



Editorial

Second issue of the international, peer-reviewed Open Access eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government (JeDEM)

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“The commonly held information was far more influential than the unshared information, to the detriment of the group’s ultimate decision” (Cass Sunstein, 2006: Infotopia, p. 83)

Welcome to the second issue of the Open Access eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government!

Scholarly communication is about researchers publishing and disseminating their work using a number of channels, including books and journals, conferences, proceedings, but other web-based tools commonly associated with social networking (e.g. twitter¹). But how do we deal with the knowledge generated by research organizations, universities and citizens in different participatory contexts? How accessible is this knowledge? And can citizens then access the knowledge they may have contributed to and but certainly paid for through their taxes? The answer seems to be, that we don’t really deal with the knowledge generated in an open, fair and accessible way. Only limited knowledge is readily available, even for those with the access technology. All too often we have to buy the research output or knowledge, which we either help generate or fund through taxes.

Open Access is more than just being able read the research output and knowledge generated: it is an expectation held by citizens, users, researchers, students. Paul Ayriss, Director of the University College London Library Services states clearly that users expect digital services, and they expect access to them. Open Access is important not only for those who need to read the scientific output, it is also important for those who contribute to scientific knowledge as it is linked with the researcher’s profile and can be used to measure the extent of his or her impact. Alma Swan, sees Open Access in terms of “immediate”, “free to use” and “free of restrictions” “peer-reviewed literature and date” and not about just “sticking it up on the web”.

OA is about moving the scholarly communication from print to web, it is an important element of a network which allows disenfranchised people to access research, it increases readership and the impact of research and scientific knowledge. Alma Swan clearly shows that Open Access can increase citation of the articles by 50%. We therefore hope that by publishing with the eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government, we support researchers, their work and their institutions, readers, citizens and society as well as contribute to the dissemination and availability in terms of Open Access of scholarly knowledge and research output.

The higher education and professional environments have been transformed by the digital publishing revolution: electronic resources and open access repositories are now part of research and professional tools. But we would also like to see the Open Access have a further and greater impact on European governments’ policies concerning research output. Given that in almost all European countries, governments fund the universities, the universities are requested to publish their research outputs. The published research output, with the assessment exercise in turn determines the funding the universities will be given in future (and in what areas). Publishing in journals is the publication format most commonly associated with assessing research performance,

¹ <http://twitter.com/tweprints> or <http://www.orbitingfrog.com/arxiv/>

but all too often, the chosen journals used for publication of research are subscription-based journals, and the material can only be accessed after subscribing to the journal or buying an article.

There have been changes, and several universities and institutions have adopted OA policies. Some of the major research funders now require research outputs to be archived in large subject based repositories such as PubMed². Funding organisations have adopted Open Access policies for the research they fund, in Austria, for example the FWF clearly demands that any research outputs have to be published using OA channels. The European Commission has decided to pilot an Open Access policy, and all projects funded by the 7th Framework programme for research and development (FP7 funds projects during the period 2007-2013) must provide Open Access to research publications such as peer-reviewed scientific journal articles, but also to research data, images, etc³.

These funders and universities are funded by the governments, who are actually funded by the taxpayer in the first place. So if governments use public money to fund those organisations and universities to conduct research and publish in OA venues, a logical step would be for governments to develop an OA policy. An open and transparent government must be able to show how taxpayer money is spent and what it funds. The public benefits of government spending must be accessible to all. If projects funded by the European Commission have to publish using OA journals or deposit in OA repositories, then the next step is an European Union OA policy for European universities and research institutions.

A government Open Access policy will be central to a successful and transparent democratic transformation which will enable large scale collaboration and participation. The international eDemocracy conference 2009 showed that the tools used are important too, in terms of public participation, integration, the interaction they allow, their usability and their integration. Mike Milakovich looks at the role of the internet and how it can increase citizen participation. Michael Kaschesky and Reinhard Riedl present the collaborative tools from the Comuno networking site which are used for public participation across multiple networking sites. The tool presented allows for cross-posting from the networking site to a wide variety of other networking sites. Klaus Petrik explores how a Web 2.0 platform can enable and facilitate large-scale participation, deliberation and collaboration between stakeholders. Günther Schefbeck provides the theoretical concepts and practical requirements when providing electronic support for the legislative consultation processes. César Alfaro, Javier Gómez, José Lavin and Juan Molero as well as Edith Maier and Ulrich Reimer suggest ideas how to increase eParticipation: Alfaro and his colleagues propose a configurable architecture for eParticipatory budget formation support, whilst Maier and Reimer propose a functional navigator for guiding users so as to achieve a transparent flow of information and opinion between citizens and policy-makers in a collaborative environment.

Enrico Ferro and Francesco Molinari argue that one of the main reasons that eParticipation have only limited impact is that due to a high level of social complexity. Social complexity is still an open issue, but also offers governments benefits – so they suggest a design strategy which does not force citizens to use the official spaces for their activities and the generation of content.

Mohammed Awad and Ernst Leiss show although eVoting has been successfully used in a number of countries, the US still doesn't trust this technology, and therefore suggest an approach which combines the advantages of both paper ballots and electronic voting systems. Lucie Langer, Axel Schmidt, Melanie Volkamer and Johannes Buchmann suggest a PKI-based protocol for secure and practical online elections, and address the issues of secrecy, democracy, accuracy, fairness and verifiability necessary for eVoting.

² <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>

³ <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/548>

Participation remains a central issue to democracy, and there are a number of projects and trials. But it is now time to start looking beyond testing and trialing, so the next issue will look theoretical and practical papers addressing the challenges of “Sustainable eParticipation”. The next issue of JeDEM will be a PEP-NET special issue edited by Rolf Luehrs and Francesco Molinari. PEP-NET (<http://pep-net.eu/>) is a European network of all stakeholders active in the field of eParticipation, and includes public bodies, solution providers and citizen organizations as well as researchers and scientists. The network is open to all organizations willing and actively trying to advance the idea and use of eParticipation in Europe.

And now, enjoy the second issue of JEDEM !