From the Editor-in-Chief: A Further Editorial

I am delighted to present three further articles for this double issue of **_Information Polity_**.

It is always a pleasure to publish a special issue from the Digital Government Society of North America, indeed we have included a collection of best papers for many years now and look forward to doing so again in coming years.

On this occasion I have added three further papers which work well with that special issue collection. The first of these keeps the US theme going, written as it is by Dr Kimberley Douglass from the University of Tennessee. This is a challenging paper, one that questions our scholarly assumptions about e-governance research as well as suggesting new ways of thinking that can enhance life chances for those in receipt of public support, particularly through the provision of specific and highly relevant information resources. E-governance research has tended to 'homogenize' consumers of public services, treating them as a single entity rather than as disparate in their service and informational needs. It has too, argues Douglass, tended towards an uncritical appreciation of the technological components of digital governance. As I say above this is a challenging paper and, for those involved in research that involves 'user groups', it is a 'must-read' from which deep and desirable self-questioning should ensue.

The next paper in this second collection comes from Albert Meijer, Stephan Grimmelikhuijsen, Louise Nell and Leo Lentz, scholars from the University of Utrecht's School of Governance and its Institute of Linguistics. Here these authors seek to explore the effectiveness of information disclosure as a regulatory instrument. As they say "Disclosure of information is an effort to approach the ideal of perfect information that is supposed to result in adequately functioning markets." Thus legal sanctions and financial instruments are displaced by, or supplemented by, information disclosure. Quoting these authors again, this means that "government [thus] enables consumers to act as 'regulators'. "But how, they are asking, do organisations translate this informational disclosure into practice? At the heart of the disclosure process is a fundamental dilemma for organisations serving consumers. Either these organisations can place emphasis on legally exact communications, thus risking what these authors call their 'social legitimacy' or they can place emphasis upon communicating per se Ie in ways that are generally comprehensible which, in turn, might jeopardise their formal legitimacy as organisations.

My own footnote here is to the authors of each of these first two papers. I hope that they will read their respective papers and communicate for they may find common ground here from which more ideas and research can ensue.

Finally I come to an excellent paper from Emily Barry and Frank Bannister from Trinity College Dublin. The paper reads as a strong corrective to the hyperbole surrounding so much of the debate about the release by governments of 'open' and 'big' data. But, these authors ask, can we really expect full release of these data sets or are the practical barriers to such release too high? The perspective taken in the research from which this article derives is that of senior managers in the Irish public services. The authors find no fewer than 20 barriers to open data from which they pick out three major areas of practical concern: those of resourcing open data; whether to establish a revenue stream for end use of data that has been opened; and a stream of issues surrounding data protection. These authors provide realism as a corrective to idealism and it is a realism that has to be addressed by those who argue that more and more data can readily be opened to the benefit of governments and their citizens.

JA Taylor, May, 2014.