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A Brief History of the Midwest Association for Information Systems: 2005-2020

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Abstract

The Midwest Association for Information Systems (MWAIS), founded in 2005, was recognized as an outstanding chapter of the Association for Information Systems (AIS) for all five years of the award (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018). MWAIS continues to grow and serve academics in the Midwest and the surrounding region through annual conferences, meetings and receptions at national and international conferences, and through its journal, Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems (JMWAIS). This article briefly describes the impetus and actors instrumental in the creation of the association and the current state of MWAIS, its conferences, and the journal.

Keywords: History, Founding MWAIS, Founding JMWAIS, Midwest Association for Information Systems

1. Introduction

The Midwest Association for Information Systems (MWAIS) has been in existence for 15 years. Founded in Fall 2005, MWAIS is an organization of Information Technology academic and industry professionals that creates a regional network where they can work together to advance the region in addition to meeting the shared needs for professional development and scholarly collaboration. The goal of MWAIS is to "promote the exchange of ideas, experience, and knowledge among scholars and professionals in the Midwest region in the development, management, and use of information and communication systems and technology." The MWAIS serves Association for Information Systems (AIS) members across the Midwest region of the United States from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. MWAIS meetings are held yearly in the region and offer an opportunity for academic and social interactions with colleagues.

AIS has made a commitment to expanding chapters both globally and regionally. The regional conferences create affordable opportunities for academic engagement. According to Daniel Power, one of the founding members of MWAIS, the association helps regional researchers to network and work together to advance in professional development and to improve scholarly collaboration. The structure of the organization allows for continuity between events and allows MWAIS to be active throughout the year. With the addition of the *Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems (*JMWAIS), the organization provides another quality peer-reviewed outlet for Information Systems scholarship. Throughout the years, MWAIS has genuinely supported the goal of offering a chance to make life long professional friends!

2. A Brief History of Information Systems

It is necessary to briefly review the history of the IS field and the formation of the Association for Information Systems (AIS) to appreciate the history of MWAIS. The Information Systems (IS) field has a unique yet rich history. In its formative stages, information systems (IS) programs in business schools were part of other academic disciplines like accounting, economics, management, and operations research. Hence, many of the early IS researchers had professional affiliations in other disciplines. Over the years, there has been considerable effort expended by IS researchers to establish Information Systems as a discipline.

The first International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) was held in Philadelphia in 1980 . This conference was created by senior IS scholars predominantly from North America. However, the conference grew, and scholars worldwide considered it as an opportunity to interact with researchers in the field.

The Association for Information Systems (AIS) was created by the efforts of many, especially William R King from the University of Pittsburgh. The initial effort by Dr. King was to conduct a study on the issues of creating a comprehensive academic association and the factors affecting the level of support for such an organization. In the process of the study, he found that many of the senior scholars were interested in the idea of creating a scholarly association. He formed an organizing committee consisting of 40 senior scholars around the world, solicited membership, created an organization having 1800 members in 6 months, and became the first President. In addition to ICIS, there are national and multi-national conferences like AMCIS, ECIS, and PACIS to cater to the regional scholarly IS community. The impact of these national conferences led to the demand for regional conference opportunities to further chances for collaboration, thus paving the way for AIS-sponsored organizations like MWAIS. More information on the history of AIS is online at https://history.aisnet.org/.

3. Beginnings of MWAIS

MWAIS was conceived in August 2005. The initial idea developed during conversations between Dan Power, University of Northern Iowa, and Troy Strader, Drake University, at the 11th annual AMCIS meeting in Omaha, Nebraska, USA, August 11-14, 2005. Based on the enjoyable AMCIS social event that year held at the Omaha Zoo, they thought it would be a good idea to have a yearly meeting at universities around the Midwest for both academic and social interactions. Ilze Zigurs, University of Nebraska-Omaha, joined them along with 23 others in submitting a proposal to found MWAIS on September 7, 2005. Ilze Zigurs helped Dan Power craft the initial by-laws to define the preliminary structure of MWAIS.

The early years focused on organizing the yearly meeting and establishing the framework for the executive committee to govern. As the process and by-laws evolved, the committee actively met monthly during the academic year and developed a website to promote the organization. Over time, additional events were added to the committee calendar, including occasional meetings or gatherings during national and international AIS conferences. In addition to the conferences, the committee has supported the offering of panels on topics relevant to research or teaching as well as highlighting topics of interest in the MWAIS newsletters.

