EDITORIAL PREFACE

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As all scholars in the nascent field of e-government research know, a considerable amount of hype surrounds this subject. To read the hype, one would almost think that a second coming was about to occur. That is, the outward-facing (G2G, G2B, G2C) use of ICTs in government will produce a veritable nirvana. Governments will use the Internet to do more and better with less while at the same time re-engineering internal processes and saving money, improving citizen participation and trust, and resuscitating democracy. Some of the hype is understandable as an unreflective product of enthusiasm about a new medium. Some of it comes from advocates for e-government who act as the true believers of e-government and some from marketers and vendors with products and services to sell. Above all, the hype is contagious. It is easy to find scholarly conferences and papers that are infected with some of it.

The lead article in this issue of the IJEGR tackles at least part of the hype surrounding e-government, albeit indirectly. Kenneth L. Kraemer and John Leslie King ask whether information technology (IT) has been used as an instrument of administrative reform in the U.S. They do so by examining findings from research into the use and impacts of IT over the past 30 years or so, from the mainframe era to the era of e-government. Then, they ask if the results that they found for IT and government may not presage results that may occur in the era of e-government.

Their principal conclusion, that IT and government has not been an instrument of administrative reform, was not surprising, at least to this student of IT, government, and e-government. Their finding also suggests that scholars especially, but all observers and participants in e-government, should exercise greater care when predicting future results from e-government. For reasons similar to those with respect to IT in government, e-government will probably not produce administrative reform.

The remaining articles in this issue address different but, nevertheless, important issues in e-government. The second article, by Julianne Mahler and Priscilla M. Regan, concerns what these authors describe as the transformation of U.S. federal agencies’ methods of internal administration, program management, and dealings with relations with...
both Congress and citizens. They found that within the past 10 years, agencies have moved significantly to electronic environments as the result of policy push, agency initiative, and other factors. This, then, has produced a new environment in which agencies must grapple with Web governance or what Mahler and Regan describe as the control of design and content of Web sites. Their article describes how Web governance over time has evolved government-wide and at the level of individual agencies and also discusses some of the challenges facing agencies in Web governance.

Next is an article that addresses generational differences in IT use and political participation. Using survey data from three states (Colorado, Iowa, and Pennsylvania), Mack C. Shelley, Lisa E. Thrane, and Stuart W. Shulman examine whether demographic characteristics, especially age, are related, among other things, to IT literacy and to e-participation. They found that, on the whole, younger persons are more IT-savvy, more positive toward IT, and more positive toward e-participation, while older persons are more likely to prefer traditional means of political participation and to participate more. One of the clear implications of their findings is that as the older generation of citizens is replaced by the newer generation (a generation that is more techno-literate and prefers forms of e-engagement), new modes of political participation, particularly e-participation, may arise and become mainstream.

The final article in this issue is an exploratory study by Yu-Che Chen and Daniela V. Dimitrova, who provide a framework that incorporates the supply and demand dimensions of citizen interaction with government. Using data from a Web survey, they examine three aspects of citizen engagement: accessing information, conducting transactions, and providing policy input. Among other things, they find that perceived availability of an e-government service is key to its utilization; perceived usefulness is an important factor in citizens’ willingness to use it and in their actual utilization; political activism emerges as a predictor of a citizen’s online policy engagement, and, contrary to previous findings, demographic characteristics do not explain much variance in citizens’ willingness to use e-government or in the utilization of it. Because theirs was an exploratory study, they suggest future avenues of research into understanding both the demand and supply sides of e-citizen engagement.

The IJEGR is pleased to include each of these articles in the premiere issue of its second year in publication. It is heartening to receive and publish quality manuscripts like these and the articles in the issues of Volume 1 that preceded them. We encourage all of our readers to consider IJEGR as an outlet for their e-government research.

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