

## Ten Questions for Jane Fedorowicz

*Many years ago, AIS introduced a column called Ten Questions, which featured members throughout the field of IS. Written by Ryan Wright and David Agogo, the column quietly went into hibernation around 2017 as roles changed and lives became busier. With AIS celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, we are renewing the Ten Questions column, with a twist. We will be focusing on our members and volunteers who have helped shape AIS over the last 30 years, while looking to the future of the association and envisioning the next 30 years.*



Our first guest in the series is Jane Fedorowicz, the 19th president of AIS, and Professor Emerita at Bentley University following her retirement in 2023. Previously, she held the Chester B. Slade Professor of Accounting and Information Systems and held a joint appointment in the Accountancy Department and the Information and Process Management Department. She was integral in the creation of Bentley's STEM-designated Masters' Degree in Accounting which offers five concentrations with strong analytics and information technology foci. Prior to serving as president of AIS, she was heavily involved in the ICIS Women's Breakfast, which later became the AIS Women's Network. She served as the 2019 ICIS Conference Co-Chair with Helmut Krcmar and went on to serve as the ICIS Representative on AIS Council for one year.

**1. You have had many roles as an AIS volunteer, from Vice President of Affiliated Organizations to Secretary to President to ICIS Rep. How has AIS changed over the years from your perspective?**

AIS has become increasingly global, not just in its membership distribution around the world, but also in its initiatives, conference siting, journals supported, and national chapters. Relatedly, membership has also diversified, and the association's offerings now better reflect the range of interests and responsibilities of this broader membership.

**2. How did the association change as AIS shifted from a volunteer-run organization to a staff-run organization, moving from more tactical roles for AIS volunteers to more strategic roles?**

AIS has always had a strong support staff. Over time, as the association grew and the number and breadth of programs expanded, more staff was added. The big change came when there was an effort made to move from a volunteer-run organization to a staff-run organization. This gave the association a more consistent and formalized set of procedures and has documented institutional memory. I was often consulted about past initiatives and votes when in office, and was surprised at how often Council would start to investigate a strategic activity that had already been done years before. I hope records of Council activity are available and more searchable to support its members, as short election cycles quickly lead to a vacuum of historical perspective on Council. The staff who attend Council meetings are a great complement to the enthusiasm of Council in moving in new directions.

**3. What was the most rewarding part of your time as an AIS volunteer? Are there any programs or initiatives that stand out that you were especially proud to be involved in?**

I found my time as an AIS volunteer to be enormously rewarding. I was able to create programs and provide support in many areas about which I remain passionate. These included several DEI initiatives, the first of which was a task force on the status of women in AIS and the profession I assembled while President. This action led to other efforts to help AIS become more inclusive for other minority groups among the members, such as ensuring conference and association committees comprise diverse membership. I continue to pursue inclusion work on behalf of the Senior Scholars in my retirement.

I also volunteered on many conference committees and journal boards. Two especially rewarding efforts were my times co-chairing AMCIS 2001 in Boston (with John Gorgone) and ICIS 2019 in Munich (with Helmut Krcmar).

Volunteering is a learning experience – much of what I did within AIS carried over to my campus life, with similar benefits.

In addition to accomplishments, I have made lifelong friends with many people from around the world while working with my colleagues on committees and conferences. What other career introduces you to so many wonderful individuals from so many countries?

**4. If you had to go back and change one thing about your time as an AIS volunteer, what would it be?**

This one is hard. I don't have any regrets and I tried everything I wanted to try. So – no changes?

