Maria A. Wimmer
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Kim Viborg Andersen (Eds.)

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Electronic Government

5th International Conference, EGOV 2006
Kraków, Poland, September 2006
Proceedings

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Preface

Over the years the international EGOV conferences have gained the reputation of presenting and representing the current status of e-Government research. In a sense, the EGOV conference series provides a log for the unfolding of this particular domain of study and practice. This fifth EGOV conference promises to be as special and as unique a milestone as its four predecessors. Every past conference marked a specific major accomplishment: The first conference at Aix-en-Provence, France, established the conference and its format within the DEXA cluster of conferences. The second conference in Prague, the Czech Republic, saw a drastically increased number of submissions, and many more scholars became involved in a decentralized paper review process. The third conference in Zaragoza, Spain, witnessed another increase in submissions from around the world (among which were also a higher number of contributions from North America) leading to an increased attention to the many different flavors of governance and e-Government around the world. The 2005 conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, with an increased volume (again) established a rigorous double-blind review process and also introduced the distinction between full (and finished) research papers (published in Springer's *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*), on the one hand, and posters, work in progress, as well as workshops (published by Trauner Druck, Linz, Austria), on the other hand. Also, a pre-conference PhD colloquium was added to the schedule.

The Copenhagen conference was instrumental in greatly furthering the research collaboration between Europe-based researchers and scholars from other parts of the world. Along with the International Conference on Digital Government Research (dg.o) and the e-Government Track at the Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS), the EGOV series of conferences has firmly established itself as one of three leading annual conferences on e-Governance and e-Government with a global reach. Unlike in other fields, the organizers of these three annual conferences collaborate rather than compete against each other. This has had many positive impacts on the study domain of e-Governance and e-Government, which none of the three conferences could have ever achieved alone. Some of these impacts are:

1. The community of professionals and scholars meets on a regular four-month basis (January: HICCS; May: dg.o; and September: EGOV) with ample opportunity for face-to-face exchanges.
2. The four-month interval provides sufficient time for progressing in research endeavors.
3. As a consequence, work initiatives. and collaborative projects are carried forward in a timely fashion providing participating professionals and scholars with a predictable short-term schedule for reunion.

4. Professionals and scholars develop an intimate knowledge of each others' projects fostering tremendous cross-pollination and collaboration.
5. Both a global and a multi-local perspective of, and in, the study domain are unfolding (for example, scholars from around the world collaborate on the European Union's Roadmap 2020 project eGovRTD2020, www.egovrtd2020.org).
6. The three conferences provide a research and publishing rhythm that reinforces the intensity and diversity of research.
7. A shared research culture and a sense of a global scholarly and practice community is developing.

As a result of this collaboration, in the summer and fall of 2005 the global e-Gov community of practitioners and researchers discussed and voted on the mission statement of a future professional Digital Government Society. Late in the fall of 2005 and in early winter 2005/2006, the global community also voted on both the North American and Global Digital / E-Government Society constitutions. In May 2006 at dgo2006 the Digital Government Society of North America was formed, and its elected officers met for the first time in their new capacity.

The 2006 EGOV conference, EGOV – The Digital Government Society of Europe was formed, and its elected board was presented to the public. Soon, an Asian Digital Government Society will appear. In other words, the global community of e-Government practitioners and researchers will have professional societies, which equip "its members with a professional support network focused on both scholarship and effective practices that nurture technical, social, and organizational transformation in the public sector" (cf. Mission Statement of the Digital Government Society, www.dgrs.org).

So far, e-Government research appears to be multi- and interdisciplinary in nature. The 2006 EGOV conference underlined and exposed this nature of the study domain. However, there is a lively debate on whether or not e-Government research should develop into a discipline or rather stay away from disciplinary organization. The future will tell whether or not we remain a study domain or develop into the disciplinary direction.

In the Call for Papers of EGOV 2006, seven topical threads were highlighted, which attracted a large number of paper submissions:

- The e-Government environment
- E-Government implementation
- Conceptual design and frame for e-Government
- Assessment of e-Government
- Emerging technologies in e-Government
- E-Government and development
- E-Government research and learning

Thirty-one full research papers (empirical and conceptual) were accepted for the conference and cover those topical threads. According to the reviewers' assessments, the overall quality of papers has risen again. For better readability, the papers have been clustered under the following headings:

- Research Review and Outlook
- Participation and Democracy
- Designing Government Services
- Legal Dimensions in E-Government
- Procurement and Governance Issues in Networked Governments
- Evaluation and Assessment

As in the previous years, many people made this conference happen by reviewing and by preparing both the program and the proceedings. Gabriela Wagner for the DEXA organization as well as the members of the Program Committee deserve special thanks. Gerti Orthofer of the University of Linz, Austria, was a cornerstone of support and organization in preparing the review process, the program and proceedings.

