RRBM 2023 Conference Report
Hosted by INSEAD, Europe Campus, Fontainebleau

June 2023

Proceedings summarized by Brian Henry, PhD

This is a summary of the 2023 Responsible Research Summit, which was hosted by INSEAD at its Europe Campus, Fontainebleau, from 15-17 June 2023 (See Appendix 1 for program details). Sponsored by INSEAD and the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with RRBM, the summit was aimed at all members of the research ecosystem within business and management fields who are interested in pushing and promoting the agenda of responsible research that is rigorous, relevant and socially impactful.

This report highlights messages from keynote speakers and panelists during the conference. One attendee, Saonee Sarker, aptly summarized the conference on a LinkedIn page: “The one-and-a-half day RRBM Summit brought together deans, journal editors, and thought leaders all working to find how the academic community can encourage, conduct, and publish impactful research.”

Responsible Research: Scientific Responsibility and Integrity

In opening the conference proceedings, Agnieszka ‘Aggie’ Chidlow gave a brief overview of research at business schools from the early 20th century. While b-schools currently employ thousands of dedicated professors, one would have thought that their collective research over the past 120 years would have resulted in far more papers that had a societal impact. But instead, Aggie argued the incentive system in the academy has acted as an impediment because abstract theory has been emphasized over concrete action to the extent where much of the current and past research has little connection with today’s urgent issues like climate change, inequality and poverty. The incentive system for faculty research tilts very heavily toward professors getting their papers published in top journals. The mantra of ‘publish or perish’ must be replaced, Aggie argued, or otherwise b-schools will become ever increasingly less relevant that the mantra could turn against them as ‘publish and perish.’

Aggie said the entire ecosystem must change, including journal editors, association leaders, deans, P&T committees, senior scholars, accreditors, and this requires a system-wide change.

Having identified the problem, Aggie advanced that the founders of RRBM identified the solution was to build a global movement that supports, recognizes and rewards, in a coordinated fashion, the following seven principles:

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1. **Service to Society**: Development of knowledge that benefits business and the broader society, locally and globally, for the ultimate purpose of creating a better world.

2. **Valuing Both Basic and Applied Contributions**: Contributions in both the theoretical domain to create fundamental knowledge and in applied domains to address pressing and current issues.

3. **Valuing Plurality and Multidisciplinary Collaboration**: Diversity in research themes, methods, forms of scholarship, types of inquiry, and interdisciplinary collaboration to reflect the plurality and complexity of business and societal problems.

4. **Sound Methodology**: Research that implements sound scientific methods and processes in both quantitative and qualitative or both theoretical and empirical domains.

5. **Stakeholder Involvement**: Research that engages different stakeholders in the research process, without compromising the independence of inquiry.

6. **Impact on Stakeholders**: Research that has an impact on diverse stakeholders, especially research that contributes to better business and a better world.

7. **Broad Dissemination**: Diverse forms of knowledge dissemination that collectively advance basic knowledge and practice.

In her closing remarks, Aggie cautioned that responsible research must take into account three questions,

- Who is responsible?
- For what is one responsible?
- Towards whom is one responsible?

Moreover, Aggie was optimistic that credible, relevant and impactful knowledge can have a positive influence on science and society, if certain conditions were taken into account:

**Science**

- Producing reliable and repeatable discoveries and findings
- Observing norms of transparency and integrity
- Assessing the risk of wrongful conclusions.

**Society**

- Pursuing science to improve the lives of humanity
- Generating knowledge for solving business and societal problems
- Using research resources responsibly.

Following Aggie’s presentation, David Reibstein and Jean-Alexis ‘Jas’ Spitz gave an overview of the purpose and progress of the RRBM movement. One of the findings they cited was that a typical top-journal article generated an estimated cost of $400,000 in 2014. If one were to extrapolate this single cost to the total expenditure of all articles published in top journals in 2014, it was estimated that business research was costing stakeholders $4 billion per year. Yet, as David and Jas pointed out, no matter how much money was thrown at top journals, the societal impact was derisory.

David and Jas offered attendees many pathways to action, including RRBM taskforces that people could join. In addition, they noted that other actors in the business research community
were demanding that business schools move away from the current ‘publish or perish’ paradigm to a paradigm based on responsible research. They cited Business Roundtable, which changed its charter in 2019 in line with firms and brands that are putting sustainability into their charters, the fact that graduates of business schools want to work for companies that are socially responsible, and that customers want to buy goods and services that are sustainable.

