

## Forums for electronic government scholars: Insights from a 2012/2013 study



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### ABSTRACT

Once an academic study domain has accumulated a certain volume of domain-specific knowledge, a number of outlets emerge as preferred outlets for publication. Electronic government research (EGR) is no exception. After developing for some 15 years from its early beginnings in the late 1990s, this multi-disciplinary academic domain appears to have reached exactly this point. With an active researcher community numbering in the hundreds worldwide and a body of over 5500 peer-reviewed manuscripts and books in the English language alone, EGR has grown past its infancy into a discernible and reputable academic endeavor in its own right. While the Electronic Government Reference Library (EGRL) provides a comprehensive account of the peer-reviewed EGR literature, the preferences of publication outlets had not been studied. This study closes this gap, and it provides clues for assessing the reputation and quality of scholarly work in EGR, which is highly relevant for decisions in tenure and promotion cases.

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### 1. Introduction

“Where should I publish my scholarly research?” is the opening question in Hardgrave and Walstrom (1997) ranking of forums for MIS scholars (Hardgrave & Walstrom, 1997, p. 119). Put another way, the question could also be framed as, “Which outlets in published academic work are most renowned and most highly regarded for employing standards of excellence?” or, “What is the perceived quality of the various forums?”

In every academic domain of study these questions, or variations thereof, become burning and at times even vexing whenever scholars seek appointments, tenure, and promotion. Other domains and disciplines have long established and updated pertinent recommendations based on peer rankings and other indicators (Bharati & Tarasewich, 2002; Campbell, Goodacre, & Little, 2006; Dame & Wolinsky, 1993; Garand, 1990; Hardgrave & Walstrom, 1997; MacMillan, 1991; Olson, 2005). In Electronic Government Research (EGR), it appears that, the first study of this kind is due, since the domain has significantly grown, and tenure and promotion committees need trustworthy and

authoritative input in their decision-making processes. However, before considering a study of this kind in EGR some questions need to be addressed, such as “why does an interdisciplinary study domain like EGR need a list or even ranking of preferred outlets for publication?” or “what do we gain from domain-specific rankings?” Said differently and more provocatively, “do such rankings do more harm than good?” and “do such rankings help define, or rather limit a domain?”

Rankings have certain known deficiencies, for example, the reduction of multiple and diverse factors into a single dimension (the apples and oranges dilemma), and, hence, the problem of potentially false precision, when producing composite scores from diverse inputs. However, despite their known problems the more severely damaging effect might not lie in the rankings themselves but rather in their uninformed use and schematic interpretation.

As a case in point, publication outlet rankings in Management Information Systems (MIS) had produced an ultra-short list of two so-called “elite” journals (Dennis, Valacich, Fuller, & Schneider, 2006). For receiving tenure and promotion in the 1990s and way into the first decade of the 21st century, at many schools MIS candidates had to land one or two publications in these “elite” journals. When these demands were upheld in practice and considering the limited amount of publishing slots in these two outlets, simple arithmetic demonstrated that the discipline had made it impossible to promote a sufficient number of young academics to even compensate for retirees in that discipline, let alone grow the scholarly community – an almost classical self-defeat.

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Another side effect from rankings, which was also observable in the MIS case, is the potential limitation of scholarship to a relatively narrow interpretation of the study domain's scope, its stance, and its accepted standards of inquiry. If the top-ranked forums allow only for a narrow understanding of what is in scope and what is not, or, if the epistemological stances promoted by the top-ranked outlets tightly constrict the type and predication of contributions as well as the standards of inquiry, then a self-enforcing feedback between rankings and top-ranked outlets can indeed have limiting effects on the scholarship of a domain or field.

We hold that these pitfalls have been (and may continue to be) avoided in EGR for several reasons: (1) EGR is a multidisciplinary domain that has benefitted from the cross-fertilization among and between the researchers from various home disciplines; (2) unlike other academic disciplines, EGR has demonstrated its relevance to practice time and again, and, hence, its *raison d'être* is not questioned inside the academia, nor outside; (3) the editorial policies of the leading EGR outlets are pluralist with regard to epistemological stances and standards of inquiry, which is reflective of the diversity of research contributions from various fields; and (4) the understanding of senior academics involved in EGR is appreciative of the inclusive and multidisciplinary approach to studying EG-related phenomena.

Therefore, the purpose of this contribution is to determine how active EGR scholars perceive and value the publication and conference outlets (forums) in EGR. While this undertaking implicitly offers an indirect assessment of the perceived quality of EGR forums, it is also intended to provide guidance for promotion and tenure cases in EGR.

In its design this study has followed avenues similar to those taken by previous studies in other domains such as sociology (Cronin, Snyder, & Atkins, 1997), psychology (Over, 1978), or management (MacMillan, 1991; Olson, 2005) and management information systems research (Walstrom, Hardgrave, & Wilson, 1995). In particular, we replicated in part the study design and instrument introduced and used by (Hardgrave & Walstrom, 1997) study. However, beyond the need for authoritative rankings of academic forums when seeking appointment, tenure, and promotion, the ranking of publication outlets also serves other purposes such as identifying appropriate outlets for publication, studying the stream of research in a particular field, determining the direction of editorial work, shaping the identity of a study domain, and informing acquisition decisions in libraries among others (Walstrom et al., 1995).

Like other recently emerged areas of academic study EGR is a multi-disciplinary endeavor and not a discipline in the traditional sense (Scholl, 2007); major contributors to EGR are scholars with a disciplinary training in the fields of Public Administration, Management Information Systems, Computer Science, Political Science, and Information Science among others. The accepted standards of inquiry vary across those fields, so do the criteria for promotion and tenure; furthermore, some fields are multi-disciplinary study domains themselves. However, no single field can claim majority ownership to EGR or even comprehensive coverage of the study domain, and with the exception of occasional special issues and workshops EGR topics have rarely been a focus in most of the major outlets of the participating disciplines (Scholl, 2007).

From the perspective of those contributing disciplines, EGR is a special topic and a niche of that disciplines' research. For EGR scholars seeking tenure and promotion in single discipline-oriented environments, for example, such as Management Information Systems, demonstrating the quality and impact of their EGR work to their promotion and personnel committees might pose a potential problem unless evidence is provided for the acceptability and equivalency of quality standards applied to EGR research, which also motivated this study.

