

What Have We Learned? Twenty Years of *The Innovation Journal:* *The Public Sector Innovation Journal*

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This is the 20th anniversary of publication for *The Innovation Journal/La Revue de l'innovation*, an anniversary that presents an opportunity to consider what have we learned, what the journal has and has not accomplished, and what remains to be addressed.

Public sector innovation was a matter of keen interest when I (EG) created the journal and the Innovation Salon, a dinner meeting, from within the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) of the Government of Canada during the mid-1990s. Personnel of the TBS believed that innovation was a potential major contributor to dealing with the Government of Canada's (GoC) deficit and debt, when had grown to worrisome amounts during the economic recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The TBS government introduced a program of loans to departments to fund cost-sharing innovations but the loans had to be paid back, whether the innovation was successful at saving money or not; accepting a loan was therefore a risky proposition for departments, and the entire risk was to be assumed by the department. Around the same time, the Treasury Board introduced a policy requiring departments to self-fund any new programs. Interest in innovation in the GoC has never been the same.

By 1995, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) came to call with the message that the GoC had to deal with its deficit through restraint. The GoC complied and introduced a major cut-back program that reduced all grants and contributions by thirty per cent and most programs. TBS eliminated its innovation and quality program. I decided to continue TIJ outside government, and secured permission to do so. The government abolished almost all its periodicals at this time.

TIJ has been a success, in our opinions, in all ways except one. We have:

- 1) Created a venue for publishing material on public sector innovation
- 2) Published in both English and French
- 3) Created an open access source for finding information about public sector innovation worldwide by publishing: Prior to this issue, we published:

- a) Five books
- b) 238 peer-reviewed papers
- c) 146 discussion papers (also peer-reviewed)
- d) 57 case studies
- e) 22 Review Essays
- f) 172 book reviews

We have solidly contributed to the process of creating an international literature on public sector innovation, and for some authors on innovation we are the journal of first choice for such material. TIJ is a resource that all can access freely. During this time, TIJ and LRI have also become widely read, with around 100,000 individuals reading TIJ per year. In 2014, for example, TIJ was visited by 99,402 unique IPs ("unique visitors") who returned to read TIJ an average of 6.24 times. TIJ has also become widely cited, ranking 39th among 1157 public administration journals during 2012¹ and 68th among the top public administration journals in 2013.

We have published about public sector innovation in many places (e.g. Malaysia, Norway, Denmark, India, the Middle East, Canada, Great Britain, the USA, etc.). With this issue, we expand that scope to Russia. We have also published on many subjects, including health, education, public administration, ethics, collaboration and many others. We have published special issues at the forefront of innovation, such as those on leadership, processes and tools, education, empowerment, research, policy informatics, the Middle East, collaboration and democracy. We have also published on innovation patterns and a framework for a research program on the fate of organizations that innovate. The scope and depth of our work is remarkable.

Consider a selection of topics covered in TIJ over the last five years, which might give a tangible sense of the extent and reach of coverage of the field in the journal, with topics ranging from healthcare system innovation to regional governance, network governance, informatics, and public ethics:

1. Volume 20 (1), 2015. Special Issue on Innovations in Health Care System Reform in OECD Countries, with peer-reviewed papers on System Reform in OECD Countries, key competencies for promoting service innovation in the health sector, the role of regional agencies in performance management for innovation, New Governance and its influence in the long-term care sector in Ontario, Canada, innovation through public-private partnerships in the Greek healthcare sector, and applications of a Systemic Innovation Model for public sector Innovation Practice.
2. Volume 19 (2), 2014. Open Issue, with papers on Public Sector Innovation Theory, governance in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region, a Market-segmented Client Stance Innovation Model, the transformation of regions into Innovation Ecosystems, and Indian scientific innovation.

¹ Scopus SC Imago ranks public administration journals by citations. Its SJR indicator measures the scientific influence of the average article in a journal, expressing how central to the global scientific discussion an average article of the journal is. The measure Cites per Doc. (2 years) measures the scientific impact of an average article published in the journal within two years of publication; it is computed using the same formula as Journal Impact Factor TM (Thomson Reuters). It also measures the impact within three years.

