Editorial Preface

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Conferences present important opportunities for researchers to present their ideas, to exchange viewpoints, and to learn from one another. It is in such a spirit that we are fortunate to include in this current issue contributions from authors who initially presented their work at the International Conference on E-Government (ICEG 2005) held in October 2005 in Ottawa, Canada.

The event, organized by Academic Conferences International, brought together researchers from a diverse range of countries and professional backgrounds. Although the academic contingent proved the most significant, the conference benefited from its local in Canada’s political capital, thereby drawing leading public servants from the Government of Canada as both keynote speakers and conference participants. IJEGR was also well represented at the conference, with Jeffrey Roy (then of the University of Ottawa and now Dalhousie University) serving as Conference Chair and IJEGR Editor-in-Chief, Donald F. Norris, joining many other leading e-government scholars as presenters.

Following this event a number of conference papers were submitted for peer-review to this Journal. Here we are pleased to present three of the best papers presented in Ottawa and then subsequently revised through both feedback from the conference itself as well as blind reviewers acting on behalf of this Journal. These articles provide a snapshot of the important dialogue that took place at ICEG 2005, one that can now serve to reach a broader audience through IJEGR.

Collectively, the articles derived from the conference reveal the broad scope of e-government activity and the range of both conceptual and applied research questions emerging in this field, particularly with respect to implementation and experimentation — as e-government now imposes itself as a reality for most all countries in the world today. The individual contributions provide value through a more rigorous examination of specific themes and issues, deploying different methodological approaches in doing so. Each one helps to provide new analytical insights by providing research that can help to distinguish between rhetoric and reality, an undeniably important aspect of e-government’s evolution after an initial decade that has brought with it significant change but also much hyperbole.

This issue of IJEGR begins with two research papers by Chai, et al. and Titah and Barki. These are followed by a research note
by Monnoyer-Smith and a report from the field by Pratchett et al.

Sangmi Chai, Tejaswini Herath, Insu Park and H. Raghav Rao of the State University of New York at Buffalo (NY) begin this issue within the theme of implementation, focusing on more precise questions surrounding the inter-relationship between the provision of confidential information in e-government services and user satisfaction as it related to both current performance and intentions and openness toward repeated usage of e-government mechanisms. Their study reveals that, as demonstrated by previous studies, performance is a predictor of satisfaction. However perceived confidentiality does not directly effect user’s satisfaction towards the service. This indicates that the level of confidential information plays a role not as an antecedent of satisfaction but as the same level of satisfaction. The study also showed that users’ demographics-gender and race act as a moderator on the relationship between reuse intention and satisfaction (confidentiality) by providing the interaction effect. Specifically, gender (race) played as a moderator on the relationship between intention to reuse and satisfaction (level of confidential information).

Ryad Titah and Henri Barki, at HEC Montreal, seek to respond to what they view an insufficient focus on theorizing the implementation of e-government systems from two critical dimensions: adoption and integration. With respect to adoption, these authors provide a categorization of key factors from an extensive literature review, highlighting the main implications and ongoing questions emerging from such a template. They also discuss the importance of ‘complementarities’ as a basis for examining the complexity of integrating multiple business processes, a challenge that is technical, organizational and political. The implications of their findings are discussed, with a number of promising facets proposed for future efforts in the realm of multi-dimensional e-government research.

The analysis by Laurence Monnoyer-Smith, University of Technology of Compiègne, shifts from the service provisions of e-government toward matters of democratic engagement and the potential for new forms of online participation to strengthen public sector outcomes. Drawing on the recent experience of consultations surrounding the proposed 3rd international airport for the French Capital of Paris, the author shows the added-value of Internet-based deliberation can be derived from widening the participant’s profile, the nature of their argumentation, and their means of expression. Monnoyer-Smith draws on this case study as a basis for a refined consideration of both the meaning and mechanisms of deliberation in a democratic society. Her conclusion is that the potential of positive online engagement rests in the ability to mobilize the creativity of the citizenry in ways that may be at odds with traditional forms of rational argumentation and exchange.

The final paper is a report from the field by Lawrence Pratchett and Melvin Wingfield, De Montfort University in the UK, and Rabia Karakaya-Polat, Isik University in Istanbul, on barriers to e-democracy. The present form of report was edited for inclusion in IJEGR by Anne Roland, University of Maryland, Baltimore County. This paper is an abbreviated version of a longer monograph by Pratchett, et al., that was funded by the UK Local Democracy National Project.

This study, based on an examination of all local government Web sites in England and Wales and on interviews with local elected and appointed officials, provides an analysis of barriers to local e-democracy that local authorities in the UK have encountered. The principal findings reported in this paper are that although e-democracy is rather young and local Web sites remain mostly informational
some progress is being made toward achieving local e-democracy in the UK. This is true despite the existence of such barriers as the absence of a clear and common understanding of what e-democracy means; lack of funding, technology, skills and political and managerial will at the local level; central government mandates, and lack of citizen uptake.

We hope that you will find these papers both informative and provocative.

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Jeffrey Roy is associate professor in the School of Public Administration, Faculty of Management at Dalhousie University. He specializes in models of democratic and multi-stakeholder governance and electronic government reforms and his research in these fields is presently funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. He has also consulted and provided executive development for organizations in both government and industry. Prior to joining Dalhousie he was associate professor in the School of Management, University of Ottawa. In 2004-2005, Professor Roy was also a visiting faculty member of the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. He is author of a recent book, E-Government in Canada: Transformation for the Digital Age (University of Ottawa Press, 2006).