Over the years several outlets have emerged accounting for the rapid growth of EGR (see Table 0). Around the turn of the millennium new conferences or new conference tracks rather than journals served as the main venue for presenting and publishing EGR. The North

American dg.o conference (1999), the European EGOV conference (2002), and a minitrack (2001) at the Hawaii International Conference on System Science (HICSS) were among the first new and visible outlets for EGR. For quite some time conferences were more frequently used for publication than journals, and the main conferences have maintained a high appreciation among EGR scholars to this day. The first new academic journals dedicated to electronic government appeared around by the mid-first decade of the 21st century. Gradually, also previously established journals such as *Government Information Quarterly* (Elsevier) and *Information Polity* (IOS Press) began expanding their scope ever so slightly and increasing the number of published manuscripts from the emerging domain of EGR.

In 2005, the publicly accessible Electronic Government Reference Library (EGRL) (<http://faculty.washington.edu/jscholl/egrl/> – accessed on 8/18/2013) was created, in which the peer-reviewed, English-language literature of the EGR domain has been recorded and semi-annually updated ever since (Scholl, 2009, 2010). The purposes of the EGRL have been “to improve the quality of e-Government (EG) research and publication...” and “to provide authors and reviewers access to the body of current academic knowledge, provide keyword searches to better inform research, and provide accuracy and reliability in citations” (<http://faculty.washington.edu/jscholl/egrl/purpose.php> – accessed 8/18/2013). The EGRL has been a unique resource for the study domain, since it represents a comprehensive account of the domain's English-language-based body of peer-reviewed academic knowledge. For this study the EGRL has served as an important point of departure and reference, providing exact quantitative information, for example, about most frequently used forums in EGR. While it might have been possible to infer and calculate the scholarly publication preferences from the number of entries in the EGRL at least in part, it was important to determine the perceived quality, academic weight, and rank order of forums as explicitly seen by the domain's scholarly community.

The manuscript is organized as follows: First, we present our research questions followed by the description of study design and methodology. Then, we present our findings for each forum group, which we discuss in the succeeding section. Finally, we present our conclusions and recommendations along with future avenues of research.

## 2. Research questions

### 2.1. Research question #1

Conferences have played and are still playing an important role in presenting and discussing current electronic government research. While quite a number of special-topic meetings and conferences have emerged, it has not been studied what relative importance and value the various conferences carry in the view of the scholarly community dedicated to EGR, which leads to

*Research question RQ #1: What is the relative value/weight/rank of the various academic conferences used for presenting electronic government research?*

### 2.2. Research question #2

While not identical to the value of conferences, the value of proceedings is closely related to the value of the respective conference itself. However, some conferences split up their proceedings which makes it harder to determine the perceived value of the respective proceedings. So far, it has not been studied what relative importance and value the various conference proceedings carry in the view of the scholarly community dedicated to EGR. Therefore,

*Research question RQ #2: What is the relative value/weight/rank of the various conference proceedings used for publishing electronic government research?*

**Table 0**  
EGR outlets: aims and scope.

EGR forum	Type	Acronym	Publisher/organizer	Aims/scope
e-Government Track at AMCIS	Conference	AMCIS EGOV	Association for Information Systems	No statement available
Digital Government Society's dg.o	Conference	dg.o	Digital Government Society	dg.o is “an established forum for presentation, discussion, and demonstration of interdisciplinary e-Government research, technology innovation, applications, and practice. Each year the conference combines: Presentations of effective partnerships and collaborations among government professionals and agencies, university researchers, relevant businesses, and NGOs, as well as grassroots citizen groups, to advance the practice of e-Government. Presentations and discussions on new research on e-Government as an interdisciplinary domain that lies at the intersections of information technology research, social and behavioral science research, and the challenges and missions of government. A showcase of e-Government projects, implementations, and initiatives that bring together the research and practitioner communities, demonstrate the effectiveness and/or challenges of e-Government, and offer best practices.” <a href="http://www.egov-conference.org/egov-2013/call-for-papers">http://www.egov-conference.org/egov-2013/call-for-papers</a> – accessed 08/19/2013
European Conference on Electronic Government	Conference	ECEG	Academic Conferences and Publishing Limited	ECEG “offers a forum for academics, researchers and practitioners working in this important field, whether at micro or macro levels. ECEG provides a forum for discussion, exploration and development of both theoretical and practical aspects of e-Government and a chance to network with others working and researching in this area.” <a href="http://academic-conferences.org/eceg/eceg-home.htm">http://academic-conferences.org/eceg/eceg-home.htm</a> – accessed 08/19/2013
e-Government Track at ECIS	Conference	ECIS EGOV	Association for Information Systems	The ECIS EGOV track “aims to provide a common platform for discussion and presentation of original research highlighting issues related with public sector ICT including the transformation, implementation and adoption from both the government and citizen's perspective...The track is in line with ECIS 2013 main theme “Beyond Borders”, as public sector ICT often implies that several organizations collaborate to create e-Government solutions directed towards citizens and businesses, which draw attention to inter-organizational issues. We also see an increasing interest for multi-disciplinary research within the field of public sector ICT.” <a href="https://sites.google.com/site/ecis2013nl/the-conference/tracks-and-keynotes/track-evolution-of-public-sector-ict">https://sites.google.com/site/ecis2013nl/the-conference/tracks-and-keynotes/track-evolution-of-public-sector-ict</a> – accessed 08/19/2013
Electronic Government: an International Journal	Journal	EGalJ	Inderscience	EGalJ “is dedicated to design, development, management, implementation, technology, and application issues in e-Government. EG[alJ] aims to help professionals working in the field, academic educators and policy makers to contribute, to disseminate knowledge, and to learn from each others  work through cutting-edge thinking in e-Government. The international dimension is emphasized in order to overcome cultural and national barriers and to meet the needs of accelerating technological change and changes in the global economy. EG[alJ] is an outstanding outlet where e-Government research can take a shape of its own and results can be shared across institutions, governments, researchers and students, as well as industry.” <a href="http://www.inderscience.com/jhome.php?jcode=eg#moredesc">http://www.inderscience.com/jhome.php?jcode=eg#moredesc</a> – accessed 08/19/2013
European Journal of e-Government	Journal	EJEG	Academic Publishing Limited	ECEG “is intended to provide perspectives on topics relevant to the field of e-Government and web-enabling technology in the public sector. Through its publication the journal aims to contribute to the development of both theory and practice. The journal will accept academically robust papers that contribute to the area e-Government, including, but not limited to the following topics: e-Government portals, e-Government transaction sites, webocracy, e-Democracy, security and confidentiality, integrated systems, citizen centric information systems, web-enabled knowledge management, other ICT enabled systems in the public service sector.” <a href="http://www.ejeg.com/scope.html">http://www.ejeg.com/scope.html</a> – accessed 08/19/2013
Government Information Quarterly	Journal	GIQ	Elsevier	GIQ “is an international journal that examines the intersection of policy, information technology, government, and the public. In particular, GIQ focuses on how policies affect government information flows and the availability of government information; the use of technology to create and provide innovative government services; the impact of information technology on the relationship between the governed and those governing; and the increasing significance of information policies and information technology in relation to democratic practices.” <a href="http://www.journals.elsevier.com/government-information-quarterly/">http://www.journals.elsevier.com/government-information-quarterly/</a> – accessed 8/19/2013
e-Government Track at HICSS	Conference	HICSS EGOV	Shidler College, U Hawaii	The HICSS e-Government track “has been a hotbed for groundbreaking studies and new ideas in this particular research domain. Many studies first presented here were developed further and then turned into publications at top journals. Eleven minitracks cover the full spectrum of research avenues of electronic government including minitracks dedicated to emerging topics, open government, and social media and social networking, or most recently, insider threats.” <a href="http://faculty.washington.edu/jscholl/hicss47/Welcome.html">http://faculty.washington.edu/jscholl/hicss47/Welcome.html</a> – accessed 08/19/2013
International Conference on e-Governance	Conference	ICEGOV	Center for Electronic Governance, United Nations University IIST	ICEGOV welcomes papers “that focus on the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to transform the working of government, and its relationships with citizens, businesses and other non-state actors; how to design, implement, operate and sustain this transformation (its “mechanics”); and how to achieve not only “better government” but “smart governance”. Unlike previous ICEGOV conferences, we especially welcome submissions that address not only the “mechanics” but the “value” of this transformation: how through “smart governance” government organizations can partner with citizens, businesses and other non-state actors to pursue “smart development” and to advance public policies post-2015.” <a href="http://icegov.org/event/submissions/#call-for-papers">http://icegov.org/event/submissions/#call-for-papers</a> – accessed 08/19/2013

