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Interfaces



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Interfaces Editor's Statement

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As I complete my first year as editor-in-chief (EiC) of *Interfaces*, I am thankful for my editorial board and the excellent staff at INFORMS. It is truly an honor to be in this position. *Interfaces* is my favorite INFORMS journal, the mode journal for my own publications. I have been on its editorial board for 10 years. My goal is to continue to build on its excellent reputation, and expand its influence at the *interface of theory and practice*.

This brings me to my main point of this editorial: *Interfaces* is hampered by its name.

Those of us (mostly academics who are mostly members of INFORMS) who know and admire its 45-year history certainly know its name and the critical role of *Interfaces* in INFORMS—the interface of theory and practice. However, the vast majority of the people *Interfaces* tries to reach, the practitioners who would be introduced to applications of OR/MS and the value our methods bring, do not know what *Interfaces* is, what OR/MS is, or that they are in fact “practitioners”! (To most, this term applies only to doctors and lawyers outside of academia, not to railroaders or retailers.) So, the name does not attract nonacademics to using or publishing analytical methods in their work. I will admit that I did not know the origins of the meaning of *Interfaces*’ name, even as I submitted my first manuscript to the journal. To allow *Interfaces* to better achieve its outreach and promotion of OR/MS, we need to change the name of *Interfaces* to the *INFORMS Journal on Applied Analytics (IJAA)*.

Why the change? Three reasons.

Outreach

First, the name change would allow *Interfaces* and INFORMS to reach a wider audience. Analytics is

extremely large, well-known, and growing. The press regularly reports on dramatic analytics growth. CEOs, MBAs, and consultants know about analytics, and tout its benefits. New Master’s in Analytics programs are sprouting each year, creating a host of well-trained, often newly minted analytics professionals.

All of these groups would turn to a journal called the INFORMS Journal on Applied Analytics long before they would think of *Interfaces*.

Branding

Second, the name change supports INFORMS’ strategic direction to align itself with analytics. The most recent INFORMS board meeting included this strategic goal: “INFORMS will be recognized as THE leading association for promoting the practice, research, methods and application of advanced analytics, supporting analytics professionals and organizations.”

Yet, INFORMS has no journal on “analytics.” Establishing *Interfaces* as the INFORMS journal centered on analytics would place a research-centric foothold in the analytics space before another academically rigorous organization does so.

Growth

Third, aligning with analytics is a good way for INFORMS to grow. The strategic direction of INFORMS to support analytics professionals and organizations has paid off. The Analytics Society (that reached society status in just three or four years) is now the largest society at INFORMS. The Innovative Application in Analytics Award of that society, just a few years old, receives an

impressive number of submissions. In 2013, we established the INFORMS Certified Analytics Professional certification, which *CIO Magazine* has identified as a certification that “pays off,” and it is now available in 100 countries.

Interfaces is the ideal journal by which INFORMS can tap into this movement, because there is no specific methodology or domain with which *Interfaces* aligns. *Interfaces* has a “problem” focus, and uses whatever methodology or discipline(s) is required to address problems. As Russell Ackoff (1987) noted in his famous “OR, a Post Mortem” piece, at its roots “OR was a market-oriented discipline from its inception...practiced by scientists and engineers from a wide variety of disciplines” (p. 472). As we debate “what is analytics?,” few would question that analytics is multidisciplinary; *Interfaces*, with its problem focus, can also build bridges between these disciplines.

The Name

Why the *INFORMS Journal on Applied Analytics (IJAA)*?

Let's parse:

- **INFORMS.** Branding. When a professional Googles “analytics,” INFORMS shows up as part of the search. Journal, applied, analytics: everyone knows. What is INFORMS? INFORMS and analytics are linked by this title.
- **Journal.** Academic rigor. This isn't a magazine, glamour, fluff, or marketing. We will continue to maintain *Interfaces'* academically rigorous journal peer-review process.
- **Applied.** Communication to academics: we want to let potential authors know their work must be applied. Communication to professionals: this work is not theoretical, but is something they can use.
- **Analytics.** The word analytics is obvious. We wish to reach a wider audience, particularly the professionals who identify with, are excited by, and will turn to a journal with such a word in its title.

Finally, this naming format mirrors the titles of other INFORMS journals, such as *Computing*, *Transactions on Education*, and *Optimization*; so, it is consistent with INFORMS customs.

Challenges

The name *Interfaces* has been around for 45 years and is well-known and respected; therefore, a name change is a big move. There is precedent for this; Peter Norden changed the name of this journal in its fourth issue from *The Bulletin* to its current name.

I recognize there will be some who say analytics is not OR/MS, just as some once said that OR is not management science or decision science. Some might say that an alignment with analytics is not the right direction, although this has clearly been a positive direction for the broader organization.

Regardless of the name, *Interfaces* seeks to build bridges between disciplines and address the solution of problems via whatever means are appropriate, just as it did in the early days of OR/MS. I can assure you that *Interfaces* will not stray from its core editorial mission of delivering high-quality research of sophisticated applied analytics, which anchors itself on core OR/MS methodologies.

There will be some who worry about technical and marketing issues. I have worked with the INFORMS staff on marketing concerns, and database and indexing issues. I am assured that these issues are minimal.

Summary

Although the name *Interfaces* makes sense to those who know it, it does not to those who do not. The name *Interfaces* is inherently inward looking, and hinders our ability to market the value of OR/MS and broader analytical methods to the “practitioners” professionals we hope to attract.

I ask you to please participate in an upcoming survey from INFORMS about this proposed name change. I welcome your input, whether or not in favor, because I want only what is best for our organization and this journal.

Reference

Ackoff RL (1987) Presidents' symposium: OR, a post mortem. *Oper. Res.* 35(3):471–474.