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Tribute to John Bertot and message from the incoming Editors-in-Chief



Among thousands of scientific journals that exist today and many more that will appear tomorrow, only few have achieved or will achieve the status of institutions of scientific endeavor. The distinction rests upon several factors, some general and others specific to the fields.

The general factors include authoritative delivery of state-of-the-art and timely work in the field; high visibility in the scientific community represented e.g. by the rate of citations to the journal's articles; guarantee of a rigorous process employed to produce research results and an equally rigorous process to review them, assuring the readers that the published research is generalizable and can be replicated; openness to new ideas and approaches and willingness to give them audience and space in the journal; active community of authors, editors, reviewers and readers, all acting in multiple roles, representing diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and open and welcoming to newcomers; and the reputation built and maintained over the years.

An increasingly important domain-specific factor is also the impact of a journal. The need for having a scientific impact is undisputable and there are many measures available, however the impact should not only be on the academic work by the researchers active in the field and their students, but also on decisions, policies and processes adopted by formal institutions in the economic, social, government and non-government sectors. This requires that members of the policy and practice community, representing such institutions, see their needs and interests addressed by the journal, are among the authors, editors, reviewers and readers of the journal, and are willing to consider the recommendations produced by the journal to inform decisions and working of their organizations, in turn putting research directly at the service of public policy and socio-economic development.

On all accounts, *Government Information Quarterly* (GIQ) has been firmly established as an institution of scientific endeavor, achieved both citation and real-world impact, and became an important resource to the whole research and practice community focused on the intersection of policy, information technology, government, and the public. The process of raising GIQ to the status it enjoys today took many years and received contributions from numerous scholars and practitioners from different disciplines, affiliations and countries from around the world. However, a major part of GIQ's success is due to the leadership and commitment by one remarkable scholar. This scholar is the former editor-in-chief *John Bertot*.

Being an editor-in-chief of a scientific journal is a demanding job and editors come and go. John Bertot has been the editor-in-chief of GIQ for a very long time. Therefore almost everybody was expecting that he would continue being the editor for a long time. As such, it came as a surprise when he announced a while ago that he wanted to step down. Thanks to his leadership John managed to raise GIQ to the leading journal in its field. He had a clear vision on where the journal should go and he managed to direct the journal towards this vision.

John has managed to create a journal with a high-standing reputation of what is measurably and undisputedly viewed as the leading journal in the field of government information and policy (Scholl & Dwivedi, 2014). The field and all of us individually have benefited from his commitment to this vision. In our view, he did an extraordinary job in bringing together various communities, building a field of scholarship and advancing the journal to where it stands today. Furthermore, he combined excellent research with the demanding responsibilities of being the editor-in-chief of GIQ. We are very grateful for John's efforts and want to thank him for all his hard work which resulted in where the journal stands today.

As the incoming co-editors-in-chief we intend to continue the direction of the journal, to protect the journal's quality and relevance, and to further increase its visibility and impact. In addition to citations and other measures of academic impact, we care about the impact of GIQ on government policy and practice, and about the journal's role in bridging the research and policy worlds. To this end, we intend to organize sections in regular issues dedicated to policy-relevant research; solicit articles to provide overviews and state-of-the-art in selected areas, relevant for researchers and readable to non-researchers; solicit articles to map research directions in relation to policy needs; highlight developments in digital government and governance from around the world through regularly produced columns; promote the presentation of research highlights through video messages and interviews; and adopt other measures discussed with the journal's editorial board.

The focus of the journal remains at 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 internal working of government and the relationship between the governed and those governing; and the increasing significance of information policies and information technology in relation to democratic and participatory practices. However, we will also keep updating the scope or the journal to capture emerging new concepts and approaches in the field.

John had a long term vision for the journal and was always open to new ideas. He changed the governance of the journal a couple of years ago by introducing the new role of Associate Editor (AE) and expanding the editorial board. This allowed not only to deal with the increasing number of submissions and the variety of topics covered by them but also helped the AEs build experience in performing the work of an editor.

