Editorial Preface

Special Theme Issue:
E-Government

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The Journal of Electronic Commerce in Organizations (JECO) always energetically searches the new issues to find and deliver to you the most innovative thinking on electronic commerce in organizations. We continue to focus on strategy, innovation, leadership, technology, and organizational change, while widening our coverage to include e-commerce, entrepreneurship, marketing, and finance. This special issue of the JECO presents selected papers from growing interests about e-Government in recent years.

New developments and implementations in e-government challenge even the most experienced managers and strategists to successfully position their e-government projects in the changing environment. Grove (1996) wrote a book entitled Only the Paranoid Survive. He wrote it before the onslaught about the Internet revolution and e-government. But his thesis is still fresh and appropriate for anyone thinking about e-commerce and e-government. We are in the midst of major shifts: Traditional logic, so fundamental to the industrial revolution, is challenged every day by the possibilities of the e-commerce world. Well-understood sources of value creation through tangible, physical assets are being replaced by newfound sources through digital assets and networks of relationships. New entrants are crafting powerful new business models and rewriting the rules of competition. Established companies need to embrace the e-commerce agenda; failing this, they will be left behind. Government needs to blend traditional and Web-based operations while confronting the challenges of e-government.

Clearly, research in the domain of e-government seems fragmented. A number of management and IS/IT concepts have enriched our centered attention on how to design and manage e-government applications. However, the growing literature on e-government should continue to draw from rich theoretical perspectives, but also investigate with the “how” questions of e-Government applications.

From a research perspective, many e-government projects adopt a process perspective and/or a context perspective. The processes themselves can be studied by, for example, design, codification, integration, collaboration, and transfer phases. The process framework can also be studied for e-government development processes occurring between individuals, groups, and organizations. Some e-government development processes exist in duality with the context, that is, they can be influenced by and influence the context. Of course, strategy, structure, culture, and technology can be the focus of research in both process and context frameworks.

An alternate approach to study e-
government is from a public service perspective. Several key attributes of an efficient and effective public service on e-government would include such factors as usability issues, organizational change, information symmetry, common currency, social exclusion, and homogeneity of customers. This public service framework raises concerns that focus on pragmatic issues of “how” and “what” make e-government implementations work better. These could include issues on the role of IT in reducing information asymmetry via e-government applications, factors affecting the value of information services, relationships between public service efficiency and workforce morale, types of physical and virtual e-government mechanisms and their impact, and conditions that influence beliefs on privacy and trust regarding e-government development. Both the process and public service frameworks would provide a complete and complementary representation of e-government research questions.

The articles in this issue represent a variety of conceptual and methodological approaches that epitomize the complexity of the e-government applications and development being examined. The first article by Liz Lee-Kelley and Thomas James of the University of Surrey, U.K., entitled “E-Government and Social Exclusion: An Empirical Study” contributes an excellent empirical study on the possibility of social exclusion from e-government implementation. Anchored on two crucial questions: (1) What are the factors influencing the adoption of e-government initiatives? (2) Is the implementation of e-government likely to result in the social exclusion of certain groups in the community? The study confirmed that language, ethnicity, cognitive computer skills and a positive personal attitude towards online transactions are the key drivers for e-government adoption. The results provide preliminary guidelines on the effective public services delivery and the ways to direct resources into increasing e-government applications.

In the second article “Implementing e-Government in Ireland: A Roadmap for Success” by Willie Golden, Martin Hughes, and Murray Scott, National University of Ireland, examines the interesting issue of e-government implementation. The most appropriate model and technical infrastructure were identified and implemented by outsourcing to leverage expertise that already existed. Critical concerns of local authorities were managed by using familiar actors. The interactions necessary between otherwise independent agencies was successfully coordinated to ensure the delivery of quality services. This case study also alerts managers to recognize the gaps between the stages that greatly increase, requiring sophisticated strategies and infrastructures to obtain the latter stages.

The third article, entitled “Building Blocks of an e-Government – A Framework,” is written by Sushil K. Sharman of Ball State University, and Jatinder N.D. Gupta of the University of Alabama in Huntsville. The article describes an interpretive examination of the e-government framework and the four stages of Internet and Web-enabled e-government. The authors provide guidelines for various actions needed for e-government development.

In the fourth paper, entitled “A Heuristic Model to Implement Government-to-Government Projects” by Luis Antonio Joia of the Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil, analyzes and presents the key success factors and main barriers, causes and potential solutions for G2G implementations. The author suggests a heuristic model to implement G2G projects
successfully. The article provides a useful way to make sense of the many G2G initiatives undertaken in recent years.

E-government involves efforts on many fronts to be successful. Whether framed in terms of a process and its context or in terms of service efficiency and effectiveness, e-government offers fertile avenues for research. This special issue provides one small step in this regard. It is also important to note, however, that the research agenda should be closely tied to practical issues in e-government. The growing literature on e-government should continue to draw from rich theoretical perspectives, but also deal with the how questions of e-government design, applications and management (Gronlund, 2002).

As a whole these four articles provide an overview of some of the most interesting issues which need to be studied under a dynamic view of e-government. It is hoped that they will encourage further research into the dynamic aspects of an e-government world. We welcome your suggestions and hope you will take a minute to send your ideas and comments about JECO. Watch for our next issue; JECO’s best days are yet to come.

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REFERENCES