

A Space Fixed in Time: Twenty Years of iSCHANNEL

To mark its 20th anniversary in 2026, this student-led journal held a conference on 25 March that brought together its founders, alumni, LSE faculty, current editors and students, alongside speakers from other universities and from industry. Over an afternoon of talks and a panel discussion, the programme set out to celebrate two decades of iSCHANNEL, to revisit how it began, and to consider its future and the ways in which it prepares students for life beyond university. This report offers an account of that afternoon, tracing the diversity of themes that connected its sessions. For readers who were unable to attend, I hope it conveys something of the occasion; for those who were there, I hope it offers a way to remember it, preserved, like the journal itself, in a space fixed in time. Listening to the speakers, I was repeatedly reminded of how closely the principles the founders set out as students still speak to the questions the field faces today.

Information Systems has never been a static field. It was evolving rapidly when iSCHANNEL published its first issue in July 2006, and it is changing faster than ever today. Opening the conference, Managing Editor Stefan Weiss and Dr Will Venters, Associate Professor of Digital Innovation and Information Systems in the Department of Management at LSE and one of the journal's original faculty advisors, reminded us that it is now changing faster than ever, with no sign of slowing down. Against that backdrop, they described iSCHANNEL as a vehicle that allows students to express themselves in a space that stays fixed in time. In a constantly evolving discipline, the journal provides a lasting record of students' scholarship, preserving it beyond the academic year in which it was written.

That record rests on a set of values that has developed over two decades. The first sessions looked back at the journal's origins. Section Editor Katharina Randelzhofer traced the journal's evolution, with a quiz for the audience along the way, showing how its contents have reflected changing concerns in the field. Founders Kabir Sehgal and Omer Tariq, the journal's first Editors-in-Chief, revisited the slides they made as students while proposing the journal. Their motivations still resonate: curiosity about a dynamic field, an awareness of LSE's history, and the belief that students' work should make an impact. Equally important, they said, is the diversity of the cohort itself, which enriched every discussion and led to the creation of the journal practices that still work today: blind peer review, a critical approach to technology, and a concern with making scholarship accessible. Turning from history to the present, Florian Allwein, Professor of Digital Transformation at IU International University of Applied Sciences and himself a MISDI alumnus, brought that critical eye into the present with his keynote, "A Critical Stance on AI", as what is commonly called "the AI" is better understood as a socio-technical system consisting of data centres, software, training data, and human contributions.

If critical thinking is the journal's inheritance, the practice of publishing is how that inheritance is passed on. In her talk "From Research to Publication: Lessons from iSCHANNEL", Marta Stelmaszak Rosa of the Isenberg School of Management reminded the audience that every article is energy, not just a collection of words. Research itself is not the hardest step in academic life, but rather its beginning. Publishing is about an ongoing dialogue to provide constructive criticism on what is not captured or made clear. It depends on continuity, as research builds on what has come before and opens questions for those who follow. And it requires a community of people who care about ideas and about helping them reach others. Along these lines, in her "Confessions of an Editor-in-Chief", Silvia Masiero of the University of Oslo offered an editor's perspective, identifying what sustains such a community: collegiality, reputation, and above all, kindness in peer review. Kindness, she said, takes you a long way. In a journal where students review the work of their peers, that matters a great deal.

The efforts and diligence that the publication requires are also important outside the confines of the university. Offering a practitioner's perspective on bridging the gap between academia and the corporate world, Viacheslav (Slava) Oganezov, co-founder and CEO of Finverity and a MISDI alumnus, drew on his experience with LSE Generate and trade finance to argue that while an objective must remain clear, the path towards it may change twenty times. Persistence matters, he said, but so do the willingness to pivot and the ability to navigate when plans change.

These reflections on navigating uncertainty also informed the panel discussion on the future of iSCHANNEL and how it prepares students for professional life, moderated by Section Editor Damla Bilginogullari, who

invited Professor Youngjin Yoo, Dr. Will Venters, Stefan Weiss, Professor Florian Allwein, and Slava Oganezov to join. It addressed the pressures facing graduates entering professional life, due to geopolitical challenges and the threat posed by AI. While AI may take over some work, it will not substitute for soft skills or for the knowledge gained through practical experience. It is precisely in this area that the journal's educational role becomes most evident, fostering critical thinking and perseverance. As a student about to enter that world myself, I took one thing above all from the discussion: in a world moving this fast, we need to act quickly and be comfortable with what may at first look like failure, because that is how we find out where our strengths and limits lie.

The afternoon closed with remarks from Youngjin Yoo, Professor of Information Systems and Innovation and Faculty Group Lead for the Information Systems and Innovation Faculty Research Group in the Department of Management. He invited the audience to explore what iSCHANNEL can become and called for a socio-technical lens that recognises both the harm technologies can cause and the value they create. Twenty years ago, the founders declared themselves responsible for the journal's quality. That responsibility now belongs to a new generation of contributors, editors, reviewers and readers. It is up to them to hold on to what has made iSCHANNEL valuable while continuing to question the technologies, and the assumptions, that shape the field.

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