GIQ enjoys a high volume of submissions, almost one received every day. As this is more than any review process can handle, all submissions are screened for their appropriateness and quality before entering the

full review process. Also, we further extended the editorial board to be able to handle the vast volume of submissions and to cover the variety of topics in the field. More AEs are also being introduced to represent the key areas of the field. The AEs will cover certain topics and assignments will be proposed by topic but all papers will be first screened by us. Although AEs will cover certain topics, topics will likely change over time and many papers do not fit within one category; the value of a paper is often that it is located at the intersection of different categories. We are delighted to welcome new AEs:

- John Carlo Bertot
- Antonio Cordella
- Yogesh K. Dwivedi
- Elsa Estevez
- Paul Jaeger
- Chris Hinnant
- Robert Krimmer
- Ines Mergel
- Jochen Scholl
- Suzanne S. Reinman

and editorial board members. A journal's quality is reflected in its team!

We embrace a principle that if reviewers do a good job, then they can join the editorial board. If they're really good, they might become an AE or even an editor. Underlying this principle is the appreciation for the reviewers spending their dedicated time in writing thorough and helpful reviews.

The field of GIQ is a practice-oriented, activity-based academic discipline aiming to support government policy and practice. Although some believe that practitioners and scholars belong to different worlds and there is a huge knowledge gap, we believe that rigor and relevance can be combined. When looking back at the past papers published by GIQ, there is hardly any noticeable gap between rigor and relevance; they go together. The type of papers we are aiming at have both scientific rigor and practical relevance, as depicted in Fig. 1 below, although there might be exceptions to this rule.

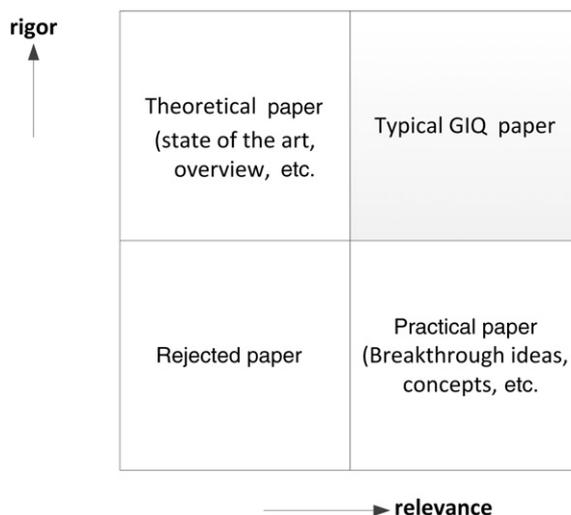


Fig. 1. Position of a typical GIQ paper.

Rigor requires the use of literature and theories, building upon existing research, employing systematic research methods, as well as sample selection, measurement instruments, argumentation, replication and generalization. The research methods employed should be useful for solving problems at the intersection of policy, information technology, government, and the public. Papers should be aimed at solving problems and challenges of practitioners and, at the same time, advancing knowledge in the field. While not abandoning rigor, the papers should have a clear relevance. Papers showing less rigor might be accepted when they convey novel or breakthrough ideas; the first in their area. Also theoretical contribution might be accepted but only if they advance the field. In general, we expect that submissions have both scientific rigor and practical relevance, that both attributes co-exist. This requires that scholars who intend to publish in GIQ should combine rigorous and practically relevant research by taking the combination into account in their research approach.

Finally, we intend to continue the direction established by John Bertot's leadership of GIQ over the past years, to lead the journal to address research problems that matter to the world, and to protect its status as an institution of scientific endeavor concerned with the impact of information technology on government, policy and the public. GIQ would not have achieved its status if not for the joint effort of the whole research and practice community. We count on your continued support to this effort, and look forward to receiving your papers, reviews and ideas.

Reference

- Scholl, H. J., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2014). *Forums for electronic government scholars: Insights from a 2012/2013 study*. *Government Information Quarterly*, 31, 229–242.

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