4. The First of Many Conferences

The first MWAIS meeting was in May 2006 at Grand Valley State University. The meeting established the typical structure for subsequent events with an agenda of presentations and panels followed by a social event held that year at the Gerald Ford library and museum. On the following day, there were more presentations and a business meeting with elections of officers. In 2007, the annual meeting was in Springfield, Illinois at the University of Illinois-Springfield with a social event at a presidential museum–the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Linrary and Museum. It became a joke that the meeting could only happen in towns where there was a presidential museum! Of course, that has not been the case; the conference has met all over the Midwest (See Table 1 for the list of MWAIS conference hosts).

Year	Conference Hosted By
2006	Grand Valley State University
2007	University of Illinois Springfield
2008	University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire
2009	Dakota State University
2010	Minnesota State University, Moorhead
2011	University of Nebraska Omaha
2012	University of Wisconsin, Green Bay
2013	Illinois State University
2014	Iowa State University
2015	Pittsburg State University
2016	University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
2017	University of Illinois Springfield
2018	University of Missouri, St. Louis
2019	University of Wisconsin, OshKosh
2020	Drake University

Table 1: List of MWAIS conference hosts

The annual MWAIS meeting represents a time to share budding or novel research with academic peers and has always allowed ample time to socialize between sessions and over meals. The meetings foster engagement between faculty, students, and practitioners in the context of panels, presentations, and social events. Figures 1 and 2 are from the first MWAIS conference. Professor Gordan Davis, University of Minnesota, was the keynote speaker at the Grand Valley State Conference.

Figure 1: Gordan Davis receiving an award from Simha Magal and Deepak Khazanchi

Figure 2: Dan Power and Gordon Davis engaging in conversations with conference attendees at the First Conference at Grand Valley State University

5. Milestones Of MWAIS

MWAIS has a short but meaningful legacy of 15 years. In 2020, Drake University is hosting the 15th MWAIS conference in Des Moines, Iowa. Over the last fifteen years, MWAIS has grown as an association. The following summarizes the timeline and major milestones of MWAIS. The milestones are not necessarily reflective of any particular President but rather the group as a whole.

MWAIS 2006

The first annual MWAIS conference was at Grand Valley, Michigan. The conference had 54 paid participants and 25 papers presented. Dan Power served as the interim President, and the conference was co-chaired by Simha Magal and Paul Leidig. Dan Power considers Gordon Davis' Keynote at MWAIS 2006 conference as one of the most memorable events in MWAIS history. According to Pete Tensley, the then deputy executive director of AIS, MWAIS, and SAIS (Southern AIS) were the only two chapters of AIS. The MWAIS chapter newsletter was created that year, and the MWAIS website was expanded.

MWAIS 2007

The University of Illinois-Springfield hosted the second MWAIS conference that was co-chaired by Rassule Hadidi and In Lee. Program co-chairs were Matthew Nelson and Arkalgud Ramaprasad. The academic keynote speaker was Blake Ives. The industry keynote speaker was Ronald Swift, vice president of cross-industry solutions for Teradata. Some amendments were made to the by-laws during this conference meeting. The period of office was changed from two years to one year for President, President-elect, and past-President. The term of secretary and treasurer remained at two years.

MWAIS 2008

MWAIS conference in 2008 was hosted by the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire and was co-chaired by Matt Germonprez and Jakob Iversen. During this conference meeting, the MWAIS president Deepak Khazanchi presented the service award to Dan Power for his service to MWAIS as the founding president and past president of MWAIS.

MWAIS 2009

Simha Magal was the MWAIS president during this time. The MWAIS 2009 conference on the theme "Information Technology in service industry" was hosted by Dakota State University and was co-chaired by Omar El-Gayar and David Olson. The keynote speakers for the conference were Kevin DeWald and Hesham Ali.

MWAIS 2010

The MWAIS 2010 conference, co-chaired by Ashish Gupta and Mani Subramani, was hosted by Minnesota State University, Moorhead. MWAIS president Rassule Hadidi presented Ilze Zigurs with a service award for her service to MWAIS as the At-large director of MWAIS.

MWAIS 2011

University of Nebraska – Omaha hosted the 6th MWAIS conference and was co-chaired by Gert-Jan de Vreede and Fred Niederman. The theme of the conference was on the multi-disciplinary nature of IT research and practice. The program co-chairs were Stacie Petter and Fiona Nah. The conference included research-in-progress and full papers on pedagogy, research and services in IT/IS and the academic keynote speaker was Moez Limayem.