Making a Case for Inclusivity as a Guiding Principle in Responsible Science

Piet Naudé, Professor of Ethics, past Director of Stellenbosch Business School and Director of EFMD Deans Across Frontiers, gave the Summit’s keynote address. In his inspiring speech, Piet at once humored the audience and shook them up to take action. He first looked at the challenges facing a world divided into north and south, where inequalities continue to sharpen despite decolonization especially on the African continent. Access to the internet, for example, is taken for granted by citizens in the high-income countries, but what about access for citizens living in low-income countries in Africa, where the electricity grid is rudimentary? Are they invisible?

Secondly, he discussed the tendency of research to fall into rigid silos, where researchers see the world from their own disciplinary perspective. He cited an example of new legislation in New Zealand, giving inanimate objects like trees and rivers the same rights as humans in terms of projects proposed by humans that would have an environmental impact on their flow or their right to remain planted in the ground.

Thirdly, Piet discussed the different forces of good leading to a utopian concept he called “the best world” as opposed to a better world. He cited the example of Nelson Mandela who looked out at the world from his prison cell. Piet asked the audience to reflect on a famous photo of Mandela looking out his prison window. Who was really in prison, Piet asked the audience, Mandela or the Apartheid leaders?

An Experimental Business Model for Industry-supported Sustainability Research

Atalay Atasu, Professor of Technology and Operations Management and Bianca & James Pitt Chair in Environmental Sustainability, INSEAD, gave a talk on the inadequate recycling infrastructure for solar panels. In an HBR article co-authored with Serasu Duran and Luk N. Van Wassenhove, Atalay showed that the solar panel industry had overlooked the circularity solutions of discarded panels, an article that had and continues to have an impact on industry experts and policy makers. In the article, he wrote, “The sheer volume of discarded panels will soon pose a risk of existentially damaging proportions.” Customers who have already installed panels, for example, often want to replace older models long before their expiration, because panels have come down in price enormously and generate far greater yields of electricity.

His research showed that cumulative waste projections will rise far sooner and more sharply than industry experts expected. In his impactful article, the estimated amount of solar panel waste could come to 315,000 metric tons. The stinger in the tail is that almost no panel manufacturers have put in place plans for reverse logistics. This will result in people taking their solar panels to landfills instead of recycling depots. To avoid this scenario, Atalay calls
on solar panel producers to lobby for a legal framework for recycling and disposal of solar panels or otherwise run the risk of hitting a point in time where the totality of unforeseen costs could crush industry competitiveness.

In his closing remarks, Atalay discussed the INSEAD Business Sustainability Series, which he helped launch at the school to show how he has taken his research ideas into the classroom, to the students, to great benefit to all. This series consists of five interactive events running from April 2023 to November 2023.

**Introduction to the Journals Impact Forum – A Panel Discussion**

*Serguei Netessine*, Senior Vice Dean for Innovation and Global Initiatives and Dhirubhai Ambani Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Wharton School  
*Wilfred Mijnhardt*, Policy Director, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University  
*Herman Aguinis*, Avram Tucker Distinguished Scholar, George Washington University

The RRBM Summit 2023 witnessed the launch of the *Journals Impact Forum*, which is led by a taskforce whose strategic objective is to encourage top journals to publish societally relevant research. To this end, the RRBM taskforce will help develop new impact measures for journals that incorporate societal impact in their selection process. At the same time, the taskforce will encourage organisations like business schools and universities to consider those journals in their promotion process that have adopted these new measures. The *Impact* taskforce is led by Jerry Davis, Jennifer Howard-Grenville, Serguei Netessine and Wilfred Mijnhardt.

Herman Aguinis gave a keynote presentation, just before the panel members (see below) took to the floor, calling for a broader impact methodology with metrics capturing whether and how research reaches various stakeholders. He argued that to measure the impact of journals and articles, we should use a pluralist conceptualization of impact. He said business schools and universities have promotion criteria for young non-tenured professors whereby their research papers would need to be published in four or five top journals to be awarded tenure. The sole metric these schools use in the promotion process is the number of citations in top journals. The result, he said, is that research papers are being published in top journals with unintended consequences. One example is that more articles are being co-authored by seven or eight different professors. “We see people publishing all over the place on different topics. It’s not a consistent research stream,” he said. He called for a multi-stakeholder approach to our publishing strategy as business scholars. An audience member, Saonee Sarker, offered during the panel Q&A that “if we wanted to make impact, we probably cannot make impact directly, but we can make impact through a multitude of stakeholders.”