(continued on next page)

Table 0 (continued)

EGR forum	Type	Acronym	Publisher/organizer	Aims/scope
International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) EGOV	Conference	IFIP EGOV	IFIP WG 8.5	“The annual international IFIP Electronic Government (EGOV) conference is the European core conference in the domain of ICT in the public sector. Each year, scholars from all over the globe present the state of the art and most recent innovations in e-Government, e-Governance and related fields of study. The IFIP conference is organized by the IFIP Working Group 8.5 on information systems in the public sector...Since its beginnings in 2001, the EGOV conference has provided important guidance for research and development in this fast-moving domain of study.” <a href="http://www.egov-conference.org/egov-2013/call-for-papers">http://www.egov-conference.org/egov-2013/call-for-papers</a> — accessed 08/19/2013
International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) ePart	Conference	IFIP ePart	IFIP WG 8.5	IFIP ePart “aims to bring together researchers of distinct disciplines in order to present and discuss advances of eParticipation research. As the field of eParticipation is multidisciplinary in nature, ePart provides an excellent opportunity for researchers and practitioners with different disciplinary backgrounds to share and discuss current research on foundations, theories, methods, tools and innovative applications of eParticipation. ePart also provides a fruitful ground to nurture and plan future cooperation... Its principal aim is to review research advances in both social and technological scientific domains, seeking to demonstrate new theories, concepts, methods and styles of eParticipation with the support of innovative ICT.” <a href="http://www.epart-conference.org/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=142&amp;Itemid=11">http://www.epart-conference.org/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=142&amp;Itemid=11</a> — accessed 08/19/2013
International Journal e-Government Research	Journal	IJEGR	IGI Global	IJEGR “publishes high-quality, original research about electronic government. Electronic government is broadly defined within topics such as but not limited to the hardware and software technology, e-Government adoption and diffusion, e-Government policy, e-Government planning and management, e-Government applications, and e-Government impacts. The journal also serves as a forum for scholars and practitioners to present theoretical and philosophical discussions on current issues relating to the practice of electronic government. “IJEGR” is to supply academicians, practitioners, and professionals with quality applied research results in the field of electronic/digital government, its applications, and impacts on governmental organizations around the world. This journal effectively and positively provides organizational and managerial directions with greater use and management of electronic/digital government technologies in organizations. IJEGR epitomizes the research available within e-Government while exponentially emphasizing the expansiveness of this field.” <a href="http://www.igi-global.com/journal/international-journal-electronic-government-research/1091">http://www.igi-global.com/journal/international-journal-electronic-government-research/1091</a> — accessed 08/19/2013
Information Polity	Journal	IP	IOS Press	IP “is dedicated to publishing work from two main sources: academic and practitioner. The journal publishes work from academics that is both of top quality and, equally, of high strategic relevance to practitioners. Secondly, the journal is intent on publishing work undertaken by practitioners — professional, administrative and political — who are actively engaged in the broad arenas of government and democracy, whether at local, regional, national or supra-national levels. The journal is both international and comparative in its perspectives and welcomes articles from scholars and practitioners throughout the world. The journal is a tangible expression of the awareness that ICT, including the internet, is of deepening significance for all polities as new forms of government and democratic practice are sought throughout the world. This journal establishes a role for itself in these contexts, seeking both to capture and stimulate debate. The journal publishes articles on political, economic, legal, managerial, organizational and wider social themes and issues as they relate to policy developments surrounding information & communications technologies (ICT) in government and democracy.” <a href="http://www.iospress.nl/journal/information-polity/">http://www.iospress.nl/journal/information-polity/</a> — accessed 08/18/2013
Journal Info Technology and Politics	Journal	JITP	Taylor and Francis	JITP “examines how information technology (IT) impacts politics and government, how politics and government influence the development and use of IT, and how IT can be used to advance research and education, particularly in political science. The journal features articles that carry significant technical weight on IT issues with a practical, readable focus for social scientists. Contributors address the challenges and opportunities presented by the use of IT in a variety of disciplines, including law, geography, communications, economics, and sociology. “JITP” covers research, policy, tool development, and teaching issues at the intersection of IT and politics. Edited by Dr. Michael Xenos, the journal looks at e-Government; the applications of IT in political campaigns, elections, and public sector management; the political economy of IT; and the governance of the internet. The journal’s contributors also examine forms of citizen interaction with government-from “blogs” at the “net-roots” to hyperlinked transnational social movements.” <a href="http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?show=aimsScope&amp;journalCode=witp20">http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?show=aimsScope&amp;journalCode=witp20</a> — accessed 08/19/2013
Transforming Government	Journal	TGPPP	Emerald	TGPPP “publishes leading scholarly and practitioner research on the subject of transforming Government through its people, processes and policy. Unique and progressive in its approach, the journal seeks to recognize both the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives of eGovernment, and welcomes both pure and applied research that impacts central and local Government. International perspectives are also welcome. The journal is also interested in exploring how research carried out in the private sector can be applied to the public sector as a means of improving efficiency and effectiveness...Coverage is international and focused on original research in eGovernment ICT, service chain issues, public sector management, policy implications of developing an eGovernment environment, and organizational and human resource issues.” <a href="http://www.emeraldinsight.com/products/journals/journals.htm?id=tg">http://www.emeraldinsight.com/products/journals/journals.htm?id=tg</a> — accessed 08/19/2013