MWAIS 2012

Gaurav Bansal chaired the MWAIS 2012 conference hosted by the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay. The seventh MWAIS conference had an emphasis on privacy, security, sustainability, innovation, and collaboration. Alan Henver and Dov Te'eni were the academic keynote speakers.

MWAIS 2013

The 8th MWAIS conference was hosted by Illinois State University. The conference focused on the role of Big Data in organizations and was co-chaired by Bryan Hosack and Gabriel Giardano. Joey George was the academic keynote speaker for the conference, he presented his perspective on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Rob Thomas, Vice President for Big Data at IBM Software Services, and Steve Pettit, Director of Systems at State Farm Insurance, presented industry keynotes on the impact of the changing data landscape on organizations. A highlight of the conference was a tour of State Farm Insurance's three-story data center and emerging technologies lab tour.

MWAIS 2014

The award for the best chapter of AIS was introduced in 2014. MWAIS was named as the outstanding AIS chapter for the first time. Iowa State University hosted the MWAIS 2014 conference in Ames, Iowa. Joey George was the conference chair, and Zhengrui Jiang and Kevin Scheibe were program co-chairs. Dr. Munir Mandviwalla of Temple University was the academic keynote speaker. Geoff Wood, founder of Welch Avenue and COO of Startup Genome, James Eliason, Co-Founder and CEO of Goodsmiths, and John Jackovin, Founder of Bawte, all discussed startups in Iowa and the Midwest.

MWAIS 2015

In 2015, the 10th MWAIS conference was in Pittsburg, Kansas, chaired by Dr. Peter Rosen. The Kelce College of Business at Pittsburg State University hosted the meeting at Bicknell Family Center for the Arts in May 2015. This conference covered a wide array of topics and several informative sessions. There were seven tracks, including security; leadership, government, and governance; knowledge management and decision support; healthcare; adoption and use; social-media, and e-commerce. The same year, MWAIS introduced the new *Journal of the MWAIS* – JMWAIS. The inaugural volume of the journal had two issues containing ten articles. MWAIS was named as the outstanding chapter of AIS for the second time.

MWAIS 2016

The School of Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee hosted the 11th MWAIS conference. The conference theme was "Bigger, Smarter, Safer: Game Changers for Information Systems" focusing on how organizations use IT to adapt, learn and respond effectively to a rapidly changing environment. The conference included 22 research and research-in-progress academic presentations.

MWAIS 2017

The 12th MWAIS conference hosted by the University of Illinois Springfield and chaired by Rassule Hadidi. . Program co-chairs were Fiona Nah and Roya Gholami. This year, a poster session and a "slam" session were introduced to the conference. Slam sessions give the opportunity to authors to give a five-minute presentation of their work in its early stages. The slam sessions gave authors early feedback on their research ideas.

MWAIS was recognized as the outstanding chapter of the AIS for the fourth time. In 2017, MWAIS rolled out a newly designed website (http://mwais.org). After soliciting feedback from the members of the organization, a new website was designed and implemented through the nonprofit program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's School of Information Studies. In addition to the new website, MWAIS maintains a presence on aisnet.org and a LinkedIn group.

MWAIS 2018

University of Missouri – St. Louis hosted the 13th conference of MWAIS. For the fifth time, MWAIS was recognized as an outstanding chapter of the AIS. During the 2017-2018 time period, the face of MWAIS was redesigned. A new logo that represents the expanded MWAIS community was created. The MWAIS newsletters were given a more professional and updated look. Figure 3 shows the previous and current logo of MWAIS.

Figure 3: The previous logo (left) and the current logo (right) of MWAIS.

As with any volunteer organization, it takes the dedicated work of the executive board to maintain the health and direction of the organization. The prior MWAIS Presidents (shown in Table 2), are only one piece of the leadership puzzle. To recognize the excellent work performed by board members, the executive board of MWAIS voted to create an outstanding officer award to recognize members of the MWAIS executive board for their exceptional leadership, dedication, and commitment to the chapter. The awards are presented during the MWAIS conference. In 2018, Ryan Schuetzler (secretary) was awarded the outstanding officer for his work and contribution to the MWAIS logo redesign.

Also, Shana Ponelis received the outstanding officer award for her dedicated work as President and the for leading the website redesign project with the help of the student team from the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee.

