This mini-track aims at discussing trends, challenges, case studies and best practices, theories, and methodologies in the field of e-justice and e-law.

In the last few years, we have seen explicit recognition of the administration of justice both as a key component of the legal infrastructure provided by the State and as a service to the public, making evident the need to attain efficiency and efficacy in order to improve access to justice and to increase society’s trust of the administration of justice and the working of legal institutions and regimes. Consequently, our existing structures and organizational rules and procedures have had to adapt to the new exigencies.

Investment in information and communication technologies (ICT) can be considered to be one of the key elements to significantly improve the administration of justice and enhance the role of law in society. The growing attention to ICT as a means to reduce delay, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the administration justice as well as to promote confidence in the justice system has given rise to a new term that is now generally accepted: e(lectronic)-justice and e(lectronic)-law.

e-Justice and e-law is a specific field under the more general umbrella of e-government. In particular, it refers to the use of ICT aimed at improving access to justice, increasing cooperation between legal authorities, strengthening the justice system and improving legal institutions and the overall administration of law. Its main benefits are: (1) a more efficient judicial system (ICT increases productivity and diminishes transaction costs within a system that is highly information intensive), (2) a more effective judicial system (ICT reduces the duration of procedures, thus saving both time and money, and puts systems for document handling and processing within the reach of judges and courts), (3) greater access to justice (ICT provides the best information available and a better understanding of both the way the courts work and the legal instruments that citizens have to ensure recognition of their rights), (4) more transparency legal system (ICT makes possible improved control of cases and allows a better qualitative and quantitative evaluation of outputs), (5) an increase of beneficiaries’ confidence in the system, and (6) greater legitimacy of the judicial power.

The first paper in this minitrack presents a strategic approach to ensure the integrity and availability of judicial records. The authors note that maintaining the authenticity and accessibility of digital records over the longer term poses special challenges. They then present a clear preservation strategy for judicial organizations, that is both enterprise-wide and collaborative, and which addresses the special needs of digital records requiring long-term preservation.

The second paper in this minitrack presents an exploration of Mexican State judicial branches by studying their judicial web sites. The authors note that the judicial branch in Mexico is making progress toward better portals to improve their processes and strengthen the relationships with citizens and other stakeholders. Based on previous research developed in 2010, the authors of this paper propose a framework to measure and evaluate judicial websites. They perform a pilot test of the instrument in 20 states in Mexico and draw implications for research and practice from this effort.

The third paper in this minitrack presents an ontology-based approach for retrieving information from disparate sectors in government and uses the patent system as an exemplar to illustrate their computational framework, their implementation and their results. This paper demonstrates how an ontology-based approach to retrieve information across different information siloes can resolve some of difficult issues in retrieving relevant information in the legal and justice system.

We thank the authors for submitting their work and making this new minitrack an engaging forum for advancing the field of e-Justice and e-Law. We hope you enjoy the papers and their presentations at the conference.