3. Volume 18 (3), 2013. Open Issue, with papers on human and psychological capital in organizations, inter-organizational innovation in systemic networks, equity and partnership in intergenerational research, and co-innovation in public services:
4. Volume 17 (2), 2012, Open Issue, with papers on innovation in higher education, healthcare, workforce trends, and performance-based budgeting.
5. Volume 17 (3), 2012. Open Issue, with peer-reviewed and discussion papers on complex adaptive systems, computer-aided communication, innovation systems in the European Union, innovative public sector practice in the Netherlands, and computer access and social capital in Central America.
6. Volume 16 (1), 2011. Special Issue on Policy Informatics, with articles on “Information Integration to Support Model-Based Policy Informatics,” computer simulation models in the management of complex governance networks, barriers to use social media in policy informatics, evidence-driven policy design, sustainable environmental policy models, and theories of emergent systems.
7. Volume 16 (2), 2011. Open Issue, with articles on “Ethics, Innovation and Evaluation in the Delivery of Public Services,” localized innovation policy in the European Union, strategies to improve client service, and local accreditation schemes for the voluntary and community sector in the United Kingdom.
8. Volume 15 (2), 2010, Special Issue on Ethics, with articles on scaling social innovation, pedagogical innovation, ethics codes, garnering official support for community-based initiatives in Hungary, provisioning for neglected diseases in the developing world, and developing the Integrated Ethics program in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Over its twenty years in publication, the journal has established a markedly positive, synergistic relationship with the public sector innovation field, a mutually stimulating and complementary one. With its hundreds of papers, the journal has been one of the major scholarly and practitioner forums for exploration and extension of the field. Consistently, its Editor-in-Chief and associate editor have kept to the criterion that peer-reviewed papers in particular should be explicitly grounded in the public sector innovation field and should demonstrably contribute to its advancement.

These might be regarded as rather abstract avowals were they not rendered vital by countless instances of personal devotion. The volunteer service of editors, editorial board members, and many others has been incalculable, their support and devotion invaluable.

One such connection has been of particular importance to the journal: the inspiration it has found and the recognition it received from the great innovation scholar and major founding force for the innovation field, Everett M. Rogers, **who ended his career at the University of New Mexico**. Rogers had long had high regard for the journal. **He was invited, attended and gave a paper at the Innovation Workshop in Ottawa, Canada (where TIJ is headquartered), in 2002**. He decided to make TIJ the forum for (what would prove to be) his culminating work. He and Editor Rivera forged a partnership in 2001 when they were both awarded Regents’ Professorships at the University of New Mexico. At a function connected to those appointments, in March 2001, Rogers accepted Rivera’s proposal that they undertake collaboration around the implications of diffusion theory for the new century. Rogers agreed, if it could wait a few

months—he was about to embark on a trip to Africa in his ongoing (and soon to be successful) promotion of voluntary waivers of patent protections for HIV-AIDS drugs on the continent, in pursuit of affordable care for victims of the disease. Later that year, the two undertook a series of articles which would prove to be Rogers’ culminating work, curtailed by his untimely death in 2004, at age 73. Two of those coauthored works were published in the journal, entitled “Evaluating Public Sector Innovation in Networks: Extending the Reach of the National Cancer Institute’s Web-based Health Communication Intervention Research Initiative,” *TIJ* 9 (3), 2004 and (posthumously) “Complex Adaptive Systems and the Diffusion of Innovations,” *TIJ* 10 (3), 2005.

The second of these articles was an exploration of linkages between his diffusion framework and complexity theory, with special consideration of its connections with the STOP AIDS campaign in San Francisco. This campaign, dating to the 1980’s, has firmly established Rogers’ diffusion theory as the benchmark model for HIV-AIDS prevention education worldwide. STOP AIDS and developments stemming from it were for Rogers his singular labor of love and greatest single achievement. He wanted this landmark paper (the most heavily cited in the journal’s history) to appear in *The Innovation Journal*, as it did. Rogers’ determination to make *TIJ* the venue for this work was a reflection of his appreciation of the journal’s importance for the field.

While a great deal has been accomplished—much of it seminal—there are some areas that still need some attention as the journal enters its third decade. These include a review of the public sector innovation literature, producing a summary of what we have learned and what remains to be done: such a review and prospectus, if a partial one, is found in the Proposal article coauthored by editors Glor and Rivera, in this issue.

We also need to do more quantitative research, and we need to cite each others’ work more. We still also need to find a sustainable way to fund *TIJ*.

The field’s greatest weakness, in my (EG) opinion is that the study of innovation still focuses a great deal on promoting innovation, cutting costs and fitting into dominant paradigms. A more nuanced and critical approach would be less prescriptive, and less accommodating to prevailing approaches to management. As might be exemplified by the editors’ Proposal essay in this volume, such an approach would consider both positive and negative sides to innovation, depending on intent and execution, coupled with awareness that public and cross-sector innovation is a highly complex undertaking.