Year	President
2006	Daniel Power
2007	Daniel Power
2008	Deepak Khazanchi
2009	Simha Magal
2010	Rassule Hadidi
2011	Matt Germonprez
2012	Amit Deokar
2013	Ashish Gupta
2014	Martina Greiner
2015	Gaurav Bansal
2016	Bryan Hosack
2017	Kevin Scheibe
2018	Shana Ponelis
2019	Dave Larson
2020	Ryan Schuetzler

Table 2: List of Presidents of MWAIS

MWAIS 2019

The 2019 MWAIS conference was hosted by the Univerity of Wisconsin, Ashkosh. Webinars were initiated in 2019 to improve the outreach to members of the MWAIS community. The webinars are based on interesting research done in the Midwest region. The first webinar was conducted in November 2019 by Gaurav Bansal and Noah Redfearn on their work on "Trust violation and rebuilding after a data breach: role of environmental stewardship and underlying motives."

6. Ongoing Success

In 2020, Drake University will host the 15th annual MWAIS conference in Des Moines, Iowa. Each year the annual conference has seen participants from all over the Midwest, surrounding states, and even a few from outside the US. The conference has served as an excellent way for Midwest colleagues to re-connect in a more personal setting than what is found in the larger national and international AIS conferences. Additionally, the relationships that are deepened at the regional conference make AMCIS and ICIS more enjoyable, as MWAIS members interact at the MWAIS receptions. Another benefit of the regional conference is the scholarships made available for graduate students with accepted papers. These scholarships have provided affordable opportunities for the next generation of faculty to engage with experienced scholars, present their research, and receive feedback in a friendly and relaxed environment.

To enable the success of the conferences, the MWAIS has an active executive board. Serving on the board are the President, President-elect, Immediate Past-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Membership and Publicity Director, and At-Large Director. The executive board meets monthly to discuss any relevant business and to ensure the next conference planning is moving forward smoothly. Other business discussed by the board is proposals from universities for future conferences. To help program chairs successfully plan their conference, the executive board has formalized procedures, established budget expectations, and outlined best practices. These procedures serve to provide conference planners with helpful support, and they help to minimize surprises or potential problems.

7. Journal of the MWAIS

The Journal of the Midwest Association for Information Systems (http://jmwais.org) was initially proposed in September 2013 by Rassule Hadidi, while serving as At-Large Director of MWAIS in a meeting of the MWAIS executive committee. The executive committee approved the proposal in October of that year to provide an additional research outlet for the region and beyond. Daniel Power was named the Editor-in-Chief, and Rassule Hadidi became the Managing Editor. The journal has a full panel of Senior and Associate Editors. The inaugural issue, published in January

2015, contained six articles on a variety of IT-based topics.

The editorial emphasis is on interdisciplinary research involving information systems or information technology and MIS from organizational and individual perspectives. JMWAIS strives to be unique, in both its interdisciplinary information systems focus and its commitment to authors of an expedited and constructive review process. Specifically, the editorial policy encourages authors from various disciplines to submit interesting IS/T and MIS related manuscripts. The editorial board emphasizes a balanced vision between rigor and relevance with a focus on both academic, scholarly-oriented as well as practitioner-oriented.
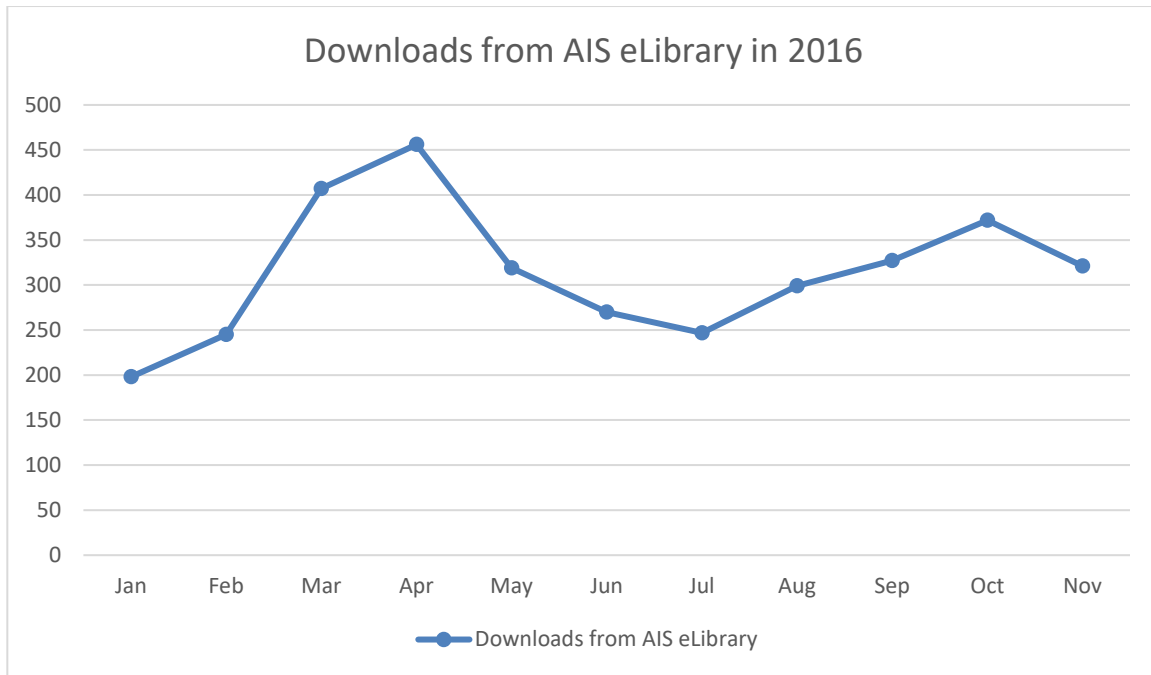