### 2.3. Research question #3

EGR is presented in both dedicated electronic government journals as well as journals not dedicated to EGR. Until now, it has not been known what relative importance and value the various journals carry in the view of the scholarly EGR community. Hence,

*Research question RQ #3: What is the relative value/weight/rank of the various journals used for publishing electronic government research?*

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Sample and data collection

#### 3.1.1. Sample

Previous research had estimated the size of the core group of most active and prolific EGR scholars at 55 worldwide, whereas the inner EGR community was found to number in the mid 200s and the extended EGR community at around 700 individuals (Scholl, 2009, 2010). The EGOV listserv ([egov-list@uw.edu](mailto:egov-list@uw.edu)) membership roll as well as the Electronic Government Reference Library (EGRL, version 8.5, 2012) provided the main sources of information allowing for the verification of academic background and for survey-participant selection. The EGOV listserv had been formed and launched in 2011 based on the author list derived from the EGRL. By merging and cross-compilation with various conference participant lists as well as via desk research, email addresses were verified and matched to author names. After its launch, a relatively low number of originally invited EGOV listserv members unsubscribed from the list. Ever since its launch the listserv has been open to new members via self-enrollment. When this study was conducted the EGOV listserv membership list contained 1132 entries, 882 of which contained email addresses of persons with a verifiable academic background and an active involvement in EGR.

#### 3.1.2. Instrument

The Web-based questionnaire contained a total of nine questions with required responses to the first eight questions. Question #9 provided a non-mandatory entry mechanism for specifying and rating outlets not listed as choices and for providing general feedback. Questions #1 to #5 inquired about the academic position, the greater geographical area, the primary and secondary academic disciplines, and the top-three sub-areas of EGR-related interest. For all questions, pre-configured responses could be selected including “other” for choices not listed. Question #6 interrogated about the perceived quality of eighteen pre-specified conferences. This list was derived from conference entries in the EGRL and from the list of top-two conferences in the major disciplines contributing to EGR. Question #7 inquired about the perceived quality of five pre-specified conference proceedings as found in the EGRL. The categories of evaluation for both conferences and conference proceedings were adopted from MacMillan (1991) and Hardgrave and Walstrom (1997) and used in questions #6 and #7:

- 1 = No value to the e-Government study domain
- 2 = Little value to the e-Government study domain
- 3 = Valuable to the e-Government study domain
- 4 = Very valuable to the e-Government study domain.

In question #8 we asked for the assessment and ranking of journals. We mainly identified journals from the EGRL, but also consulted the 2011 ISI Web of Knowledge's Journal Citations Report for further entries of non-EGOV journals. We arrived at a list of seven journals dedicated to EGR and a list of 27 journals of other disciplines with no particular focus on EGR. Again, we adopted categories of evaluation from MacMillan (1991), Walstrom et al. (1995), and Hardgrave and

Walstrom (1997) and presented for each of the 34 journals the answer choices as follows:

- 1 = Not appropriate as an outlet for publication in the e-Government study domain
- 2 = Appropriate as an outlet for publication in the e-Government study domain
- 3 = Significant as an outlet for publication in the e-Government study domain
- 4 = Outstanding as an outlet for publication in the e-Government study domain.

In the statistical analysis we would have greatly preferred using a truly symmetrical scoring scale with a neutral midpoint. However, for consistency purposes we finally opted in favor of the replication of the aforementioned previous studies with regard to their conference and journal-related scoring scheme. However, we assigned negative values to evaluations indicating “no value” (conferences) or “not appropriate” (journals), which were mirrored by the positive values of “valuable” and “appropriate” evaluations in absolute value. That notwithstanding, still like in the earlier studies (e.g., Hardgrave & Walstrom, 1997), the higher the value of a positive evaluation, the more increased the means proportionally.

#### 3.1.3. Data collection

Between mid-November and early December of 2012 emails were sent worldwide to the 882 scholars identified as described above, explaining the purpose of the study and inviting recipients to take the survey providing prospective participants with an individualized electronic link to the Web-based survey. A week apart, a total of three reminders were sent. The results were electronically recorded and automatically coded in a fashion for immediate use in SPSS.

