

Editorial: Improving Diversity in our Journal

Research shows that gender and geographical inequalities remain persistent issues in academia. This manifests itself in a number of ways, notably in an underrepresentation of women and academics from ‘emerging countries’ in leadership positions in many academic disciplines, including eGovernment studies. Within the realm of journal publishing these inequalities can be evidenced by levels of diversity amongst the published authors, journal reviewers and on editorial boards. Whilst these are indicators of broader societal inequalities more diversity in authors, reviewers and editorial boards can show a direction of travel and a desire by publishers and academic communities to be more inclusive. As Editors-in-Chief of *Information Polity* we are keen to enhance diversity within the journal and would like to invite you to work with us to make the journal more inclusive.

The focus on diversity has been on the agenda of *Information Polity* for a couple of years, and has become more tangible and concrete since 2020 when IOS Press, the publisher of *Information Polity*, became a member of the United Nation’s ‘Sustainable Development Goals Publishers Compact’.¹ Of particular interest here, are IOS’s commitments to SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities). As part of this commitment, IOS has started to trace each journal’s development towards equality. IOS are now collecting data from authors and editorial boards on a yearly basis, so as to allow for a measurement of progress over time. We are now at a point where three years’ worth of data is available, and trends are observable for *Information Polity*.

In relation to geographic diversity a number of measures can be reflected on. Our journal had its starting point in European and to a more limited extent North American research communities, and these origins are still clearly evident in the published contributions and membership of the Editorial Board. A three-year analysis of the geographical location of authors shows that the vast majority of the authors publishing in *Information Polity* are affiliated with institutions in Europe. Prior to 2020 authors were almost exclusively based in Europe or North America but more recently there has been a shift with notable publications from authors based in Oceania, Africa, Asia and South America. The geographical distribution of authors is also comparable with the geographical distribution of Editorial Board members. Whilst all continents have representation amongst authors and the Editorial Board, it is evident that the Board is dominated by Europeans, with over half the members based at European Institutions. In relation to gender composition, the Editorial Board of *Information Polity* is predominantly male (approximately 70%). The same distribution is evident for the full Editorial Board and the senior Editorial Board (Editors-in-Chief and Associate Editors). Furthermore, this split has been relatively static over the last three years. In terms of published contributions, a quick glance over the last year (2022, Vol.27, No.4 to 2023, Vol.28, No.3) shows that of the 78 authors published in *Information Polity* approximately 37% were female.

These numbers do not necessarily mean that we are doing poorly compared to other journals, rather our current position reflects the field of study and academia more generally. At the same time, we aim to be at the forefront of more inclusive academic work, and at the moment we are not. Whilst we may not be doing

¹United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals Compact, URL: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sdg-publishers-compact/>.

any worse than other journals in the field we do need to work on strengthening the focus on inclusivity. At *Information Polity* we have tried to be proactive in improving gender and geographical diversity in the journal. We have actively sought to appoint women and academics from different geographic regions as Associate Editors and as members of the Editorial Board. We have also encouraged special issues edited by women, as well as special issues dedicated to diversity issues, see for example recent special issues on 'Inclusion and eGovernment' (Vol.27, No.4) and 'Digital government and gender' (Vol.26, No.2). These actions have been valuable, but they are certainly not enough, and we will keep working on improving our inclusivity and monitor our efforts to do so.

We need your engagement as authors, reviewers and readers to realise our ambition to be at the forefront of a more inclusive academic community in the coming years. Part of this process includes building awareness of these issues amongst the readership of the journal. In some ways, this editorial is a first step in this process, and we hope it is the starting point for a conversation with many of you on this topic. We need your input because we certainly have many blind spots. Please share your thoughts and ideas and let's work together to make *Information Polity* a truly inclusive journal.

Editors-in-Chief

Professor Albert Meijer, Utrecht University

Professor William Webster, University of Stirling