Fig 4: Monthly statistics of JMWAIS download from AIS eLibrary during the year 2016.

JMWAIS publishes bi-annually in Winter and Summer. To date, the journal has five volumes with ten issues, including one special issue on Health Information Systems. JMWAIS has published 48 rigorously peer reviewed articles over the past five years and continues to grow. The winners of the best paper award in the MWAIS conference have the opportunity to publish an expanded, reviewed version of their paper. In 2016 alone, JMWAIS had over 3,500 article downloads and averaged over 300 downloads per month. Figure 4 shows the monthly download statistics of JMWAIS articles in 2016. The journal helps to support the continuing mission of the chapter to provide a regional venue to engage colleagues in academia and industry, and as figure 5 shows, the journal has a greater reach than just the Midwest.
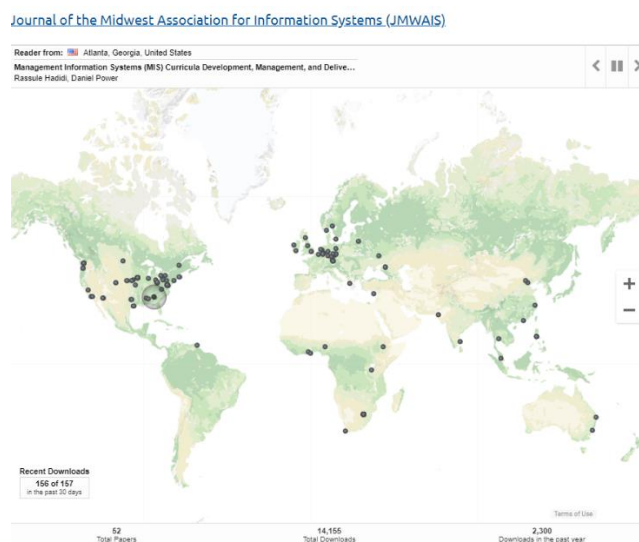
Fig 5: February 2020 snapshot of global downloads of JMWAIS papers (AIS eLibrary)

8. MWAIS Today

The current MWAIS executive board consists of seven members under the leadership of Ryan Schuetzler (President 2019-2020). Membership is robust and engaged, and the executive board is considering additional ways to engage the community, including more webinars and cooperative efforts with SIGs that are aligned with conference topics. MWAIS continues to serve a crucial role in the academic community. There are opportunities to host conferences, engage in scholarship through the conferences and the journal, and to serve in a leadership capacity on the board. As noted, the fifteenth conference of MWAIS will be held at Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa. MWAIS 2021 will be hosted by Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois.

9. Conclusion

MWAIS has grown over the last fifteen years, including the formation of its own journal - JMWAIS. According to Daniel Power, MWAIS experienced "slow, steady growth". The annual conference of MWAIS has helped scholars share their scholarship and develop new professional friendships. The excellent leadership of MWAIS has helped in its ongoing growth. To continue to grow, MWAIS has to focus more on serving Ph.D. students. Currently, MWAIS provides financial support to Ph. D. students to present paper at MWAIS conferences. Also, the association provides support for doctoral students to publish their research work in JMWAIS. However, Daniel Power believes that MWAIS "can and should do more" to serve Ph. D. students. Furthermore, MWAIS is in a position to help Information Systems faculty adapt to the challenges of learning about developments in Information Technology and producing scholarship that advances our shared understanding. Past experience suggest that MWAIS will continue to foster a stronger community of Information Technology scholars and teachers. Each year members add to the history of the Midwest Association for Information Systems.

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