#### 3.1.4. Limitations

First, we would like to recognize that survey-based research in general introduces the problems of participant self-selection and non-response, which might skew the results. Second, we understand that in the rankings of forums a response bias might play a role, that is, respondents would likely rank those forums higher, in which they have published, than those, in which they have not published. We would finally like to recognize that using the EGRL and EGOV listserv for selecting the survey participants might have also impacted the results. This approach reached out to the wider scholarly community engaged in EGR. Instead we could have considered to selectively approach the heads and deans of MIS, IS, Public Administration, Computer Science departments and schools and other academic institutions for this survey (as it has been done in other forum-related studies). However, we felt safe in the assumption that EGR might not have risen to sufficient visibility and recognition among these disciplines and administrative leaders due to its relative novelty and its multi-disciplinary nature, which would have rendered those results questionable. When reaching out to the wider scholarly community, we controlled for academic rank and seniority. As discussed in detail in the next section, the response rate from the senior and most prolific EGR scholars in the domain was very high, which despite the outlined limitations gives us some confidence in the robustness of our approach.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. General overview

A total of 206 completed responses were received, that is, a response rate of 23.4% was attained. Due to the tightly controlled environment of this targeted Web-based survey, all responses were usable. Participants needed between 9 min and several days to complete the survey. While

the overall response rate was acceptable (and even a little on the higher side for an electronic delivery mode), this study's credibility and weight rests on the fact that over 80% of the most senior (in terms of academic rank, that is, associate and full professors) and most prolific (that is, with more than 10 entries in the EGRL) EGR scholars participated in it. The breakdown of academic positions in the sample revealed that a relatively high percentage (29.1%) of EGR scholars hold non-tenured (mostly research-oriented) positions. Also, quite a few doctoral students took the survey (14.1%). However, the majority of responses (56.8%) came from tenure-track faculty (tenured and untenured). In the following we use this group as an embedded control group. We assume that this group has a particular vested interest in the rating and rankings of forums. For that very reason we also assume that the ratings of this embedded control group help better understand and qualify the overall results. Detailed results are shown in Table 1.

While the results for primary disciplinary backgrounds of EGR scholars (see Table 2) seem to suggest that the majority of scholars have either Computer Science or MIS backgrounds (51.46%), followed by Public Administration and Political Science backgrounds (23.3%), only a small fraction of EGR scholars (6.8%) is skilled in just one and the same primary discipline. In other words, despite the disciplinary breakdown shown in Table 2, the vast majority of EGR scholars appear to be cross-trained in more than one academic discipline.

With regard to geographic provenance the vast majority of survey participants (79.6%) came either from Europe and the UK (54.9%) or from North America (24.8%). The strong participation from Europe and the UK is noteworthy. As can be seen in the next section it had an impact on the ranking of forums. In the absence of better knowledge regarding the geographic distribution of the EGR scholar population worldwide, it is unclear whether or not the strong European participation has caused a bias in the results, or not (Table 3).

*Ad RQ #1: What is the relative value/weight/rank of the various academic conferences used for presenting electronic government research?*

Much like in other emerging domains before, conferences have played a very important role in the evolution of the domain. In the first decade of EGR's unfolding conferences were the primary venues and preferred over journals for presenting research in EGR (Scholl, 2010a). More recently and with the advent of EGR quality journals, EGR conferences have lost their almost exclusive standing, however maintained a very high reputation relative to journals (also, relative to the lesser standing of conferences in other disciplines). Conferences have remained the preferred forum for presenting novel topics in EGR, which is indicated by the growing number of conference papers, new topical areas, and rising conference attendance (Scholl, 2012, 2/17).

Following previous studies we ranked the conferences by mean, median, and mode (Hardgrave & Walstrom, 1997; Walstrom et al., 1995). Using medians and modes provided additional information for the grouping of conferences rather than relying on mean scores alone. We also used the number of responses and the score sums as indicators of

**Table 1**  
Breakdown of academic positions in the survey responses.

Academic positions	n	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Professors	41	19.90%	19.90%
Associate professors with tenure <sup>a</sup>	48	23.30%	43.20%
Assistant professors (tenure track) <sup>b</sup>	28	13.59%	56.80%
Full, associate, or assistant research professors without tenure, post-docs, and other PhDs	60	29.13%	85.92%
Doctoral candidates (ABD)	14	6.80%	92.72%
Doctoral students	15	7.28%	100.00%
Totals	206	100.00%	

<sup>a</sup> Including senior lecturers (UK).

<sup>b</sup> Including lecturers (UK).

**Table 2**  
Primary disciplinary backgrounds.

Primary disciplinary backgrounds	n	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Public Administration and Political Sciences	48	23.30%	23.30%
MIS and Computer Science	106	51.46%	74.76%
Information Science	15	7.28%	82.04%
Other	37	17.96%	100.00%
Totals	206	100.00%	

a forum's "popularity" (Bharati & Tarasewich, 2002). In Tables 4 and 5, the results for the whole sample as well as for the sub-sample of tenure-track faculty are shown. As pointed out before the results for the tenure-track sub-sample were included, since the sub-sample plays the role of an embedded control group. It helped reveal some slight, however important, differences compared with the entire sample. As outlined before, since tenure-track scholars have a vested interest in choosing publication forums most conducive to their own tenure and promotion, it was reasoned that this particular control group adds an important check to the overall picture of the rankings and their validity.

In both rankings, the entire sample and the tenure-track scholars, the EGOV Track at the Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS EGOV) came out on top. In terms of popularity, HICSS EGOV led the next conference in line (IFIP EGOV) by 21% and 30% (tenure-track) in responses and in score sums (561 to 463 and 309 to 233, respectively in the sub-sample). While mean, median, and mode were equal between HICSS EGOV and IFIP EGOV over all, the tenure-track sub-sample showed a clear distinction in terms of mean, mode, and median in favor of HICSS EGOV over IFIP EGOV. In terms of popularity, the dg.o conference actually ties IFIP EGOV overall and led over it by 14.1% in the tenure-track sample. As Figs. 1 and 2 reveal, HICSS EGOV is ranked higher than IFIP EGOV in North America and the rest of the world, while the rankings between the top-two conferences are reversed in Europe. It can be inferred that the more than 2-to-1 ratio of responses from Europe over those from North America and the over 2.5-to-1 ratio of responses from Europe over those from other parts of the world (except North America) has generally skewed the results in favor of European forums, and IFIP EGOV, in particular.

