

Chapter 127

E-Government: Status Quo and Future Trends

Tobias Kollmann

University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

Ina Kayser

University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

INTRODUCTION

According to the recent worldwide UN e-government survey, a rising trend towards the electronic reform of the public sector around the world becomes apparent (UNPAN 2008). Hence, the mere processing of detached transactions in government e-services is increasingly replaced by a complex process framework to develop an integrative approach for unidirectional as well as for bidirectional government and citizen (G2C, C2G), government and business (G2B, B2G), and government and government (G2G) communication and services. This article provides an overview of current findings in the realm of e-government and presents future directions of research. Therefore, we perform a keyword analysis of current high-quality research in the field of e-government.

BACKGROUND

The rising scope and possibilities of information technology (IT) during the past century accounts for the increasing diffusion of IT in our every-day life (Kollmann & Häsel 2006). Consequently, the modernization of public administration, i.e., the facilitation and processing of government-related tasks by the means of information and communication technology was merely a matter of time. Accordingly, the term e-government refers to electronically (predominantly online) offered services regarding information, communication, and transaction in support of government-related processes.

Among other things, the announcement of Denmark's integrated state information systems was one of the important milestones towards the emergence of e-government research in the early 1990s (Costake 2008). Subsequently, the G7 special meeting in 1995 gave direction to e-government research when the term 'online government' ap-

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peared within a project (Leitner 2003). Since the late 1990s, e-government projects and research were put in place in all major institutions, e.g. the OECD, the World Bank, and the UN. Nowadays, e-government projects face various challenges, primarily with respect to trust and privacy issues. This goes along with the emergence of considerable e-government projects in research in the early and mid 2000s, the launch of academic journals focusing on e-government (e.g., *Electronic Journal of E-Government*, launched in 2005), and the initiation of important conferences (e.g., International Conference of E-Government, first meeting in 2002). To narrow the focus, the trade-off between confidence and trust in e-government as opposed to increasing government accountability facilitated by e-government services is in the focus of attention (Carter & Belanger 2004). Additionally, overcoming the digital divide is still a current topic of discussion in both research and practice. What is more, government applications need to fulfill particular demands deriving from public administration and law requirements. In spite of all criticisms, e-government applications allow for a considerable simplification of public services. Accordingly, the location-independent and time efficient handling of government processes is facilitated, which is not only desirable and valuable for citizens but can for example also be a factor of success in the fast moving realm of e-entrepreneurship (Kollmann 2006).

METHOD

The presented research is based on a review of recent work in the field of e-government. Our analysis aims at e-government research in general, not at sub-disciplines in particular, such as e-democracy and e-administration. Therefore, we exclusively used the search term 'e-government' and synonyms such as 'electronic government' and 'digital government' to allow for a wide but relevant range of articles as foundation of our

work. To identify relevant articles, our first step was to search EconLit and Social Science Citation Index via Web of Science databases for the past four and a half years (2005-2009), which is consistent with other literature reviews. This time span refers to the previously described emergence of considerable and widespread e-government research in the mid 2000s. To ensure focus on high-quality research, we reduced the extensive list of articles by those journals not being ranked 3 or 4 in the ABS Academic Journal Quality Guide for the Information Management and Public Sector subject groups. However, those two large research areas need to be amended by the niche of e-government-specific publications to allow for articles from different angles, i.e., the broader IT and public administration perspectives, as well as the narrow e-government viewpoint. Consequently, we included all relevant (i.e. those that included the keyword 'e-government' and its synonyms) articles from the *Electronic Journal of E-Government (EJEG)*, which is one of the leading e-government journals. Additionally, the EJEG is closely linked with the two large conferences on e-government (European Conference on E-Government, International Conference on E-Government), which underlines its up-to-date orientation. Thus, we paid attention to current research from the three most relevant directions, i.e. information technology (40 articles), public administration (20 articles), and e-government itself (90 articles) with publications specific to each field, resulting in a sample of 150 articles from the past four and a half years. Following from this list of studies, we deduced current research trends in the field of e-government by performing a keyword analysis. To ensure a concise analysis, keywords with the same meaning were combined in the underlying concept, e.g., the term 'Quality' subsumes the two keywords 'IT Quality' and 'System Quality'. Subsequently, we arranged a correlation matrix, which covers correlations of keywords between the different articles using Ucinet 6 (Borgatti & Everett, 1997).

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