: What are the foundation decision support articles in MIS Quarterly?

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MIS as a field of study stretches back almost 50 years (cf. Power, 2007), but the initiation of a new journal titled MIS Quarterly (MISQ) in 1977 provided an outlet for applied scholarship in Information Systems and promoted decision support research. The founding editor, Gary W. Dickson, noted in his Editorial preview in the first issue that the journal was attempting to break new ground by publishing articles for those interested in practice and those interested in theory and research. This article reviews those foundation articles and identifies ones that suggest issues relevant to current practice and theory.

The initial MISQ decision support article was published in the first issue in 1977 and it was written by Carlson, Grace, and Sutton (1977). Carlson et al. reported case studies using the interactive Geo-data Analysis and Display System (GADS) to study interactive problem-solving. The article was very optimistic concluding "one can develop interactive problem-solving systems which stimulate user insights and improve problem-solving performance (p. 63)."

Many other decision support articles have appeared in MISQ, but this review focuses on the foundation articles published between March 1977 and December 1986. This time span covers the first 40 issues of MISQ. In the history of MIS Quarterly, 1986 was also a transition time with the resignation of William R. King, the second editor of the journal, and the new directions of the third editor, F. Warren McFarlan. Also, in 1985, Andrew B. Whinston founded the more specialized Decision Support Systems journal that attracted influential articles in the field. Cutoffs are always arbitrary, but the first 10 years of MISQ were a time of great technological changes and increasing sophistication for the decision support field.

In the June 1977 issue, Munro and Davis report on a comparison of decision analysis (top down) versus data analysis (bottom up) methods for developing requirements for management-oriented information systems. The decision analysis approach remains a tool for building decision support applications. Munro and Davis explain "The decision analysis approach is characterized by its focus on the decisions at the managerial level of the organization. For each management-oriented application, the method requires the definition of the critical decisions which are the responsibility of the management group (p. 56)."

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