Hence, the top-tier of EGR conferences comprises three annual conferences. While HICSS EGOV has a distinct lead over the other two conferences and can be seen as the top conference in the domain, IFIP EGOV and the Digital Government Society's dg.o are part of the top-tier of the three conferences in EGR.

The EGOV Track at ECIS, the IFIP ePart conference, ECEG, ICEGOV, and the EGOV Track at AMCIS were all ranked in the second tier of EGR conferences. While the rankings of second-tier conferences slightly differed between the overall and the tenure-track samples, they were clearly distinct from the lower ranked conferences in terms of both popularity indicators (numbers of responses and sum of scores).

Some EGR-specific conferences such as ICEG, EGOVIS/EDM, and the EGOV Track at PACIS were not highly rated by survey participants. The same holds true for non-EGR-oriented conferences such as ICIS, the Academy of Management, ASPA, and others. It was noteworthy

**Table 3**  
Geographic provenance of survey participants.

Greater geographic region	n	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Europe and UK	113	54.85%	54.85%
North America (Canada, Mexico, & USA)	51	24.76%	79.61%
Other	42	20.39%	100.00%
Totals	206	100.00%	



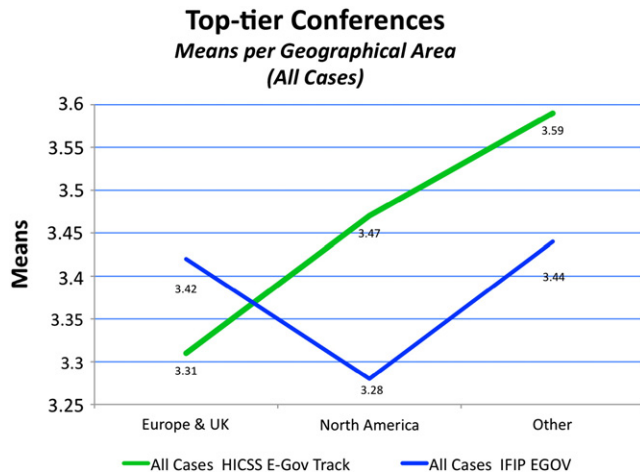


Fig. 1. Means for the top-two conferences per geographic area (entire sample).

journals such as GIQ and IP began allotting more space to EGR topics over the years. Around the mid of the first decade of the 21st century, also dedicated EGR journals began to appear (Scholl, 2010):

- *Electronic Journal of e-Government* (Academic Publishing) in 2003;
- The short-lived *Journal of E-Government* (Haworth) in 2004, later renamed to, repurposed, and continued as *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* (Taylor & Francis);
- *Electronic Government: an International Journal* also in 2004 (Inderscience);
- *International Journal of Electronic Government Research* (IGI Global) in 2005; and
- *Transforming Government: People, Process, and Policy* (Emerald) in 2007.

Ever since its first appearance the annual rate of EGR publications has risen, and with this increase also the overall capacity of full articles published in dedicated EGR journals has gone up (Scholl, 2010, 2012). As Table 8 reveals, the annual volume (2012) of full articles in EGR-dedicated journals has reached the amount of 213. Interestingly, some journals provide a larger capacity, for example, *GIQ* with almost a third of the total, and along with the *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* (JITP) and *IP*, these three journals provide three fifths of the annual full-article capacity in EGR-dedicated journals.

In terms of the perceived value and quality of EGR-dedicated journals as forums for e-Government scholars, both the entire sample and the tenure-track-scholar sub-sample show similar rankings. With

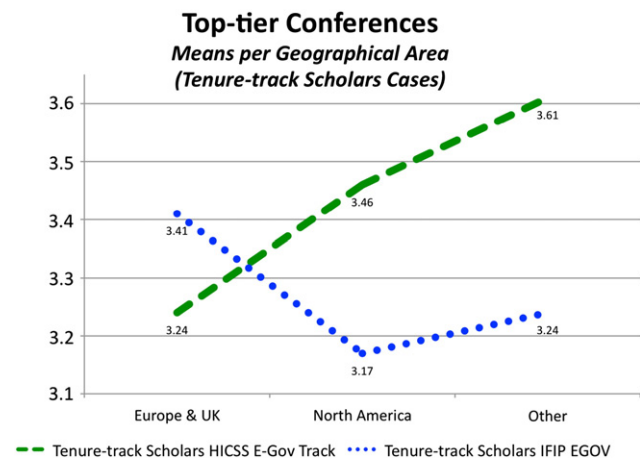


Fig. 2. Means for the top-two conferences per geographic area (tenure-track sub-sample).

regard to popularity, that is, number of responses/evaluations, sum of scores, mean score, median, and mode, *GIQ* leads all other journals by a significant margin in both the entire sample as well as in the sub-sample. In other words, *GIQ* is seen as the premier journal for publishing EGR (see Tables 9 and 10) forming the top-tier of dedicated e-Government journals in and by itself.

At some distance, a group of four journals comprises the second-tier of journals dedicated to EGR: *Information Polity* (IP), *Transforming Government: People, Process, and Policy* (TGPPP), *International Journal of Electronic Government Research* (IJEGR), and *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* (JITP). Their rank order differs between the entire sample and the tenure-track sub-sample. While IP maintains a top rank in the second tier in both, JITP, while at the bottom of the second tier in the entire sample, holds second place after IP in the sub-sample. It is also remarkable that IJEGR with a relatively modest mean score has a solid overall lead in the second tier in terms of popularity (highest number of responses/evaluations and highest sum scores in both the entire sample and the sub-sample).

The other two journals, *Electronic Government: an International Journal* (EGalJ) and the *European Journal of E-Government* (ECEG) form the third tier of dedicated EGR journals.

