The inaugural issue of the International Journal of Electronic Government Research represents an important milestone in the field of electronic government research — the professional recognition of this field as a credible and valuable research domain. While most governments around the world have already recognized the worth of electronic government as a business process and an enabler of citizen access, there has not been a recognized venue for the publication of peer-reviewed research in the electronic government domain. IJEGR addresses this need, as exemplified in its mission:

The mission of the International Journal of Electronic Government Research is to publish the very best original scholarly research on the subject of electronic government, broadly defined, and to publish top quality articles about electronic government from the practice. To this end, we invite submission of papers from a variety of disciplines and perspectives. (A Brief Snapshot of International Electronic Government. ____., p. x)

We are beginning to see the development of a growing body of research on electronic government. Much of the research reflects the global nature of electronic government. Research is plentiful about electronic government at the subnational level of government as well.

In a recent report issued by the United Nations (2003), 91% of its member states had Web sites. Only 18 member countries did not have any Web presence. The United Nations (UN) study further reported that the United States, Sweden, Australia, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Norway were the leaders in e-government readiness, a measure of Web presence, telecommunications infrastructure, and human capital.

A related report from the E-Governance Institute/National Center for Public Productivity and the Global e-Policy e-Government Institute (2003) presented an evaluation of the official city Web sites from the largest cities in the 98 United Nations member countries with online populations that were greater than 100,000. The report found that 16 of these cities did not host official Web sites. Of the 84 cities that did have Web sites, the highest ranking cities (based on 92 measures of five components of electronic government) were Seoul, Hong Kong SAR, Singapore, New York, and Shanghai.

The 2003 Global E-Government report (West, 2003) examined 2,166 government Web sites in 198 different countries. When
assessing the level of services and government information available at these Web sites, only 16% of the government Web sites had fully executable services available online. Most of the government Web sites offered access to publications (89%) and a majority also made government databases available online (73%). While English was the most frequently used language on government Web sites, West found that 51% of the sites surveyed were multilingual.

Finally, there is the 2004 report in Accenture’s Government Executive Series, the fourth in a series of reports on trends in global electronic government. The latest findings indicate that, in general, activities in electronic government are slowing down. The large advances made in previous years are not as noticeable this year. Another finding from this study is that electronic government has moved from a focus on horizontal integration of processes to a vertical integration that encompasses efforts across multiple levels of government. Accenture rated 22 countries on their level of electronic government maturity — service level and customer relationship management. The countries that received the highest maturity level scores were Canada, Singapore, the United States, Australia, and Denmark.

Among other things, these major international studies show that models of electronic government and the measurement of electronic government are vastly different in the research domain. This reflects the naivety of the field and the need for the development appropriate electronic government research methodologies. The research further makes clear that electronic government has become ubiquitous. However, examination of Web sites across nations shows great diversity of implementation quality and service levels at both national and subnational levels of government. Additionally, the research shows that electronic government has been adopted in all but the smallest and poorest of governments worldwide.

AN IMPERATIVE FOR AN E-GOVERNMENT JOURNAL

The Center for Technology in Government (CTG) at the University at Albany, SUNY, recently completed a survey to determine publication strategies for electronic government research (NSF grant EIA-CISE-RI-MII 0306813). CTG had two primary research questions: Is there a need for a professional journal that has electronic government as its focus, and how would the establishment of such a journal compare to other publication strategies? The study used a purposive sample of electronic government researchers from multiple disciplines and achieved a 41% response rate (n=188). More than nine in 10 (92%) of the sample were academics, 35% had taught at least one course in electronic government, and the mean for conducting electronic government research was 5.64 years. Survey respondents had conducted electronic government research in 31 different countries, with the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and The Netherlands being the most studied countries. The findings indicated two important issues.

First, researchers and practitioners in the field of electronic government find it problematic to publish their research in the more recognized and established disciplinary journals. To publish in these venues, respondents noted that the often interdisciplinary nature of electronic government research was a hindrance, requiring them to pull out the portions of the research that were not relevant to the particular journal audience. Respondents further voiced their concerns that the journal reviewers were not sufficiently aware of the electronic government domain to do a sufficient review.
Second, the strategies identified to support the peer-reviewed publication of electronic government research included the establishment of a journal that has electronic government as its focus, and the development of special issues on electronic government in the traditional academic journals. Eighty-eight percent of the survey respondents indicated that they would submit their manuscripts to a journal dedicated to electronic government. In addition, 81% indicated that they would be reviewers for such a journal, and 72% noted that they would be willing to be editorial board members.

The CTG study clearly showed that there is an interest among electronic government scholars in a journal devoted to electronic government research. The respondents also indicated a high level of interest in participating in the workings of a dedicated journal on this topic.

The respondents defined important characteristics for the success of this journal. The first was that it be one that is highly regarded in the research community. Second, the publications had to represent the best and most current research on electronic government policy, development, practice, and evaluation.