**5. You were heavily involved with the ICIS Women's Breakfast, which later became the AIS Women's Network. What was that transition like for it to move from a once-yearly gathering to a more robust group? Who were some of the key players in that change happening and what were some of the early wins?**

My first Women's Breakfast meeting occurred at the second ICIS conference in 1981. There were ten of us who met in the hotel restaurant. We didn't even need a reservation! AIS did not exist yet, and women made up approximately 10% of ICIS attendees. As ICIS and AIS grew, so did the number of women attendees. The annual event started to attract sponsors as the breakfast gathered more attendance. A few men attended regularly too (I'm thinking of Dave Salisbury and Steve Sawyer in particular). Speakers were added (I spoke at the Barcelona breakfast). When Colleges were created, it was a natural transition for this group to become more formalized and hold more events. The women's task force created under my presidency can take some credit for this move. And we were off – the College now has a strong governing board, hosts many events at regional conferences, and sponsors a mentorship program, among other activities. Key players at the outset (and I apologize to those I omit) included Joyce Elam, Mary Culnan, Lynne Markus, Cynthia Beath, Carol Saunders, Katie Kaiser, Foxy Mason and Jan DeGross. Many others have been closely involved over the years – check out the Web presence at [aiswn.org](http://aiswn.org) to learn more!

**6. You have always had a keen understanding of increasing opportunities for underrepresented faculty and students and were one of the lead speakers at the 2019 ICIS Senior Scholars Panel, "Diversity and inclusion in academia: Does AIS have a problem?". How have AIS's efforts toward inclusivity changed over the**

**years and now five years out from your initial panel, what do you think the next wave of efforts should include?**

By 2019, gender inequity had gained attention in AIS, but other identifiable minorities had not. I have to say this was probably the least well attended Senior Scholars panel at any ICIS. Maybe it was the session timing, maybe it was the topic. But “back then”, it seemed that only those few members and colleagues who publicly identified as being in a minority paid the topic any attention. As the facilitator of Senior Scholars, I worked (with others) to move DEI to the top of their agenda. Several initiatives have resulted, the most successful of which is a mentorship program for colleagues who self nominate as a member of a minority, or are in a non-tenure-track position. It is now in its second year, with 75 mentor-mentee pairings each year.

What’s next? We need to get to a place where inclusion is a natural occurrence and does not need to be monitored on conference committees, editorial boards and in other programs. The interim step is to constantly monitor and advise on how to diversify, and to recognize that many of our colleagues have differing academic expectations, particularly around the tradeoff between research and teaching, that should drive more diverse programming and strategy for AIS.

**7. What is your favorite memory at an AIS event (ICIS/AMCIS) or affiliated conference (ECIS/PAIS/etc.)?**

I could cheat and say the Hearts (card game) tournaments I organized after hours for many years at ICIS were my favorite, but that’s probably not what you want to know. I am especially proud to have been the moderator of a keynote session panel of high ranking German women at ICIS in Munich, entitled, “Inclusive Leadership in a Digital World”. This was the first time a DEI topic had been featured at a keynote session at ICIS (and maybe other AIS conferences as well).

**8. What do you think the next big area of focus will be for IS? How can AIS support it?**

AI is clearly the research topic of choice, probably replacing data analytics as the hot thing to study and teach. Both are changing how business is run, and also how academia operates. IS academics have to self-motivate to keep up with what is happening in business and in society because of these two technologies. A side effect of both is that they make it easier for potential students to acquire skills and knowledge without stepping foot on campus (along with Zoom of course). AIS can expand its instructional resources and training to help faculty obtain the expertise needed to stay ahead of the curve (and ahead of students!) to remain competitive as an industry.

**9. What are some of the most important research areas with the potential for lasting global impact that IS researchers should focus on more**

The easy answer to this question is the obvious one – AI. AI is advancing so fast and so ubiquitously that there is no dearth of researchable questions to be investigated. The less obvious answer, in my opinion, is to look at how technology affects people and places that have little voice in the world – refugees, war survivors, the poor, the elderly, those with disabilities, etc. As my career developed, I realized that conducting research that could make a measurable impact on those without a strong voice was much more rewarding to me. I urge you to look into something that will make a difference that reaches beyond your vita.

**10. What is the one trend you are most excited about for the future of IS?**

I think there is much more global collaboration among researchers and instructors than at any other time in my career. I would encourage young faculty to seek opportunities to work with colleagues around the world, to collaborate on international grants, and to spend a sabbatical or take a Fulbright position someplace you have never lived before. Technology enables easy collaboration – find someone with similar interests or teaching needs as you and see where it takes you. You will look back on those opportunities as highlights of your career as you reflect during your retirement.