similar to Avison *et al* (2017), Kaarst-Brown's (2017) objective is to employ an alternative genre to challenge conventional case studies that close the window of interpretation by developing a story characterized by linearity, certainty, and inevitability. In contrast, by conveying meanings that are not explicitly spelled out in the narrative, allegory opens up the possibility for readers to develop a variety of multilayered interpretations.

Drawing on a comparative case study of the role of culture in strategic IT alignment, Kaarst-Brown (2017) demonstrates the effectiveness of allegory in IS research by means of short vignettes, as well as visual representations of the mythical characters (i.e., dragons and wizards) that feature in the fairy tales. In addition, the paper presents guidelines so that researchers can develop their own allegoric tales. Given that the latter is the paper's primary objective, the manuscript differs from the first four papers in this special issue in that it conforms to the conventional genre of an academic journal publication.

Crowdsourced research

Similarly following a conventional genre, Love & Hirschheim (2017) develop an alternative IS research agenda that leverages mass collaboration among scholars by highlighting the potential of new information and communication technology to address what many regard as a broken model of knowledge production. They argue that IS should play a leading role in developing a new technology-enabled approach to research production, which they label the crowdsourced research genre.

As a genre system (Orlikowski & Yates, 1994), i.e., a complex web of interrelated, typified communicative acts that constitute a practice, the crowdsourced research genre differs in scope and meaning from the presentational genres on which the other papers in this special issue are focused. Specifically, the research genre addresses all phases of research, from generating ideas, through funding, executing and assessing the research, to applying the results.

Drawing on insights derived from crowdsourcing in non-academic settings (i.e., citizen journalism, open source software development and Wikipedia), Love & Hirschheim (2017) develop a number of key themes that

IS research will need to explore in order to become a leader in the application of the crowdsourced research genre. These include issues of incentives that will motivate scholars to contribute to this new mode of knowledge production, intellectual property protections and the role of anonymity in this collaborative model. By describing the crowdsourced research genre in terms of both its opportunities and challenges, this paper echoes Van de Ven's (2016) observation that engaging the audience in dialog and thereby expanding the research beyond the published text is unlikely to generate 'pretty pictures, but it makes for better social science.'

The future of alternative genre in IS research

Genre pluralism is already welcome in *EJIS* (Te'eni *et al*, 2015), and the special issue on alternative genres is another unequivocal testament to this pledge. By definition, alternative genres are an exception to the rule. They serve as a generative mechanism that helps to spark scholarly insights by pursuing the path less traveled, at least for a time. Off the beaten track, we are forced to loosen constraints, to acquire new practices, and to boost mental flexibility with the expectation of new knowledge and insight as our reward. However, we realize that the risks and ambiguities required to not only write but also read alternative genres in IS research are not for everyone. In that respect, this special issue might be seen as a frivolous exercise by some, a stretch goal by others and a welcome breath of fresh, innovation-inviting air by yet others.

Authors should not expect from this special issue clear templates for how to apply alternative genres to IS research. Similarly, we cannot and do not wish to offer review guidelines for reviewer and editors. What is the future of alternative genres in light of this? How can papers written in such unconventional ways be nurtured through a traditional review process in our journals? Based on our experience with this special issue, the conventional double-blind review process had its limits given the ambiguity of what a publishable alternative genre paper should look like. What seemed most productive was intensive one-on-one editor-author dialog. We would therefore recommend that alternative genre papers be reviewed in the kind of team-based, developmental fashion that *MISQ Executive* pursues with some papers. It entails assembling a review team that discusses the paper in order to come to agreement on its merits and possible directions forward. The editor's feedback to the authors synthesizes this discussion, thus providing a coherent and more manageable set of expectations. With subsequent rounds of revisions, the authors, reviewers, and editors interact directly, thus abandoning the conventional double-blind review protocols.

Moreover, we can also envision an open peer review process in which alternative genre papers that pass an editorial screening process are made available for public peer review. Although open peer review is not prevalent

today, it is already practiced in the natural sciences where it is touted as a way to enhance the effectiveness, transparency, and quality assurance of published papers (Ford, 2015). Building on the crowdsourcing research genre outlined by Love & Hirschheim (2017), a certain form of open peer review is likely to help facilitating the review and development of alternative genre papers.

While alternative genres are the exception by definition, there is a chance that some will become mainstream over time as more and more researchers experiment with them. We can imagine, for example, that the auto-ethnographic approach presented in the form of meditation (Bødker, 2017), and memoir (Prasopoulou, 2017) in this special issue, will be pursued by other scholars interested in contributing to the experiential computing (Yoo, 2010) research agenda. These genres hold much promise with regard to exploring the experience of our body's everyday entanglements with technology. Since the sensate, human body has been largely omitted from IS research, these alternative approaches are likely to open the door for a new stream of research. As these genres are refined and criteria for evaluating them are developed, they are likely to lose their designation as being alternative or different. Just like interpretive and design science research, these auto-ethnographic modes of research and self-reflexive styles of writing might move from the fringe to the mainstream.