The success of this undertaking is dependent on meeting these criteria. The IJEGR and Idea Group Publishing are committed to meeting these benchmarks.

IJEGR BOARD AT A GLANCE

Research in electronic government reflects the multidisciplinary nature of the field. No single discipline claims ownership. Rather, research is conducted from several disciplines and from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives. Furthermore, an increasing fraction is also the product of collaborative efforts reflecting the paradigms of a range of academic disciplines and practitioners. The IJEGR Editorial Board strongly reflects the multidisciplinary nature of research in electronic government. The Editorial Board is composed of respected scientists from the academic fields of public policy, public administration, economics, information science, political science, computer science, and management science.

The practitioners on the Editorial Board are international leaders in the development and implementation of electronic government processes. The list of Editorial Board members is found on the inside of the cover page each issue of the journal.

From this notable group we have identified four Associate Editors to oversee the manuscripts that relate to their editorship.

Our Associate Editors for Research are:

Marc Holzer, Professor and Chair, Graduate Department of Public Administration, Rutgers University, USA. Marc has directed the National Center for Public Productivity since 1975 and is the founder and Editor-in-Chief of the Public Performance and Management Review. Marc is the past president of the American Society for Public Administration (2000-2002) and the author of numerous books, reports, and journal articles. Marc is co-author of a recent study (2003) of digital governance in worldwide municipal cities.

Jeffrey Roy, Associate Professor, School of Management, University of Ottawa, Canada. He is currently a visiting professor in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Jeff’s research is in public sector management and new governance challenges associated with new technologies and online connectivity. He has published numerous articles and book chapters in this field and is a regular contributor to CIO Government Review in Canada. Jeff has recently
served as a Canadian consultant with the OECD’s international study of e-government.

Our Associate Editor for Research-in-Progress is:

**Genie Stowers**, Professor and Director, Public Administration Program, San Francisco State University, USA. Genie’s primary areas of research are e-government and online education. She has been active in the research of Internet applications for government and has taught online since 1995. Genie’s current focus is on measuring the performance of early e-government efforts, assessing the effects of increased security concerns on e-government efforts, and structuring/designing Web sites for maximum usability. Genie has an extensive publication record for both academic and professional association outlets. Notable among her publications are three research reports for the PricewaterhouseCoopers Foundation for the Business of Government.

Our Associate Editor for Practice is:

**Sharon Dawes**, Director, Center for Technology in Government and Associate Professor of Public Administration and Policy, University at Albany, State University of New York, USA. The Center for Technology in Government is an award winning applied research center devoted to effective public sector information strategies. Sharon’s research is on information strategy, management, and policy in the public sector. She has received support for her research from the National Science Foundation, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the State of New York, and the U.S. Department of Justice. Sharon is a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration (2002) and was recognized by Governing Magazine as a 1997 Public Official of the Year.

**FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF THE JOURNAL**

The issues for Volume 1 of IJEGR each have different foci. This inaugural issue includes papers that examine the general domain of electronic government. Issue No. 2 will present the “best” papers that were presented at the recent National Science Foundation/Digital Government Research Center’s dg.o2004 conference. The guest editors for this special issue are Lois Delcambre (Oregon Science and Health University, USA) and Eduard Hovy (University of Southern California Information Sciences Institute, USA). Issue No. 3 will focus on electronic democracy, with guest editors Robert Krimmer (Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Vienna, Austria) and Lawrence Pratchett (DeMontfort University, Leicester, UK). Issue No. 4 will be open for papers on any topic related to e-government.

We have a number of thoughts about special issues for Volume 2 that includes research on e-voting, privacy, security, and applications. We welcome suggestions for future issues of IJEGR, as well as volunteers to be guest editors.

**INAUGURAL ISSUE ARTICLES**

This issue represents some of the best of current research and thinking on electronic government. The five articles present a range of research topics. In addition, they examine a variety of levels of government — local, national, and global.

The article by Melitski, Holzer, Kim, Kim, and Roh takes an international perspective on electronic government. These authors present the results of a study of municipal Web sites using the 98 United Nations mem-
ber countries to draw a sample. From these, they chose the largest cities in each country, ones with populations of Internet users greater than 100,000. While Melitski et al. initially selected 100 cities, the final sample included the 84 cities that had home pages. Their theoretical framework encourages us to think about what drives public managers to use the Internet. The authors contend that successful public managers adopt electronic government strategies as a way to enforce their own management practices and policies. The theoretical framework offered by Melitski et al. offers an alternative to the more traditional public administration and information systems paradigms, and raises some compelling and useful questions about what drives adoption of electronic government.

The research makes use of a detailed level of measures to evaluate electronic government. They have five global measures — security/privacy, usability, content, service, and citizen participation — which are then further refined into 92 key concepts. This goes well beyond the refinement of measures seen to date in electronic government research. This instrument enables Melitski et al. to provide rich data that add to the developing picture of electronic government worldwide. There is a need for more research that focuses on international electronic government, which, because of its scope, has received little attention to date.

