Over the years, electronic government (or e-government as it is commonly referred to) has matured from merely cataloguing information to transforming the way governments across the world conduct their business with different stakeholders. Increased adoption and application of e-Government across countries is being propelled by its potential to offer not only a convenient service to citizens but also related benefits such as reduced transaction costs and enhanced operational efficiency. From citizens’ perspective, e-government holds the potential not only to streamline the services offered to citizens but also to engage citizens’ in the governance process. However, one of the most overlooked pieces of the puzzle in the current debate and research on e-government is the citizen. While the role of e-government in improving internal processes and achieving internal efficiencies cannot be denied, the transformational role of e-government can only be achieved through engagement of citizens in the e-government rollout and subsequent adoption.

E-Government implementation may meet initial citizen resistance, require cultural sensitivity, and change the way citizens and governments relate to each other. Citizens are not always trustful of governments with issues such as corruption, inefficiencies in government transactions, or wasteful expenditures making the relationship between government and citizens complicated. Other issues such as individual attitudes, privacy concerns (especially for information captured through website which can be used for other purposes by the government), or level of e-government adoption can also cloud the success of e-government. Considering that the transformational role of e-government cannot be fully achieved without participation by the citizens in the e-government process, it is critical to look at the e-government process and its success from citizens’ perspective.

It is an opportune time to reflect on the research that has shaped our understanding of e-government from the viewpoint of citizens and develop research models to guide
e-government initiatives in the future. There is a need to examine how citizens perceive e-government initiatives, what is the level of citizens’ involvement and satisfaction with e-government implementation, and what issues and challenges still remain unaddressed.

The objective of this special issue of JOEUC is to focus on original research highlighting citizens’ perspectives on e-government development and implementation across the world. These perspectives range from adoption of e-government to satisfaction with e-government services, and to challenges in e-government participation. This special issue incorporates papers that address various aspects of e-government projects from a theoretical, conceptual, or empirical perspective to set the stage for future research direction in citizen centric e-government efforts. Both quantitative as well as qualitative studies on e-government from citizens’ perspective are included in this issue.

The special issue brings four research papers that focus on range of issues from citizens’ perspective in different contexts. These papers contribute to our understanding of citizen centric e-government by building models/instruments to assess citizens’ adoption of e-government services, exploring facilitators and inhibitors of adoption of public e-service, or by analyzing the role of end users and citizens in e-government application development.

The issue begins with two papers that focus on adoption of electronic government services by citizens. In the first paper, Lemuria Carter and Ronald Campbell conduct an empirical analysis of Internet voting adoption. This study explores the role of accessibility, trust, and convenience in influencing perceived usefulness of Internet voting from citizens’ perspective. Through this research, authors hope to respond to earlier calls for research that explores in detail perceived usefulness as a factor influencing information systems adoption. The study results confirm the generally accepted notion that trust is an important factor in an individual’s perceived usefulness of the Internet for voting. The study results also point to the growing influence of accessibility and convenience (provided by Internet voting) on citizens’ adoption of Internet voting.

The second paper by Alzahrani et al. develops a measurement instrument to assess the citizens’ adoption of e-government services in Middle East context. This study integrates elements from widely accepted theories such as technology acceptance model (TAM), innovation diffusion theory (IDT) and theory of planned behavior (TPB), in conjunction with web trust models to identify the measurement items. The measurement instrument includes some unique latent variables such as Image, Compatibility, or Media Influence which have not been explored in earlier research. It is expected that this study will help researchers to assess citizens’ intention to adopt e-government services across multiple dimensions using a validated instrument.

The third paper by Antoine Harfouche and Alice Robbin investigates inhibitors and enablers of public e-services in context of Lebanon. This study highlights fear of government control as the most important determinant of citizens’ use of public e-services. Like earlier studies, this paper also confirms the importance of building trust between the government and citizens to ensure successful rollout of e-government and related services. The other important aspect underscored by this study is that in developing countries, citizens are still not comfortable with the security of information provided through electronic channels and still perceive that governments could potentially use the information to increase political control over its citizens. From this standpoint, this paper identifies a major inhibitor to e-government success. While the findings from this study are specific to Lebanon, this study offers guidance for e-government implementation elsewhere too by emphasizing that norms and values of the political culture of developing/transitional economies should be taken into account for successful e-government adoption.

The fourth and final paper by Shah Jahan Miah develops a conceptual approach
for e-government application development by engaging end users such as government managers, officials, and citizens. This paper proposes an innovative process model for delivery of e-services. The authors post that by using the proposed process, not only can the citizens participate in obtaining relevant government services, government officials can also be more effective in communicating with citizens. Such a process model could potentially help simplify governments’ various task allocations for service delivery and the associated transformational roles, particularly for citizen-oriented service development. This study underscores the significance of involving citizens in customizing the services offered rather than offering standard services.

We anticipate that the papers included within this special issue will prove to be a useful source of information for those readers who wish to learn more about the various facets of citizen centric e-government.

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