Alternative genres are an acquired taste. With this special issue, we intend to illustrate the value of alternative genres to IS scholarship and to evoke debate about our taken-for-granted norms around the academic journal genre. What might be some ways in which the genres featured in this special issue could be applied in IS research? In order to stimulate potential answers to and ongoing conversation around this question, we offer a number of ideas.

In light of the considerable attention that literature reviews have received in recent years (e.g., Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015; Oates *et al*, 2012; Rowe, 2014; Webster & Watson, 2002) and the special section that many journals dedicate to this manuscript type, it would be interesting to explore the conversational genre illustrated by Boland & Lyytinen (2017) in literature reviews. A conversational literature review would most certainly produce an engaging text, but also one that is likely to be partial and lacking in narrative coherence. However, might a conversational literature review lead to a deeper and more critical engagement with a subset of arguments and empirical results, i.e., a practice that Alvesson & Sandberg (2011) label problematization? Could this form of interacting with prior research help the IS discipline move beyond a more superficial gap-spotting (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011) treatment of the prior literature?

The application of genres like allegory and the French new novel to the (re)presentation of empirical material in case study research further raises some interesting possibilities. Given the interpretive openness that these genres

foster, might papers that apply these alternative modes of presentation generate the necessary motivation for scholars to engage in the kind of knowledge crowdsourcing practices that Love & Hirschheim (2017) advocate? Even though journals like AMD are already experimenting with ways of fostering debate of published papers (Van de Ven, 2016), might such efforts be energized by presenting case studies in ways that invites interpretation by the reader, rather than shuts it down as the conventional academic paper genres is designed to do?

Furthermore, what if teaching cases were written in the style of allegory and the French new novel? To what extent might we teach students to question the reliability of sources, the moral character of actors, and the plausibility of events? What if the 'facts from the case' needed to be constructed rather than memorized by students? What would a case-based class discussion look like if the teaching case did not lead students down an interpretive path but expected them to develop their own, alternative points of view? Imagining such a case-based class discussion, do we see chaos and confusion, and students complaining that they don't know what they are supposed to learn? Or do we see productive debates where students and teachers are required to explain the narratives they construct and to listen empathetically to others' configurations of facts and interpretations? Either way, the classroom experience would most probably look and feel very different from the one many of us teaching Harvard-style cases endeavor to orchestrate now.

The future of highly personal, non-fictional genres such as meditation and memoir is particularly interesting. These genres are particularly conducive to research on experiential computing, which demands increased attention to the sensate, affective body that is becoming more and more entangled with a variety of technologies, particularly mobile and wearable devices and image-rich social media. Both Bødker (2017) and Prasopoulou (2017) draw on auto-ethnographic data for their research, suggesting that the 'field' no longer has to be a place 'out there' that the researcher has to enter. Instead, for experiential computing, the self-aware, sensate researcher that is willing to make himself/herself vulnerable, is a viable researcher site.

A key question is how this stream of experiential computing will evolve. Will we see auto-ethnographic methods and self-revealing genres of representation go mainstream, or will they represent an intermediate step in the evolution of research into experiential computing? For example, can we imagine that meditations and memoirs teach IS researchers how to feel and develop the kind of sensibilities that allows them to teach their participants how to get in touch with their feelings in a more traditional, 'field-out-there' study? In other words, is it the genres that will thrive or the insights they help generate?

And, of course, we would encourage the pursuit of the research agenda that Love & Hirschheim (2017) outline. Moving into a post-industrial mode of knowledge production as represented by the crowdsourced research genre will require the transformation of many of academia's – not just the IS discipline's – institutional structures. It would be exciting to see intrepid members of the community explore this new genre system empirically.

Conclusion

With this special issue, we hope to inspire IS scholars to experiment with new, unconventional and underrepresented modes of (re)presentation in order to develop and demonstrate new insights and perspectives on subject matters of interest to the IS discipline (e.g., rethink our positions on language, limits, systems and design), to make new phenomena accessible (e.g., embodiment and affect in experiential computing) and new research practices possible (e.g., greater audience engagement, more interdisciplinarity). Specifically, we believe that the application of alternative genres as a practice in IS research would help us get a better grasp on the dialectic tension between the situated and the universal in the prevailing academic article genres, which Kallinikos *et al* (2015) refer to as the inherent friction between the perceived domain-bound nature of representation and its context-free characterization.

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In addition to application of and experimentation with the alternative genres introduced in this special issue, we hope to see extensions, variations and mutations of established IS research paper genres. We also encourage the application of many other established literary genres (e.g., drama, fiction, parody, satire, comics) to convey IS scholarship. Last but not least, we hope this special issue stimulates increased exploration of media-enabled research practices as outlined by Love & Hirschheim (2017), as well as media-enriched genres of (re)presentation, including video and agent-based conversations. Additionally, multimedia could be used to convey data and evidence from interviews as dynamic visual presentations of insightful data patterns, and virtual and augmented reality technologies might be employed to develop genres such as immersive experience of phenomena or research insights.

We want to thank the many authors and reviewers that have made this special issue possible, and we leave its contributions in the hands of IS scholars as generative mechanisms for moving our research forward.

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