

Editorial

The academic and societal value of research

For academic papers, we traditionally distinguish two audiences: scholars and practitioners. This is especially the case in the field of eGovernment where research is often closely aligned to governmental practice. This issue of *Information Polity* is a case in point. It touches upon topics as diverse as: robots in the public sector, designing a digital index, social media engagement, digital government in rural areas, and transparency and public transit technologies – all areas of interest to both eGovernment researchers and practitioners.

To help facilitate value for practitioner readers and to ensure our academic work is accessible, we at *Information Polity* invite all our authors to add points for practitioners within each published article. Some of the points made in the articles published in this issue illustrate the diversity of suggestions made to practitioners working on digital government:

- that an alignment of expectations between private developers and public sector adopters is crucial for subsequent diffusion activities (Aen & Nielsen, 2022);
- that a digital index can help research to integrate and understand technology in the context of public administration (Skargren & Karin Garcia Ambrosiani, 2022); and
- that public authorities should promote the introduction of a gender perspective in transparency policies and in the information offered on institutional websites (Pano et al., 2022).

These recommendations are all based on extensive peer reviewed research and provide clear guidance to practitioners. However, we do not assume that many practitioners actually read the articles published in this journal. To be honest, our focus is to ensure high academic quality from our authors, and papers that do not present a solid theoretical framework and a rigorous methodology will not make it through the review procedure – regardless of how practice oriented they are. So why do we ask authors to emphasize the value of their contribution for practitioners? Firstly, we believe that explicitly highlighting the practical value of published research may help other academic researchers to use this knowledge in their contacts with practitioners and policy-makers. Secondly, drawing out the practice implications from theoretical and conceptual research will help facilitate a broader debate about the societal value and relevance of research in this field.

In academic circles there is often a discussion about the supposed tradeoff between rigor and relevance. Some fear that more emphasis on the societal value of research could interfere with academic robustness. Added to this, is the growing emphasis on applied research, driven by large funding councils, at the expense of independent theoretical thought. At *Information Polity* we take a different position, and feel that there can be a fruitful interaction between academic and societal value. We believe that the two are intertwined and reflecting on the societal value of our research can help us to strengthen the robustness of our work by enhancing the quality of the ways in which we communicate our research objectives methodology and findings.

We would be interested in hearing your perspectives on this topic. How do you perceive the relationship between the articles that are published in *Information Polity* and the value they have for practitioners? Do

you use this published research in your interactions with practitioners? Or are you a practitioner and do you read *Information Polity* or other academic journals for your work? Do you feel that scientific journals should focus only on theory and academic value, and not practice oriented societal value. Please e-mail us since we are very interested to hear from our readers on this topic.

Editors-in-Chief
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