Herman Aguinis used the example of university undergraduate textbooks as part of the constellation of stakeholders in the RRBM ecosystem. He argued that the citations in textbooks can have a major impact on undergraduate students. However, citations in textbooks are not counted in the current system of promotion at most business schools. To prove his point, he scanned the references sections of the best-selling textbooks in organizational behavior, human resource management, strategy, and general management.

For HR Management textbooks, for example, the two journals that were cited the most were *Journal of Applied Psychology* and *HR magazine*. Yet, he pointed out that these two
publications are typically not included on the list of journals required in the promotion process. “However, if an author wants to have an impact on undergraduate HR students, these are the journals that will do the trick,” he said. Indeed, Herman added the Wall Street Journal is the number one cited publication in General Management textbooks, and yet no university would consider this newspaper in their promotion process for new professors.

He also discussed the impact of academic papers on policymakers, and in this vein advised researchers to create a performance development plan where their publication goals extend six months out to at least two years. He said, “if you want to have an impact on different stakeholders, you need to include those journals [that they read] on your list.” He also advised researchers to explore spinoff practitioner-oriented articles and even summaries from a larger paper that has already been published. “Take some of that content and convert it so that the different stakeholder groups can also benefit from your work,” he advised.

Finally, Herman also debunked the notion that having an article published in a top journal automatically means that the impact of the article will be as high as the impact of the journal. “Some articles can be cited 20 times but the vast majority [published in the same journal and same volume] are cited zero times,” he said. “Do not confuse the impact of a journal with the impact of an individual article.” He warned researchers not to bask in “reflective glory” when applying for a job.

Rethinking Journals Impact Metrics for Producing Impactful Scholarship by Business Schools – A Panel Discussion

Moderated by Jennifer Howard-Grenville, Vice Chair of the RRBM Working Board and Diageo Professor of Organisation Studies, Cambridge Judge Business School

Stephen Sammut, Senior Fellow, Health Care Management and Lecturer, Entrepreneurship, Wharton School

Saonee Sarker, Professor of Informatics, Lund University and Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Senior Editor, Emeritus, MIS Quarterly

Mark Smith, Director, Stellenbosch Business School

James Walker, Co-Editor in Chief Chartered ABS Academic Journals Guide initiative and Head of International Business and Strategy, Henley Business School

Each of the panel members contributed to the discussion from a different perspective. Mark Smith, for example, said that social impact was a fourth pillar of academic life at Stellenbosch Business School and other schools in South Africa. Having social impact was critical in a country that is still recovering from the trauma of its past. James Walker said he was interested in developing impact metrics around the SDGs. Stephen Sammut offered that investors in the area of private equity that fund healthcare projects in developing countries “would love to collaborate with good solid academics and I could be a conduit for that.”

Responsible Research for Business Schools – Two Dean’s Perspectives

Ilian Mihov, INSEAD Dean

Erika James, (Dean and Reliance Professor of Management and Private Enterprise, Wharton School)
Ilian Mihov gave a brief talk about the need for research that is rigorous, relevant and impactful. He cited an example of an exemplary fund manager who joined a company when the fund price was $6.50 and, under his proud leadership, the fund price rose to $82.00. Ilian argued this example and fund manager’s exclusive focus on returns leads him to be “very, very concerned and committed about what is happening in society.” To this end, researchers must provide business leaders like this fund manager with the frameworks that can address societal issues in order to achieve “better outcomes for their companies and for society.”

Erika James gave a recorded presentation to the conference encouraging the good work of the RRBM initiative.

Saturday 17 June

Global Sustainability Reporting Initiatives – A Panel Discussion

Moderated by Peter Joos, Associate Professor of Accounting and Control, INSEAD

Richard Barker, board member, International Sustainability Standards Board

Patricia Dechow, Robert R. Dockson Professor of Business Administration and Professor of Accounting, Finance and Business Economics, USC Marshall School of Business

Magali Delmas, Faculty Director, Center for Impact, UCLA Anderson School of Management

Peter Easton, Academic Director, Center for Accounting Research and Education, Mendoza College of Business, Notre Dame

Richard Sloan, Deloitte and Touche LLP Chair in Accounting and Professor of Accounting, Finance and Business Economics, USC Marshall School of Business

Leading the panel on Sustainability Reporting was INSEAD Professor Peter Joos of Accounting and Control who is also the co-chair of the Capital Markets Advisory Committee, an independent advisory group that provides advice to the International Accounting Standards Board. In his opening remarks a moderator, Peter Joos said that sustainable reporting is complementary to what we already have in traditional financial statements.

Patricia Dechow discussed seven research questions from an accounting perspective.

