



THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS JOURNAL
OF ABANDONED PROJECTS (ISJAP)

The Information Systems Journal of Abandoned Projects: A Manifesto for Preserving Incomplete Scholarly Work

Benjamin M. Ampel

Assistant Professor of Computer Information Systems

J. Mack Robinson College of Business, Georgia State University

ORCID: 0000-0003-0603-0270

Contact: editorial@isjap.com

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Abstract

This manifesto introduces the Information Systems Journal of Abandoned Projects (ISJAP), an open-access venue dedicated to the preservation, recognition, and reuse of incomplete scholarly work. ISJAP provides a formal mechanism to document partial results, methodological dead ends, orphaned datasets, and theoretical fragments. By shifting the focus from narrative closure to empirical soundness, and introducing the Post-Mortem Analysis as a core scientific contribution, ISJAP aims to reduce research waste. Through its “Rescue Board” and “Research Genealogy” tracking, the journal also provides a formal mechanism for the adoption and continuation of stalled projects, turning the “file drawer” into a marketplace of potential.

Keywords: abandoned research, incomplete work, scholarly publishing, academic labor, publication bias, negative results, information systems

1 INTRODUCTION

Formal recognition in Information Systems (IS) publishing favors complete, polished, peer-reviewed work. This norm protects quality, but it also hides what does not reach completion. Scholars abandon projects because of shifting priorities, funding constraints, methodological challenges, and institutional transitions. Such projects often represent months or years of labor that could inform the IS community.

Hiding this work distorts the record. Positive results have come to dominate the published literature across disciplines (Fanelli, 2012), and null results are far less likely to be written up or published than significant ones (Franco et al., 2014). This is the file drawer problem (Rosenthal, 1979). Selective reporting distorts the scientific record (Ioannidis, 2005), and researchers report that negative findings are hard to communicate despite their scientific worth (Matosin et al., 2014). Failed attempts to reproduce published findings illustrate what such findings can reveal (Begley & Ellis, 2012).

Conferences such as ICIS and AMCIS offer Research-in-Progress tracks, but these target work intended for completion. To our knowledge, no established IS venue accepts work that has reached its terminal state before completion. We call this work *Research-in-Stasis*: a project halted before completion, with no active plan to resume it.

The Information Systems Journal of Abandoned Projects (ISJAP) offers a response. Journals for negative and null results exist in other fields; ISJAP adapts the idea to incomplete IS research and provides open access to it. Making such work visible requires a framework with strict ethical protocols, so that ISJAP is a curated component of the IS scholarly record and not a repository of noise.

2 INFORMATION SYSTEMS ABANDONMENT

To design a journal for abandoned work, we first outline common types of abandonment in IS. The three types below are illustrative, drawn from the author’s experience, and are not an empirical taxonomy. In the natural sciences, abandonment often follows a falsified hypothesis (a null result). In IS, abandonment frequently reflects the sociotechnical nature of the field.

Technological obsolescence. IS researchers often begin longitudinal studies on specific platforms or hardware (e.g., early chatbots, Google Glass, blockchain implementations), only to find the technology defunct or radically altered before the study concludes. These projects are abandoned because the empirical subject vanished, not because the inquiry was flawed. The data could remain valuable for historical analysis or theoretical abstraction.

Failed design artifacts. Design science aims to generate knowledge by building and evaluating IT artifacts, and its guidelines emphasize demonstrating an artifact’s utility through rigorous evaluation (Hevner et al., 2004). In our observation, this emphasis favors artifacts that work. Artifacts that fail to instantiate, fail to scale, or are rejected by users are rarely documented, despite containing engineering knowledge about what not to do. Without this negative design knowledge, subsequent researchers may repeat the same errors. ISJAP therefore maintains a “Design Pattern Anti-Library.” Submissions in this category must tag specific failure modes (e.g., “User Rejection due to Latency,” “Scalability Bottleneck”). This structured taxonomy turns individual engineering failures into a searchable base of “negative knowledge.”

Access revocation. IS research often depends on corporate data and organizational settings. Projects stall when a corporate partner withdraws permission to publish, undergoes a merger, or restricts data use mid-project. These papers often contain sound literature reviews and developed

theoretical models.

3 THE POST-MORTEM ANALYSIS

Understanding why a project was abandoned can be more illuminating than the project itself. ISJAP therefore requires a Post-Mortem Analysis, which replaces the traditional discussion section where results are absent. The Post-Mortem Analysis must address four elements.

1. **Stasis Point.** Authors identify the exact moment the project stalled (e.g., failure to recruit sufficient subjects, or an algorithm that failed to converge) as a demarcation in the research lifecycle (e.g., Data Collection Complete → Analysis Halted). Readers can then filter contributions by stage of completion.
2. **Pivot attempts.** Authors state whether they tried to salvage the project and how.
3. **Sunk cost.** Authors quantify the labor hours and funding consumed before abandonment. We call this the *Sunk Cost Index* (SCI). It makes the hidden cost of “wasted” research visible, supports meta-scientific study of research waste, and defines the initial investment for anyone who “rescues” the project.
4. **Practical advice.** Authors advise researchers attempting the same topic.

4 RESEARCH GENEALOGY AND THE RESCUE BOARD

Preservation is passive; ISJAP aims for active reclamation. The journal operates a “Rescue Board,” a marketplace where Research-in-Stasis can be adopted by new investigation teams.

