

Editorial

Here's to the Next 10 Years

In 2012 the first 10 years of *Information Polity* were completed. How can that be, you might be saying, when last years' volume was number 17? The answer to that question is that in 2002 *Information Polity* replaced the journal *Information Infrastructure and Policy* whilst retaining the same volume sequence. So, in mid 2002 *Information Polity* came into being and since then has been published in four editions each year. During those 10 years we have published many influential papers and majored on special editions which have become 'baseline' editions for scholars working in related areas. Articles published in *Information Polity* are much cited in many other published works. And the international reach of this journal is impressive too, evidenced by scholarly contributions from more than 30 countries in these 10 years and by its widespread international subscription and general readership.

At the heart of this success has been a willing and energetic Editorial Board, a wide network of [usually] unsung reviewers as well as close colleagues who have taken specific roles in supporting the journal and who have done so to great effect. I would want to thank you all here and especially, Miriam Lips, Alasdair Marshall and Colin Smith on the academic side. And there is a further success factor here too which gives rise to more thanks from me. During the growth and development of *Information Polity*, Kim Willems from the publisher IOS Press, has been a stalwart in getting editions to press as well as proffering support as issues arise. She has been indefatigable in her willingness to get the journal into prominence. Her boss Einar Fredriksson, as well as being the owner of IOS Press, has promoted the journal's interests throughout this period including in the provision of further support on the marketing side of the journal from Saskia Van Wijngaarden. To all of you, your work and support has been, is, and will continue to be, hugely valued by me.

And so we embark upon the next 10 years with an edition as eclectic as any of the single, general editions that we have published to date. It is an edition that indicates, as other recent editions have been doing, where this journal's content can be expected to major during the next few years. Information management, including openness policy, will I am sure provide many future papers as will more practical papers on web design with a strong implementation focus. Researching and analysing the web itself, particularly social networking traffic, will provide many papers that aim to examine the re-shaping of democratic impulses in political systems.

This edition is an excellent example of the international nature of *Information Polity* with contributors coming from institutions based in the UK, USA, Kenya, Canada, The Netherlands, Germany and Mexico. Long may this truly international content continue to flow into this journal.

Volume 18, first edition: the papers

This current edition contains five substantive papers as well as book reviews. The first of these papers comes from Drs Owen and Cooke and Professor Matthews from the University of Loughborough's Information Science Department. Although it is focussed entirely upon the UK case its analysis will be of wide interest because of the way in which these authors present their material on the short history of digital government so lucidly and because the points raised and the analysis offered will touch a chord

in many countries which have been through such a similar trajectory of policy development and frustration. Unsurprisingly these authors trace the uneven progress made in the development of 'citizen-centric services' and they demonstrate the need for greater levels of support being needed to stimulate on-line uptake of government services. The paper makes an early and vital contribution to scholarly attention on the new wave of 'open government', looking at the new emphasis by government on releasing [big] government data for re-use during 2009 and 2010 with anticipated commercial and policy gains attending. Since that date this movement has gathered pace considerably in many countries and I look forward to publishing much more on this new aspect of open government.

The second paper in the edition is authored by faculty from Columbia University in New York and from Nairobi University, Kenya. Here we have a rare and very welcome addition to the academic literature on e-government. Again all readers, wherever they come from, will benefit from reading this 'actionist' account of the crucial development of a website for the Municipal Council of Ruira in Kenya, crucial in the sense that it was to stimulate the general process of democratization and devolution being implemented across the country. But how does a website "catalyze and support reforms in local government", as these authors put it? Links between universities, local technology companies and government fostered something these authors find was a "helpful approach". Focus Groups were included in each stage of the website design process too, making the process highly participatory from a citizenship perspective. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the 'action research' embedded in the authors' work however was their conclusion that "it is critical to go beyond participatory design towards a strategic, flexible and longer-term process of engagement in "e-politics", the political negotiations over the use and control of the technology by the government". This finding alone should give pause for thought for anyone developing a government web presence in any country in the world. I am so pleased to include the work of these researchers, Jacqueline Klopp, Elizabeth Marcello, George Kirui and Henry Mwangi in this journal.

Next in this edition is a paper from Greg Elmer from Ryerson University and Ganaele Langlois from Ontario. Just as the first two papers here are opening up new ground in existing fields of study so too Elmer and Langlois are offering a new methodology in the developing field of web analytics. Their substantive field is emerging forms of political campaigning on and across Web 2.0 platforms – for example Facebook, Youtube, Twitter – in the North-American context. Whereas research methods on Web 1.0 communications focused upon hyperlinking between networks, Elmer and Langlois propose a methodology for Web 2.0 that works with the concept of 'traffic tags', otherwise known as identifiers that organize political activity on-line. When these tags are tracked, sets of relationships amongst political actors of different kinds [eg partisans, bloggers, institutions], and between them and social networking sites, can be revealed. Refreshingly, the authors point to pitfalls that must be overcome if their methods are to yield strongly empirically derived and thereby valuable insights into political campaigning. Frequent technical changes by social networks seeking to differentiate themselves from others lead to problems about the uploading of data objects from one site to another, thereby establishing the need for researchers to be constantly alert to what has been and what currently is possible in seeking to track political communications.

The fourth article in this edition also offers important methodological insights, this time into the implementation of platforms that permit what the authors refer to as 'mobile participation'. Here, they argue, too little technical attention is being paid to Internet access opportunities whilst on the move [smartphones, tablets etc] and that solutions to these relatively new opportunities for e-participation need to be developed. In their paper Mark de Reuver [Delft], Stefan Stein and J Felix Hampe [both from Koblenz-Landau] describe a putative service platform that allows citizens both to report specific incidents and

to interact more generally with government agencies while on the move. With a welcome note of realism, these authors recognize the need to take a ‘business model’ approach to this sort of development, one that identifies critical technological, organizational and financial issues that government agencies must face. The authors also ask important questions that those in public administration will immediately recognize but which must be faced if opportunities are to be grasped. In the background is the much recognized ‘silo-isation’ of public administration when the authors ask ‘which agency should lead such a development, how open should such platforms be to other agencies and how the investment ratio should be worked out between those participating?’ For anyone reading this paper who is involved in design and implementation of new systems whose objective is to widen public access on-line this should be a most interesting article.

Finally, in this edition Luis Luna-Reyes and Jing Zhang, respectively from the University of the Americas in Mexico and Clark University in the US, lead a group of scholars with their paper on the importance of trust in the “development and operation of distribution networks that attach non-price information to products to mitigate market dynamics”. They argue that this non price information, which can often take the form of certifiable labels such as “organic” or “Fair Trade”, mitigates the problem of information asymmetry between consumer and supplier, ‘explaining’ as it does so the price level set on the product. The initial research into four cases in Canada and Latin America indicated that trust, in different forms – institutional trust, calculative trust, and relational trust, – plays a key role in fair pricing operations and is critical for building collaboration, coordinating network activities, and mitigating the risks associated with information asymmetry. The concept of information asymmetry is an important one for this journal. It is a condition often said to exist within wider democratic and governance networks of the governed and those who govern. Papers such as this one stimulate thought about research using this concept both in chosen case studies but also in more wide-angled work on the polity as a whole.

JA Taylor. February, 2013.