1. Measurement: How should we record information?
2. Usefulness: What decision will be made using the information?
3. Disclosure: How should the information be reported?
4. Timeliness: How quickly should the information be disclosed?
5. Incentives: How does behaviour change for those being evaluated based on the information created?
6. Manipulation: Can we detect if the information is distorted?
7. Reliability: Can the information be trusted?

From a stakeholder perspective, Patricia Dechow framed the seven questions as the following:

1. Measurement: In non-monetary units
2. Usefulness: For employees, customers, regulators, investors
3. Disclosure: Sustainability Reports and other mechanisms, social media, etc.
4. Timeliness: Voluntary disclosures
Having spoken about some of the research questions involved in sustainability reporting, Patricia Dechow highlighted her remarks with an example of an impactful paper she co-authored about the corporate response to the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the killing of George Floyd in May 2020.

Magali Delmas gave a presentation on corporate sustainability disclosure, looking at the ESG metrics and challenges of collecting them. She said the demand from stakeholders for corporate sustainability reporting is increasing, but collecting unbiased and dependable ESG data remains a challenge. To tackle this issue, she launched at UCLA a ‘Center for Impact’. Within this center, she developed a Transparency Index on an Open For Good™ platform, which offers a comprehensive assessment of corporate transparency across ESG categories.

Peter Easton discussed a publishing initiative whereby as editor-in-chief he launched Issue 1 of an online journal called Accountability in a Sustainable World Quarterly in November 2022; Issue 3 was published in June 2023, Richard Sloan discussed the issue of sustainability reporting from the perspective of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which has proposed new rules to enhance and standardize climate-related disclosures for investors.

Richard Sloan argued sustainability reporting “needs to go beyond public corporations to all businesses that have impacts on the society.”

Richard Barker gave a brief history of the ISSB, which was created on 3 November 2021 at COP26 in Glasgow. Richard is currently seconded to ISSB and is actively engaged in the standards setting efforts. The ISSB has set out four objectives:

1. Developing standards for a global baseline of sustainability disclosures.
2. Meeting the information needs of investors.
3. Enabling companies to provide comprehensive sustainability information to global capital markets.
4. Facilitating interoperability with disclosures that are jurisdiction-specific and/or aimed at broader stakeholder groups.

A Fireside Chat with André Hoffmann

André Hoffmann, Vice Chairman of Roche Holding AG and Chair of the HGIBS Advisory Board

Francisco Veloso, Dean, Imperial College Business School and incoming Dean, INSEAD
Francisco and André exchanged views on corporate sustainability and the importance of private capital as a force for positive change. They also explored the implications of these secular forces for business school curricula.

**A Panel of Impactful Research**

Moderated by [Andrew Jack](#), Global Education Editor, Financial Times

- [Gabriela Gutierrez-Huerter O](#), Assistant Professor in International Management, King’s Business School
- [Anthony Kwame Harrison](#), Edward S. Diggs Professor in Humanities and Professor of Sociology, Virginia Tech
- [Bernard Leca](#), Professor, ESSEC Business School
- [Philipp Tuertscher](#), Associate Professor of Technology and Innovation, KIN Center for Digital Innovation, School of Business and Economics, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Each of these scholars have had important research recognized by the FT Societal Impact Awards or RRBM Impact Awards. Each spoke about the inspiration and motivation for their respective research projects and how gratifying it is to be recognized, a new and welcome change in the world of management scholarship.

**Closing Remarks**

- [Javier Gimeno](#), Sauvage Family Chair for Academic Excellence and Aon Dirk Verbeek Chaired Professor of International Risk and Strategic Management, Professor of Strategy and Dean of Faculty, INSEAD
- [Andrew Karolyi](#), Charles Field Knight Dean and Harold Bierman Jr Distinguished Professor of Management, Cornell SC Johnson College of Business and Incoming Chair of the RRBM Working Board

As the incoming chair of the RRBM, Andrew Karolyi thanked the Dean of Faculty at INSEAD, Javier Gimeno, for hosting the Summit at its Europe campus in Fontainebleau. Andrew offered reflections on what he saw as the highlights of the whole conference and what inspires him about RRBM as a scholar and dean. Andrew closed saying that there is much more work to do for RRBM. He and the new RRBM executive team and working board wanted to amplify and leverage the message of the RRBM to newer audiences that have not yet heard of the organization, to focus on young and aspiring scholars for real system-wide change, and to improve the financial viability of RRBM for its greatest possible long-term impact.
Appendix 1