4.1 The Protocol of Adoption

A researcher who wishes to complete an abandoned project found in ISJAP may formally “fork” it. This creates a “Research Genealogy” link between the original manuscript and the new, active project. The protocol ensures three properties.

1. **Attribution:** The original authors retain permanent citation credit for the initial data collection and theoretical framing.
2. **Provenance:** The new publication carries a *Genealogy Badge*, a visible label that traces its lineage to the ISJAP origin.
3. **Legal stewardship:** A standardized “Handover Protocol” governs the transfer of data stewardship and ensures ethical compliance when projects move between institutions.

This mechanism turns the journal from a static archive into a “supply chain” for research inputs, allowing one scholar’s dead end to become another’s starting point.

5 EDITORIAL REVIEW

ISJAP does not judge submissions on standard IS criteria such as impact, novelty, or research completeness. To keep the journal from becoming a repository for low-quality drafts, all submissions undergo internal Editorial Screening against the checks in Table 1. The screening verifies that the

Post-Mortem Analysis addresses each required element; it does not assess whether the underlying project was finished.

Check Category	Criteria for Acceptance	Rationale
Authorship	All listed authors have confirmed participation. ORCID iDs provided. “Unresponsive author” due diligence is documented.	Prevents authorship disputes and legal liability.
Ethics	Statement of IRB approval (for human subjects) or waiver. Confirmation of no “dual use” concerns.	Ensures the journal does not publish unethical research.
Intelligibility	Manuscript is written in standard English. Structure follows logical flow (even if incomplete).	Ensures the record is usable by the community.
Context	Post-Mortem Analysis is included and addresses all four required elements (Stasis Point, pivot attempts, sunk cost, practical advice).	Provides metadata on why the project was abandoned.
Data/Code	Raw data and code are deposited in a repository (Zenodo, OSF, or GitHub) with automated “Link Rot” monitoring enabled.	Keeps the paper a retrieval resource, consistent with open-research practice (Munafò et al., 2017; Nosek et al., 2015).
Scope	Topic falls within the broad domain of Information Systems (technical, behavioral, design, or theoretical).	Maintains discipline relevance.

Table 1. Criteria for acceptance of submissions to ISJAP

ISJAP also expects submissions to maintain basic academic writing standards. Submissions should:

- use clear, formal academic language appropriate for information systems research;
- follow standard academic structure (Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Discussion, Conclusion) where applicable;
- be transparent about the work’s incomplete status and limitations;
- articulate what was accomplished and what remains unfinished;
- discuss the value of the partial contributions to the field; and
- include citations and references in APA style.

Once accepted, the paper is assigned an internal identifier and published on the ISJAP website. It is then eligible for community review, in which community members may flag the paper for further review or discussion.

6 NAVIGATING THE ETHICS OF ABANDONED WORK

Abandoned projects often emerge from severed professional relationships: a student leaves a lab, a co-author stops responding, a principal investigator loses interest. Standard publishing ethics require all co-authors to approve a manuscript, but in abandoned projects consensus may be impossible. ISJAP adopts Committee on Publication Ethics guidelines for unresponsive authors. First, for projects where former team members cannot be contacted, the submitting author must provide evidence of due diligence (e.g., attempted contact over 90 days). Such individuals may be listed in the Acknowledgments or as “Unresponsive Contributors” rather than authors, provided they do not bear accountability for the submission. Second, the submitting author must sign a statement assuming full responsibility for the integrity of the data provided by the missing contributor. Finally, authors must confirm they have the legal right to publish the data. In cases of corporate data revocation, ISJAP encourages redacted publication, in which the methodology and lessons are shared without the proprietary data.

7 LIMITATIONS AND RISKS

ISJAP carries risks that its design mitigates but does not eliminate.

- **Reputational harm.** Publishing a stalled project can embarrass authors or collaborators. Submissions require the consent of all reachable authors, and authors may request correction or withdrawal under a published policy.
- **Privacy and consent.** Named contributors, including “Unresponsive Contributors” and participants in prior data collection, have privacy interests. Editorial Screening checks that consent covers publication and that data are de-identified or redacted where needed.
- **Enforcement.** Forks and adoption claims depend on honest attribution. ISJAP cannot compel compliance outside its own venue, so Genealogy Badges and citation credit rely on norms and on editors resolving disputes case by case.
- **Spam and low-quality deposits.** A low bar for completeness invites weak or bad-faith submissions. Editorial Screening is the main safeguard, and its cost scales with volume.
- **Gaming of the Sunk Cost Index.** Self-reported labor and funding figures can be inflated or understated. ISJAP treats the SCI as a disclosed estimate, not a verified measure, and requires authors to state how they computed it.

8 OPEN ACCESS AND LICENSE

All ISJAP content is freely available to the scholarly community. ISJAP operates on an open access model, so papers are accessible to all interested scholars. ISJAP publishes under the CC BY 4.0 license. This manifesto is also released under CC BY 4.0.

9 CONCLUSION

The Information Systems Journal of Abandoned Projects offers a new approach to scholarly publishing, one that recognizes the value of incomplete work. By providing a formal venue for abandoned projects, we preserve intellectual labor, recognize scholarly contributions regardless of completion status, and create a more complete record of academic inquiry.

ISJAP looks forward to building a collection that, together, tells a more complete story of how research actually happens. Messy, incomplete, yet valuable. We invite you to empty your file drawers.

DECLARATIONS

AI use. Claude and other large language model tools assisted with drafting. The author reviewed all content and is solely responsible for it.

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