Journals with no particular focus on EGR play a secondary role in the study domain; while the annual volume of full articles in EGR-dedicated journals amounts to over 200, the entire volume of EGR-related full articles ever published in non-dedicated journals amounts to just 333 (see Table 11). When assessed by the number of full EGR-related articles, the most popular outlets are the *International Journal of E-Governance* (84 articles), *Public Administration Review* and *Social Science Computer Review* (45 articles each), and the *International Journal of Public Administration* (30 articles).

However, the perceived value and quality of journals not dedicated to electronic government differs to a significant extent from those journals' popularity. Interestingly and as a case in point, *MIS Quarterly* ranks third in the list of "other journals," also is the most frequently mentioned "other journal," has the second-highest sum of scores, and even a mode of 4 in the entire sample; yet, with one publication per decade measured over two decades that journal has not demonstrated any particular interest in public administration-related research. Two public administration journals top the list based on the entire sample as well as the tenure-track sample, *Public Administration Review* (PAR) and the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* (JPART), see Tables 12 and 13. In the same tier of seven journals also rank another public administration journal (*International Journal of Public Administration* (IJPA)) along with three MIS journals (*MIS Quarterly* (MISQ), the *European Journal of Information Systems* (EJIS), and the *Information Systems Journal* (ISJ)). Also in this tier we found Inderscience's *International Journal of e-Governance* (IJEG), which has published the highest number of EGR articles among all non-EGR-dedicated journals.

In the tenure-track sub-sample, the top-tier comprises PAR and JPART, which form the top-tier of "other journals" followed by a second tier of journals comprising EJIS, MISQ, *Administrative Science Quarterly* (ASQ), and the *Journal of the Association for Information Systems* (JAIS). The rankings for ASQ and JAIS are remarkable, since until this study was completed ASQ had never published any EGR-related article, while JAIS had published only three EGR-related articles. Also, it is noteworthy that IJPA and IJEG, two "EGR-friendly" forums, which made it into the top-tier of the entire sample, were placed outside that top-tier in the sub-sample. *Social Science Computer Review* (SSCR), which is one of the top three most popular "other journals" in terms of published EGR-related articles was not ranked near to the top-tier of "other journals," which will be considered in the discussion section.

Other forums do not play any significant role in EGR (including highly prestigious journals of other disciplines such as *Information Systems Research* (ISR), *Communications of the ACM* (CACM), both MIS, *Organization Science* (OS), *Academy of Management Review* (AMR), *Academy of Management Journal* (AMJ), all organizational and management sciences,







**Table 10**  
Rankings of EGR-dedicated journals by tenure-track scholars.

e-Government journals (tenure-track scholars)									
Journal name	N (valid)	Missing	Sum	Mean	Std. dev.	p-Value (a = 0.5)	Median	Mode	Tier
Government Information Quarterly	95	22	326	3.43	0.663	0.902	3	4	A
Information Polity	70	47	195	2.79	0.866	0.891	3	3	B
Journal Info Technology and Politics	72	45	185	2.57	1.019	0.930	3	3	B
Transforming Government	75	42	189	2.52	0.844	0.919	3	2	B
International Journal e-Government Research	85	32	214	2.52	0.946	0.904	3	3	B
Electronic Government	77	40	183	2.38	0.932	0.900	2	2	C
European Journal of e-Government	74	43	162	2.19	1.392	0.947	2	2	C
Sample (tenure-track scholars)	117								

With the exception of IJEG, the listed journals are either traditional public administration journals (PAR, JPART, ASQ) or traditional MIS journals (MISQ, EJIS, JAIS, and ISJ). As mentioned above, for some of these forums a huge discrepancy was observed between the journal's relatively high ranking among EGR scholars and the journal's actual relevance to (and interest in) EGR. For example, MISQ and ASQ, two flagship journals in their respective disciplines, have either never or extremely rarely published any EGR-related work. It might be inferred that such high ratings also represent another kind of halo effect, by which EGR scholars have unconsciously projected the reputation of these journals in their respective home disciplines into EGR. In practice, these two journals (along with a few similar cases, for example, *Information Systems Research* (ISR), the *Academy of Management Review* (AMR), the *Academy of Management Journal* (AMJ), or *Organization Science* (OS)) have no practical impact on, no demonstrated interest in, and no relevance to EGR, and vice versa.

In contrast (see Table 11), some forums in the category of “other journals” such as the *International Journal of Electronic Governance* (ICEG), *Social Science Computer Review* (SSCR), the *International Journal of Public Administration* (IJPA), *Journal of Enterprise Information Management* (JEIM), *Administration & Society* (A&S), and the *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* (JASIST) have obviously not appeared as viable outlets for publication on the radar screen of a larger audience of EGR scholars. The quality of these journals and their standing elsewhere might warrant at least a ranking in the second tier of EGR forums. Again, also in the cases of these journals a higher visibility to a larger EGR audience might translate into higher ratings in the future. However, it also falls to the editorial leadership of these journals to make the case with EGR scholars.

### 5.6. Number and age of journals

Except for GIQ and IP all journals dedicated to EGR are only a decade old or younger at the time of this writing. Like conferences the longer established forums appear to have a greater standing in the scholarly community of EGR than the younger outlets. While GIQ and IP expanded their editorial scope to include EGR topics in a multi-disciplinary

**Table 11**  
Most popular non-EGOV journals by number of EGOV publications.

Journal name	# of EGRL 8.5 entries
International Journal of e-Governance	84
Public Administration Review	45
Social Science Computer Review	45
International Journal Public Administration	30
Journal Enterprise Info Mgmt	17
Administration & Society	15
Journal American Society Info Sci Tech	13
Communications of the ACM	12
Public Manager	12
Journal Public Admin Research Theory	11

fashion, other journals took a more focused approach putting an emphasis on information systems (TGPPP and IJEGR) and policy and political science in the context of technology (JITP). As argued before, the study domain would benefit from at least a couple more “native” EGR journals in the top tier. This might work best, if the multi-disciplinary nature of the study domain is more emphasized besides the respective foci. In the category of “other journals” except for ICEG all journals have long track records in other academic contexts and disciplines, and EGR is a potentially interesting topic, however, on the sidelines. With the scheduled arrival of another dedicated journal (IJPADA) in 2014, the study domain has a sufficient number, and a sufficiently diverse number, of quality outlets spread over several tiers so to represent the domain at excellent and good levels of academic quality.

