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**Professionals and their Work in the Digital Era**

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Editors:	<b>David Brock</b> Ben-Gurion University	<b>Kevin Leicht</b> University of Illinois	<b>Daniel Muzio</b> University of York
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Professionals and professional organizations are often uncertain as to whether digital technologies are more of a threat than an opportunity. On the one hand, the realm of professional services is characterized by tradition, caution, and institutionalization—providing assurance and stability to commerce and society in general (Brint, 1994; Empson, et al., 2015). On the other hand, we are living in an era of rapid change, especially in the realm of technology—where professionals are caught between the need to keep up with changes and the incentive to actually lead and benefit from change and innovation (Cromwell & Gardner, 2020; Reihlen & Werr, 2012; Semadeni & Anderson, 2010). Professional workers may be trained and certified in time-honored practices and immersed in traditional techniques, but contemporary economic reality often places a premium on adaptation, flexibility, internationalization, change, and innovation (Amara, et al., 2009; Boussebaa & Morgan, 2015; Hinings, et al., 2018).

Researchers have tried, over the past generation, to reconcile these divergent forces within the professional ecosystem. For example, Hinings, et al. (2018) helped us understand the effects of digital innovations on organizations and fields; Amara, et al. (2009) elucidate dynamic aspects of knowledge-intensive service provision; Haas, et al. (2015) shed light on knowledge and attention in the digital economy; and Ollier-Malaterre, et al. (2013) explore online social networks among professionals.

This Special Issue of *JPO* has thus been designed to promote cutting-edge research in this vein, with a focus on professionals coping with contemporary IT/digital advances. Apart from researchers in professional service firms, this SI is intended also to capture the attention of the expanding number of researchers interested in health care, consulting, public management, and other professionalized and professionalizing contexts; as well as other researchers specifically interested in information technology, artificial intelligence and digitalization in contemporary organizational settings.

*Specific topics of interest to this SI include but are not limited to...*

- Digital developments leading to professional organizational change; e.g. all Big 4 firms incorporated 'AI audit', which evolved into the 'Audit transformation' unit, internalizing Digital and changing career models etc. (Armour & Sako, 2020; Kronblad, C. 2020).
- Professional firm internationalization in a Digital World: How digitalization affects the internationalization of PSFs (Boussebaa, M., & Morgan, G. 2015).
- Digital capabilities enhancing professionals' entrepreneurship (e.g. more and more lawyers joining Digital entrepreneurs (Lawtech), the phenomenon which were so rare before 2010s).
- Digital advances causing institutional change (e.g. IFAC has been discussing new Audit standards for Digital, or Big 4 firms established a shared service center with a unified digital platform).
- How professionals theorize and implement institutional change in the age of artificial intelligence.
- Professional identity work in the online gig economy: the emergence of identity threats and coping tactics professionals may use.
- Social Media and Professional Careers: rapid technological and social advances precipitating changes in work practices and career patterns found among professional organizations (Mawdsley & Somaya, 2016).
- The role of digital media in spreading misinformation and distrust of experts. Is the spread of misinformation, and the distrust of elites that ensues, affecting professional practice, beyond simply questioning whether professionals deserve the privileges societies have granted them? What professional groups are most exposed to the misinformation tsunami?

- Working from home: Whose work is most disrupted or changed, including those for whom places them in direct conflict with their domestic duties/priorities. Are professionals working more hours or less? What are managers and supervisors expecting? Is the digital invasion of work into the home environment producing new sorts of inequalities among professionals?
- Re-professionalization through digitalization: As processes become embedded in digital systems, professional knowledge may become less valuable.

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