E-government has been high on the agenda of many governments over the past few years. Over time the focus of attention of e-government related initiatives has shifted. Whereas at the beginning many e-government projects were predominantly ruled by the application of new technology, the focus has now shifted towards creating new business models and customer orientation. This should ultimately result in e-government becoming the accepted norm for delivering government services. Yet, there is still a long way to go.

E-government projects are unique in the sense that they require the intense collaboration of a variety of stakeholders having different views on the projects. In the past, the scope of e-government has been within organizations and was focused very much on creating added value by making use of technology in their existing processes. Today’s e-government projects are even more complex as they often involve a number of public organizations that need to cooperate. Further, as citizens become more familiar with e-business ideas their expectations of e-government services increase. Whereas in the past the focus in the public sector was primarily on taking advantage of new technologies, improving existing products and supporting existing processes, today’s expectations are much more focused on creating added value by innovating products and reengineering business processes. Instead of taking technology as a starting point, customer needs are now being considered as the starting point and more emphasis is being put on transforming public sector processes and services to meet customer expectations. Furthermore, cross-organizational processes show that the demand for a process-oriented approach is essential, as customer expectations and service demands often extend beyond the boundaries of a single public sector agency.

Figure 1 show four possible orientations that can be considered in the context of e-government and the shift in focus over time. On the left hand side the traditional e-government orientations are shown, whereas, on the right the newer orientations are illustrated. Indeed, the number of orientations can be easily extended; however, these are the orientations we observed in the e-government research articles included in this special issue. Traditionally, technology orientation has been the basis for e-government for which web technology is used to improve government. Initially the orientation has been on the online provisioning of existing products and providing transactional level functionality. Gradually the focus of atten-
tion has shifted towards providing new products. This could mean that old products are integrated in new products, which requires a reengineering of business processes. This vision often takes customer needs as a starting point and tries to facilitate customer interactions and results in a transformed government.

To enhance the chance of success the various orientations should be addressed in parallel and the orientations should be matched with each other. In this way a totally balanced field is created and the relevant ingredients for an optimal innovative state are incorporated.

This special issue contains five articles selected from the e-government related mini tracks presented at the 14th Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS 2008) held in Toronto, Ontario, 14-17 August 2008. At this conference several e-government related mini-tracks were scattered across different conference tracks. For the 2009 edition of the AMCIS conference, a main track on e-government has been introduced covering nine mini tracks on various aspects of e-government (http://www.amcis2009.org/). This consolidation shows the importance of e-government and of having e-government as a separate theme at information systems conferences.

The first article in this special issue, by Kamal named “A Multiple Case Study on Integrating IT Infrastructures in the Public Domain” addresses the challenges of synchronizing cross-departmental business processes and integrating autonomous information systems through Enterprise Application Integration (EAI). EAI is an important topic in the field of e-government as the integration of applications is necessary for realizing e-government. Whereas in the past the orientation of EAI was on integrating applications, the orientation has shifted towards process-integration in which cross-departmental business processes and applications are integrated. There is a shortage of research studies on EAI adoption and this article aims to fill this knowledge gap by analyzing two case studies.

The second article is by Al-Shafi and Weerakkody and is entitled “Implementing Free Wi-Fi in Public Parks: An Empirical Study in Qatar”. This article examines the adoption of free wireless internet parks (iPark) by Qatari citizens as a means of accessing electronic services from public parks. The authors argue that the adoption and diffusion of internet park services in a country will depend on user acceptance and availability of wireless technology. The article examines an extended technology acceptance model (TAM) that proposes individual differences and technology complexity to determine perceived usefulness and perceived ease of the iPark initiative by using a survey based study.

In the article “The Role of Intermediaries in Multi-channel Service Delivery Strategies”, Janssen and Klievink argue that customer-orientation requires the selection of innovative service delivery channels that matches citizens and businesses. Whereas the orientation in the past has been on creating direct contact between government agencies and their customers, this article argues for making use of intermediaries in the interaction with citizens and businesses. Intermediation theory and two case studies are analyzed which make the argument for using intermediaries, as they can be used to reduce cost,
improve information quality, while at the same time make government more demand-driven by employing channels that are closer to the natural interaction patterns of citizens and businesses.

Matheis, Ziemann, Loos, Schmidt and Wimmer discuss the need for an increase in the orientation on cooperation between public administrations in their article “Requirements based evaluation of eGovernment in the large”. They discuss the necessity of an efficient evaluation and requirements engineering process that guides the establishment of systems and services used by public administrations. For that purpose they propose a framework to systematically gather and evaluate requirements. The framework consists of three parts, the problem space for identifying the relevant objectives, the requirement space for gathering requirements that serve as an evaluation basis and the solution space for evaluating and developing appropriate solutions.

In “Relating Acceptance and Optimism to E-file Adoption”, Carter and Schaupp propose a model of e-filing adoption that identifies adoption factors and personal factors that impact the citizen acceptance of electronic filing systems. They highlight the acceptance factors and personal factors that impact the adoption of e-filing and find that web-specific self-efficacy is a significant determinant of behavioral intention. This study uses very specific constructs such as trust of the e-filer instead of a generic trust concept and web-specific self-efficacy instead of a general self-efficacy construct.

The aforementioned articles cover a number of developments which demonstrate the change in orientation within e-government. By simultaneously addressing a variety of orientations a balanced approach towards e-government is created which takes these various, sometimes conflicting, orientations into account. In particular, if e-government is to succeed, these orientations needs to be addressed simultaneously and e-government projects should be analyzed and understood from the various views which result in a multidisciplinary approach towards e-government.

Enjoy reading!

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