Pippa Norris presents research findings that examine the notion that Internet-enabled processes drive citizen participation in their governments. Norris uses a market model that theorizes that use of the Internet to strengthen civic engagement and democratic participation in political activities is determined by both supply and demand characteristics. She frames this in the context of a knowledge society — a society where communications technology and information have diffused successfully throughout a population.

Using data from the 19-nation European Social Survey (2002), Norris predicts that Internet use in a knowledge society will lead to more civic- and cause-oriented forums for discussion. She argues that the more traditional forms of political engagement, such as election campaigns or activity in political parties, are less likely to benefit from Internet use by knowledge societies than are non-traditional Internet-enabled channels for political activism. Internet use benefits local, social movements. The evidence she presents confirms this hypothesis. In knowledge societies, the availability and access to political information and communication channels drives the societal demand for this information from the citizenry. Norris leaves us with many questions about how this will affect knowledge societies. A question we could raise based on the Norris study asks how this will affect the use of the Internet by traditional and formal legislative bodies and legislative actors.

The article by Jeffrey Roy brings us to examination of a country — Canada — and its conceptual dimensions, applications, and future uses of electronic government. Two important aspects of Roy’s conceptual foundation emerge. Electronic government must continuously innovate, and there is an intrinsic link between the processes of government and governance. There is an ever changing interaction between both internal and external stakeholders that affects the development of electronic activities by both parties. Roy also assesses the differences between electronic commerce and electronic government, especially in terms of how each achieves customer service and internal efficiencies in the context of policy concerns and limits on government activities. More specifically, Roy looks at the issues of privacy, security, trust, and transparency in electronic government initiatives.

Roy then turns his eye to electronic government policy and practice in Canada.
He notes the tensions that arise from encouraging more active citizen participation in government activities via the Internet, which puts public servants in much closer proximity to citizens, encouraging and accepting their input. This contradicts Canada’s parliamentary form of government in which only officials in the legislative branch have the authority to engage in such interactions. Roy contends that there is a considerable gap between parliamentary processes and citizen engagement in Canada. From the detailed examination of policy and practice, Roy asserts that, in the short run, it may be that local governments will experiment with new participative and democratic forms of electronic governance. These local governments are closer to citizens and their needs, and can more easily test ways to offer effective customer service in a secure environment, creating transparency and trust in innovative ways within a policy framework.

The research presented by Hans Jochen Scholl examines the challenges presented by government’s attempt to integrate its electronic activities both vertically and horizontally. He contends that electronic government is a critical driver for changing current government business processes. Scholl further presents a case for government utilization of private sector best practices for business process change.

Scholl provides a cogent examination of how the private sector strategically approaches business process change. From this review, he developed eight propositions that link successful private sector constructs to electronic government processes. These propositions were used in the research to see if there were differences between the two sectors. Scholl’s analysis depicted the differences between government and the private sector as to how organizations in each sector engaged in strategic business process change in an electronic environment. For his research, Scholl used a sample of 30 senior public managers from the governments of New York State, Washington State, King County (WA), and the City of Seattle (WA), all of which have been involved in at least one major electronic government development in their respective governments. Scholl’s findings indicated that the public sector did rely on business process practices from private sector organizations. The differences he found were minor. Scholl also reported on how the respondents ranked the eight concepts of business process change in relation to electronic government projects. The most important were the attention to bounded rationality and self interest and the use of a systems approach in these projects. These findings are critical to understanding in the development of realistic electronic government processes, and in realistic expectations of what electronic processes can actually accomplish.

Research by Alison Radl and Yu-Che Chen examines the issue of security in the state government program area of education. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (H.R. 1) forms the policy framework for their study of a state and local government application to collect data required by the Act. The application is one which must integrate the vertical processes of disparate manual and automated systems. The Midwestern state and its 370 public school districts are the participants in this project.

Radl and Chen provide support for their assertion that the electronic collection of data on individual students is fraught with privacy and security hazards. They use a CIA model — confidentiality, integrity, and availability — coupled with a model of the organizational determinants of computer security to examine the project. They look at the security concerns of the state-local information system from the perspective of the school districts. The results from their survey of the 388 school district staff (63.4% response rate) create a picture of individual system security concerns and aggregate security issues. Radl
and Chen noted that there was a disturbingly low level of security awareness at the local level — only eight districts out of 233 had some form of security policy or process. Here is a policy area that state government could frame. The findings of this research are critical to informing the development of policy for that Midwestern state and other U.S. state governments, as the No Child Left Behind Act affects all.

These five articles provide the reader with a picture of current electronic government practices and policies. We see efforts that range from international to national and local governments. Important questions are raised concerning citizen participation, privacy, security, trust, strategy, and drivers of electronic government. These articles further serve as benchmarks for our future publications. We have some of the best current research and will continue to meet these standards.

REFERENCES


