AIP Quick Survey 2019

An exploration amongst readers and people from the wider AI community

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As we continue to build AIP, now with the full support of a large, international editorial board, we felt it would be good to include the voice of (potential) readers. Of course, we get feedback informally, which helps us a lot, but in addition to that, we also felt it would be good to do a quick survey amongst our readers and from the wider AI community. So, in the Autumn of 2019 we sent out a five-minute multiple choice survey with space for open answers and reflections, both to subscribers and to the Cooperrider Center mailing list, with the goal of reaching a wide range of AI practitioners. This report provides a brief summary of the results, as well as some first learnings that we, as the editorial team, have drawn from it.

Who filled out the survey

A total of 107 people filled out the survey, 48 of whom are currently subscribers, with 59 from the broader AI network. Half of the 'non-subscribers' have never, or only sometimes, read an article. The other half are (very) familiar with it.

Of the people from the broader AI network, most came from the US/Canada (62%) and Europe (23%) and had a background in OD consultancy, coaching (team or individual) and/or academia/research. Some combined several of those roles, meaning their demographics were very similar to that of the subscriber group.

We asked both groups their preferences regarding types of content, subscription models and ideas for next steps. The subscribers were sometimes asked a few more specific questions (such as their reflection on the current structure of the journal). We also asked an additional question on the current accessibility of AIP for them as contributors/authors. For the purposes of easy reading, we will refer to these groups as 'non-subscribers' and 'subscribers'.

Type of content

In order to gauge what type of content people are interested in, we asked *non-subscribers* what they would like to read in AIP: research articles, case stories, tools, interviews, book reviews…? Their interests turn out to be across the board, with a slight preference for practice-focused articles, case stories and tools.

This answer is very similar to that of the *subscribers*. AIP currently provides different content in the journal's different sections:
- Feature Choice articles (a lead article that highlights a new concept or practice)
- Practice-focused articles related to the topic of the issue
- Nourish to Flourish (Voices from the Field and Book appreciation)
- Research Review & Notes

We asked current subscribers how important all of these different sections are to them. They indicated that they find *all* of them important, with a slight emphasis on the practice-focused articles and the feature choice articles.

Moving forward

At two points in the survey we asked readers what we could do to evolve AIP further, either by increasing the quality of what we offer now or by adding new elements. The answers from both groups are remarkably similar.

People mention mostly content-related ideas, such as ideas for specific topics or types of contributions. The important thread here is to provide stories from a wide variety of contexts in which AI can be applied (business, education, health care, society, different countries, …), addressing a wide array of problems or dreams (individual, group, organization, ….) and to make sure that the stories are told by a rich array of voices (practitioners, scholars, younger, older, from different parts of the world….). Keeping up a good mix between theory and practice is considered important by both groups. And when it comes to methodology and tools, a recurring theme is to show not only the 'how' but also the impact of AI interventions.

Subscribers also provide ideas to engage more with the AI community, such as asking for input from practitioners and using AIP to connect people in the field and build the (online) community, with an active blog or forum page for instance, making it easy to reach out to each other for more information, ideas and collaboration.

Some, *in both groups*, raised the idea of using more videos, podcasts and blogs instead of just articles.

One of the specific things we as the editorial team were wondering about was the 'thematic' approach of the journal. Each AIP issue now has a specific focus. We were curious to hear whether people preferred this, or whether they would like each issue to contain a varied collection of articles on a range of topics. We only put this question to the *subscribers*, since they can reflect on their recent experiences. About 40% of them said either way would work for them … so: some liked the thematic approach; others were open to the 'variation' idea. And some suggested a hybrid option: 1-2 themed issues per year, with the rest being varied, or else a thematic approach with two or three articles focused on a topic but also having general articles in the same issue.

Preferred subscription models

We also wondered about which subscription model people would prefer. We proposed three different subscription models to both the *subscribers* and the *non-subscribers*:

- Choose-your-own subscription for a specified price per year (allowing the download of a set number of articles per year)
- Annual subscription for four issues per year
- Buying individual articles (at a variable price per article)

Both groups express a clear preference toward the first two options – with hardly any difference between the two groups. Only a handful of people preferred the individual article option. Interesting to note is that a small number of people suggested providing *all* options, making it even more flexible. And some would prefer the journal to be accessible for free.

AIP as a place for publishing and sharing

AI Practitioner's aim is to be a rich resource for the AI community through sharing stories. AIP readers are therefore also potential, or actual, contributors. So we also asked *subscribers*: how might AIP best spotlight the work you and others are doing in AI around the world?

Most people who answered this question suggested actively inviting people to write, and in doing so, encouraging a wide variety of writers and topics (also more innovative or remote ones). In that way AIP could capture the richness of the practical stories out there, with some readers hoping to also reach an audience beyond the AI community. These answers all read like an encouragement to 'go out there' as an editorial team.

Some suggested also working with types of contributions other than written articles: for example, interviews, portraits, spotlights, videos, blogs and other ways in which people who are not big 'writers' might also feel invited and facilitated to share their stories and practices.

Related to this, some subscribers raised the idea of moving beyond the concept of a journal/written format (as mentioned earlier) and launching an online forum or blog to enhance the feeling of community and facilitate knowledge sharing.

Learnings

First and foremost, what we take from this survey is the experience itself. We are really grateful to the people who made the effort to share their thoughts and advice with us. We like to think of AIP as 'our' journal: that of the readers/subscribers and the wider AI community. Sharing ideas in this way strengthens that notion, as several people explicitly mentioned in the survey. So we consider this something to be repeated – maybe in different forms, allowing for more interaction – in the future.

Second, we take away a few learnings and helpful questions:
- AIP's combination of practice and theory is what makes it valuable to its readers. People love to read case stories, to find practical applications and tools, *with* the addition of background on the underlying methodology or theory and information on the actual impact and effect.
- AIP readers are inspired by stories from around the world, by examples from different fields and contexts, told by a variety of voices. So the question for us as editorial team and board is: how do we find and invite as rich a collection of people as possible to share their experiences?

- A related question is whether it would be good in this respect to broaden our range of contributions, adding other media such as podcasts and videos to the mix. Perhaps we can experiment with that in the next year?
- Up until now we mainly have thought of AIP as a journal with a rich website. The survey has fueled our thoughts on how to move forward in the future… how rich do we want our website to be? Could it evolve into a forum and online community? And if so, how would it relate to AI Commons? Food for thought as we develop our vision for the future with the editorial board during the next year.
- With regard to the subscription model, it seems that there is room for innovation. Along with the classic 'four issues per year' subscription, there is also interest in a model of 'so many articles per year'. Perhaps we could offer both options? This is definitely something for us to dive into.

These are all questions and ideas to take with us in 2020. A big thank you to all of those who participated in the quick survey. As always, ideas, questions and feedback are welcome. You can contact us from the website https://aipractitioner.com/ or using the email address info@aipractitioner.com.