RRBM Conference 2023 Programme

Hosted by INSEAD, Europe Campus, Fontainebleau

Thursday 15 June

17:00-18:00: Introduction to Responsible Research: Scientific Responsibility and Integrity
Agnieszka Chidlow (Chair in International Business, University of Birmingham)
Monique van Donzel (Global Director, Research Strategy, INSEAD)
David Reibstein (William S. Woodside Professor and Professor of Marketing, Wharton School and Chair of RRBM Working Board)

18:30 – 21:00: COCKTAIL

Friday 16 June

09:00 – 10:00: Openings
David Reibstein (William S. Woodside Professor and Professor of Marketing, Wharton School and Chair of RRBM Working Board)
Jean-Alexis Spitz (RRBM Manager)
Javier Gimeno (Sauvage Family Chair for Academic Excellence and Aon Dirk Verbeek Chaired Professor of International Risk and Strategic Management, Professor of Strategy and Dean of Faculty, INSEAD)

10:00 – 10:45: “The case for inclusivity as a guiding principle in practising responsible, credible, and useful science.”
Piet Naudé (Professor of Ethics, past Director of Stellenbosch Business School and Director of EFMD Deans Across Frontiers)

10:45-11:15: Coffee Break

11:15-12:00: “An experimental business model for industry-supported sustainability research initiatives”
Atalay Atasu (Professor of Technology and Operations Management and Bianca & James Pitt Chair in Environmental Sustainability, INSEAD)

12:00-14:00: Lunch

14:15-14:30: Introduction to the Journals Impact Forum
Serguei Netessine (Senior Vice Dean for Innovation and Global Initiatives and Dhirubhai Ambani Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Wharton School)
Wilfred Mijnhardt (Policy Director, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University (RSM))

14:30-15:10: “How to measure journals’ impact: A multiple stakeholder approach”
Herman Aguinis (Immediate Past President, Academy of Management and Avram Tucker Distinguished Scholar and Professor of Management, George Washington University School of Business)

15:10-15:50: Panel “Rethinking Journals Impact Metrics for Producing Impactful Scholarship by Business Schools”
Moderated by Jennifer Howard-Grenville (Vice Chair of the RRBM Working Board and Diageo Professor of Organisation Studies, Cambridge Judge Business School)
Stephen Sammut (Senior Fellow, Health Care Management and Lecturer, Entrepreneurship, Wharton School)
Saonee Sarker (Professor of Informatics, Lund University and Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, MIS Quarterly)
Mark Smith (Director, Stellenbosch Business School)
James Walker, (Co-Editor in Chief Chartered ABS Academic Journals Guide initiative and Head of International Business and Strategy, Henley Business School)

15:50-16:20: Coffee Break
16:20-16:35: Introduction to Breakout Groups
16:35-17:15: Break Out Groups
17:15 – 17:45: Reporting Back + Conclusion of The Forum
17:45 – 18:15: Deans Remarks
INSEAD Dean: Ilian Mihov
Wharton Dean: Erika James (Dean and Reliance Professor of Management and Private Enterprise, Wharton School)
19:00 – 22:00: Dinner

Saturday 17 June
09:00 – 9:45: Sustainability Reporting Panel
Moderated by Peter Joos (Associate Professor of Accounting and Control, INSEAD)
Richard Barker (board member, International Sustainability Standards Board)
Patricia Dechow (Robert R. Dockson Professor of Business Administration and Professor of Accounting, Finance and Business Economics, USC Marshall School of Business)
Magali Delmas (Faculty Director Center for Impact, UCLA Anderson School of Management)
Peter Easton (Academic Director, Center for Accounting Research and Education, Mendoza College of Business, Notre Dame)
Richard Sloan (Deloitte and Touche LLP Chair in Accounting and Professor of Accounting, Finance and Business Economics, USC Marshall School of Business)
09:45 – 10.30: Fireside Chat
André Hoffmann (Vice Chairman of Roche Holding AG and Chair of the HGIBS Advisory Board)
Francisco Veloso (Dean, Imperial College Business School and incoming Dean, INSEAD)
10:30 – 11:00: Coffee Break
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Bernard Leca (Professor, ESSEC Business School)
Philipp Tuertscher (Associate Professor of Technology and Innovation, KIN Center for Digital Innovation, School of Business and Economics, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

11:45 – 12:10: Closing

Javier Gimeno (Sauvage Family Chair for Academic Excellence and Aon Dirk Verbeek Chaired Professor of International Risk and Strategic Management, Professor of Strategy and Dean of Faculty, INSEAD)

Andrew Karolyi (Charles Field Knight Dean and Harold Bierman Jr Distinguished Professor of Management, Cornell SC Johnson College of Business and Incoming Chair of the RRBM Working Board)

12:10 – 14:00: Lunch