Finally, this year's conference provided a great opportunity for honoring our great mentor, inspirer, communicator, founder of the EGOV conferences and wonderful colleague, Roland Traunmüller, who has been leading the community with advice, vision, and practical initiatives for many years. Without him, the community would not have developed the same spirit, productivity, and sense of shared meaning that it has developed on a global scale. Roland Traunmüller has truly carried the Prometheus torch enlightening the e-Government community for longer than anybody else. We are greatly indebted to him and hope that he may continue leading us for many years to come!

Koblenz, Seattle, Ørebrø, Copenhagen
September 2006

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e-Gov Research Quality Improvements Since 2003: More Rigor, but Research (Perhaps) Redefined

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Abstract. This paper follows up on an earlier study [1] by assessing the nature of 80 papers from EGOV 05 in terms of rigor and relevance criteria. Both studies use the same method and makes comparison between the results. We find that however still focusing overwhelmingly on descriptions and little on theory testing and creation, paper quality appears much better in that references to literature have increased grossly, there are very few dubious claims, philosophical research and theoretical arguments are virtually extinct, and the number of case stories is vastly reduced. However, the number of product descriptions is more than doubled to just over 30 %. The reasons for this are discussed, and as most of these papers are based on EU research funding we propose that an important reason may be the funding mechanism where researchers are employed as helpers in product development rather than critical scrutiny and analysis.

1 Introduction

Grönlund [1] made a survey of 170 papers at three main (2003) Electronic Government (eGov) conferences for the purpose of measuring the maturity of the field as a research area., and at the same time at a general level, the quality of papers. Maturity, we proposed, could be assessed by charting the nature of the research done. A scientific field is usually characterized by not just a common object of study, but also a set of theories which can be used to understand the general conditions of the field. More of theory generating and testing would indicate a more mature field, more of pure description and case story telling would be signs of a less mature field. Paper quality was measured at a cursory level by some rigor and relevance-oriented criteria. In the 2004 study we found that as concerns rigor, theory generation and theory testing were not frequent, whereas case stories (no theory, no data) and product descriptions (no analysis or test) were very frequent. Dubious claims (beyond what is reasonable given the method used) were also frequent, appeared in 29 % of the papers As concerns relevance, we found that only a few of the cases where theories were either tested or generated concerned the role and nature of government, most concerned general

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organizational issues which could well find a place within traditional IS conferences. Further, only 11 papers (of 170) involved shared authorship involving government practitioners.

On the positive side we found contributions from a number of disciplines, both social science ones and technically oriented, and international outreach beyond the North Atlantic shores was good with contributions from some 30 countries.

In this paper we repeat the 2004 study, however so far only with paper from the (DEXA) EGOV 05 conference, a total of 80 papers, which were classified by the organizers in two categories published in two different proceedings 30 papers were research papers" and 50 "workshop papers".

2 Research Questions

Just like in the 2004 study, the basic question asked in this paper is, what is the eGov field like in terms of what constitutes a scientific fields? This is operationalized by questions concerning rigor and relevance, with an emphasis on the former.

Relevance: To what extent is the eGov field distinct from other fields? This could be assessed by investigating what are the questions asked what (kind of) theories are used, or sought in an inductive manner? If eGov is indeed a specific field, at least some of these issues and theories would be different.
Rigor: Depending on the maturity of the field, the balance among methods used would likely change over time from case stories to more of methodologically sound examination of relevant issues, be they related to technological quality, user understanding, extent and qualities of use, or other. A mature eGov field would also involve many disciplines, certainly public administration and other fields specializing in government, not only IT-related disciplines by example from e g the HCI field. This time we compare the results with the 2004 study to find out whether there have been changes of any kind. We measure maturity according to the following rather intuitive model, which is based on the assumption that research fields mature over time passing through (but never completely leaving!) roughly the following phases:
Philosophical ("What will the world be like when everyone has a computer?"). As there are no or few theories in the field and empirical data is uncertain as the object of study is changing rapidly, studies will at this stage be mainly speculation based on philosophy, properties of technology, world view, etc.
Anecdotal case stories ("Ma, look what I found"). At this stage there is an increasing amount of data, but there are still no clear focus in the field so studies focus on "emerging" features, which may be anything but are usually grounded in factors like the researchers field of origin, personal interest, and commercial focus of the IT development. Focus is still on exploration, finding new exciting traits of the development. The researcher is an Amerigo Vespucci finding new land.
Clustering (grouping according to similarities among cases). At this stage cases abound and people start looking for similarities. The new continent is found physically, now we try to understand life on it.