### 5.7. Other deliberations

Once a study domain determines the rankings of its forums, academic departments and schools and their promotion committees tend to specify certain requirements of quality and productivity to be met for tenure and promotion. Worldwide a growing number of scholars are specializing in EGR, and departments and schools increasingly establish and fill positions dedicated to EGR. To both stakeholder groups this study will be instrumental for measuring quality of research and annual productivity. However, when doing so some caution is advisable. To illustrate let us tentatively assume that a tenure and promotion rule would require from an untenured EGOV scholar to publish per annum two manuscripts at top-tier forums and another two at, at least, second-tier outlets including forums not dedicated to EGR but ranked here as first or second tier. Tenure and promotion would be granted to a scholar who demonstrated having met these requirements every year for six years in a row. Please note that this “2/2” rule is not suggested to be the golden rule for EGR tenure and promotion, although some departments and schools appear to have used it. In order to determine the total worldwide annual capacity for successful tenure and promotion cases, we first need to determine the number of publication slots per tier. This number can easily be calculated on the basis of EGRL v8.5 data (Scholl, 2012, 2/17). The total number of publication slots amounts to 193 in the top tier and to 183 in the second tier of forums. Since these numbers represent the total publication capacity of the first two tiers, for which also senior scholars compete, let us further assume that about 50% of publication slots at conferences and 30 to 33% of publication slots at journals can realistically be claimed by pre-tenure/pre-promotion scholars. As can be inferred from Table 14, under the “2/2” tenure and promotion rule the system would currently allow for approximately 39 successful tenure-and-promotion cases worldwide every year.

While this capacity intuitively appears neither too high nor too low at the time of this writing, it might soon become a limiting factor if the study domain continues to grow at current rates. Since first-tier forums cannot dramatically increase their volumes (with this journal being a case in point), in particular current second-tier and third-tier



**Table 14**  
Annual publication capacity of first and second-tier EGR forums (based on tenure-track rankings).

Annual publication volume per tier <sup>a</sup>			
	Forum	Total annual capacity	Total net capacity
First tier	HICSS EGOV Track	50	25
	IFIP EGOV (Springer)	36	18
	dg.o (ACM, full paper)	20	10
	GIQ	69	23
	PAR <sup>b</sup>	6	2
	JPART <sup>b</sup>	2	1
Totals (first tier)		183	79
Second tier	EGOV Track at ECIS (AIS)	16	8
	IFIP ePart (Springer)	16	8
	EC EG (ACI)	20	10
	1C EGOV (ACM)	20	10
	EGOV Track at AMCIS (AIS)	16	8
	Information Polity	28	9
	Journal Info Tech & Politics	32	10
	Transforming Government	24	8
	Int'l Journal EG Research	20	7
	European Journal Information Systems <sup>b</sup>	1	0
	MIS Quarterly <sup>b</sup>	0	0
	Administrative Science Quarterly <sup>b</sup>	0	0
	Journal Association Info Systems <sup>b</sup>	0	0
Totals (second tier)		193	78

<sup>a</sup> Capacity estimates based on EGRL 8.5 records.

<sup>b</sup> Average EGR articles per annum.

valuable, and most highly reputed forums for publication of electronic government research (EGR). The study approached the task from two angles: (a) based on the Electronic Government Reference Library (EGRL) of peer-reviewed EGR-related research in the English language, and (b) via a detailed survey of the EGR scholarly community. Based on data from both sources, important insights were derived from this study.

In a nutshell, in the course of fifteen years of research, EGR has accumulated a body of knowledge comprising over 5500 peer-reviewed contributions in the English language alone. The study domain is a multidisciplinary endeavor with worldwide several hundred scholars with various and mostly multiple disciplinary backgrounds combining disciplines such as public administration, political sciences, computer science, management information systems, information science among others. The study domain has developed high-quality forums in the form of conferences and journals, which have an equal standing in the domain. The top-tier conferences comprise three annual conferences with a global reach, (1) the EGOV track at the Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences followed by (2) the IFIP EGOV conference, and (3) the dg.o conference of the Digital Government Society. With regard to journals, *Government Information Quarterly* (GIQ) represents the top tier of journals followed by a second tier of four journals. Also some non-EGR journals contribute to and are interested in the study domain of EGR.

Among the challenges for this vibrant and rapidly growing multidisciplinary domain of EGR are (a) the need for a “thicker” first- and second-tier of journals, (b) the need for better visibility and recognition of some “other journals,” which are interested in presenting EGR, while (c) the high standards and reputation of the first- and second-tier forums need to be maintained and strengthened.

Future research will update this study and particularly try to assess the changes in perception of quality and quantity among and between the various forums and formats presenting EGR. It will attempt to better understand the current tenure and promotion practices for EGR scholarship around the world.

For that undertaking and unlike many, if not most other, study domains, EGR is in the splendid position to be able to assess the quality and productivity of scholars as well as those of outlets from two different angles, the “hard data” found in the EGRL and the repeat survey

representing the perception of quality and importance as seen by the scholarly community. This two-pronged approach greatly improves the confidence in the results of such study.

However, we would nevertheless like to close with a note of caution: Beyond the outlined inherent limitations of this study and its results, we would remind the reader of the potentially detrimental and unwise uses of findings like ours. In some more narrowly organized disciplines than the multi-disciplinary domain of EGR the creation of “baskets of journals” with a few “elite journals” on top has done more harm than good. We would not like to lead this vibrant domain of study into the same trap. Electronic government research has produced a number of high-quality and excellent-quality outlets. Not all outlets cover the whole domain but rather are more specialized. While their rankings might come out lower in studies like ours, they might be a far better fit for some scholarly research than the broader but more highly ranked outlets. In tenure and promotion cases, the schematic interpretation of our findings might not serve the purpose nor do the candidate justice. However, when used with due restraint, our findings will help identify adequate publication outlets in EGR and also inform tenure and promotion committees about the range of publication opportunities in electronic government research.

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