

## Book Review

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Gil-Garcia, R. (2012). *Enacting Electronic Government Success. An Integrative Study of Government-wide Websites, Organizational Capabilities, and Institutions*. New York: Springer. 252 pp.

Ramon Gil-Garcia has authored a first-class book about electronic government (e-government), and one that will inspire scholars for years. The e-government community has flourished during the last two decades and it is now a multidisciplinary group of world-wide academics, with a broad range of perspectives (i.e. public administration, political science, information systems, computing science, legal studies, etc.). This period of time has witnessed the spectacular development of Information Technology (IT) investments in public bureaucracies around the world, also making this emergent policy field of growing interest both for practitioners and the public. However, it is not easy to find e-government books with comprehensive theories, and data, as well as multidimensional implications and practical conclusions.

This book is an integrative contribution to the emergent e-government research community and fulfils some of the existing pitfalls in the discipline. Professor Gil-Garcia, (Public Administration Department, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, Mexico), has built up this contribution using part of the work for his doctoral dissertation [2]. At the same time, he has enriched this study with his recent and prolific research advancements (Scholl [4] recognized Gil-Garcia as the most productive e-government scholar in the world). Focusing on the state level of government in the USA, this book integrates significant empirical data with sound theoretical reflection about IT.

The audiences of this book will find it useful both in the academic and practical realms. The aspiration of the study is to define e-government success and, subsequently, how to measure it. As the author states in the preface “*e-government initiatives are not only about efficiency and cost-saving; they are now also designed to realize other important benefits for the public sector such as transparency, openness, policy effectiveness, service quality, and citizen participation. As the goals of e-government expand, understanding its success has become more important and urgent. In order to develop the necessary knowledge about this phenomenon, researchers and government professionals need to identify and assess the main conditions, variables, or factors that have an impact on e-government success*” (p. xiii). Hence, this is an appealing issue for scholars in the field, a challenging problem for practitioners responsible for e-government strategies, and a ‘hot’ topic for citizens concerned with the deployment of technologies in the public sector.

Likewise, the author provides his own approach to the study of e-government and its success, while previous work is the foundation for this well-informed book. Theoretically, this text draws on the information systems in organizations, socio-technical systems, public sector management and institutional theory approaches. At the same time, Gil-Garcia delineates his own theoretical perspective, ‘*Enacting Electronic Government Success*’, which is one of the most important contributions of the book. In addition, the theoretical approach supports the nested (or mixed) qualitative and quantitative strategies of research. The study puts together the analysis of government web portals in all states of the USA with in-depth attention to the case studies of New York and Indiana.

This book is organized into two parts, with seven chapters in total (and an appendix, recommended for those who are interested in methodological aspects). In the first part of the book, the author develops

the conceptual and theoretical approach to e-government success and the model to tackle the research problem, including the identification of electronic government success factors. In the second part of the book the author strengthens and validates his model with the study of the two cases, containing the discussion of results and the implications of the study for future research.

The concept of e-government, the interplay of IT and public administration, e-government success factors, and the current state of e-government success research and practice are advanced in the first chapter. An extensive review of literature in this first part of the book facilitates the conceptualization of e-government, presenting the existing problem with the measurement of success factors. Here, the author suggests a more comprehensive and dynamic view of e-government as a socio-technical phenomenon.

After this approximation to the concept, the author develops the theoretical model behind e-government success in the second chapter. In so doing, Gil-Garcia characterizes the ensemble view of IT in organizations, with regard to the diverse theoretical models used in e-government research thus far, from structuration theory and structuring information technologies [3], to institutional theory and the *Technology Enactment Framework* [1]. This final perspective is adapted by Gil-Garcia to define his own *Enacting Electronic Government Success* framework. This perspective portrays three constructs to apprehend the complexity of e-government success: organizational structures and processes, institutional arrangements, and environmental conditions.

From this point, the author uses government-wide websites as instances to measure electronic government success factors in the third chapter. In particular, this part of the book operationalizes the theoretical constructs (organizational structures and processes, institutional arrangements, and environmental conditions) as independent variables in a statistical analysis. This quantitative part of the study tests the model using partial least squares (PLS) techniques and published data about all fifty states in the USA, with the government-wide website functionality as dependent variable. This technique within structural equation modelling explores the relationships between different factors and the complex interactions among the dependent and independent variables. Here, general organizational characteristics, management strategies and practices, and availability of financial resources were found to be statistically significant success factors. Thus, the study underlines the importance of organizational structures and processes such as size of the IT organization, budget structure, IT training, in-house development, outsourcing, and a marketing strategy for the development of functional websites.

The fourth and fifth chapters examine the cases of New York and Indiana states in order to validate the *Enacting Electronic Government Success* model and the conclusions of the statistical analysis. In both cases the author presents the qualitative part of the analysis in the state governments addressing the role of enacted technology, organizational outputs and outcomes, management strategies and practices, general organizational characteristics, institutional arrangements, and environmental conditions. Consequently, the study of these categories helps to understand e-government success in the New York and Indiana cases, but also contributes to the process of theory building, and finally, to deliver practical ideas for practitioners in the policy-making process. This part of the analysis suggests that both case studies included different histories, managerial approaches, and division of labour among actors in order to develop highly functional government-wide websites. Therefore, this book provides evidence of the inexistence of a single combination of factors that results in e-government success.

The final chapters of the book discuss the *Enacting Electronic Government Success* framework. On the one hand, chapter six clarifies the theoretical and methodological challenges and contributions of the research. This part of the study engages with each of the abovementioned components (enacted technology, organizational outputs and outcomes, management strategies and practices, general organizational characteristics, institutional arrangements, and environmental conditions) to understand the dynamics of

e-government success as a whole. Then, derived from the findings of the study some practical recommendations are proposed to give advice to CIOs, IT managers, or other senior officials about technology, management, policy, and context related to e-government. On the other hand, chapter seven and the appendix sum up the contents of the book and provide details about the research design and methods.

In conclusion, the contribution of Gil-Garcia's book to e-government advancement is incontrovertible. First, this work is an exhaustive empirical research based on systematic and primary data, statistically analysed using novel techniques such as PLS, and combined in an exemplary way with qualitative in-depth case studies. Secondly, the book successfully sketches previous e-government literature making its understanding accessible for public management and administration scholars, among others. Third, the crystallization of the *Enacting Electronic Government Success* framework represents good news for the future health of e-government, as it will open the doors to further research, addressing other countries or layers of government, and cross-country comparative studies. Besides, the combination of theory building and practical recommendations makes this book even more remarkable. In fact, this text reflects the importance of good theories to assess practical issues in government.

Future research using this *Enacting Electronic Government Success* model may be developed. In brief, the obsolescence of traditional web technologies, and the emergence of the web 2.0, social media, or open data, among other artifacts, will challenge the utilization of this framework to study the new generation of social technologies. Simultaneously, and in spite of the future evolution of e-government, the demand for advice about how to adopt and use technology in government will surely endure. Then, this book will continue illuminating these processes in one way or another.

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## References

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