Foreword

The breadth and speed of information technology in the public sector is breathtaking. Every day new software and hardware technologies are developed. Each of these new technologies has significant consequences for society and governments. For example, as online databases grow in their numbers, size, and accessibility over the Internet, the need to provide for robust security becomes more important. Likewise, new ethical questions and dilemmas arise as a result of these developments such as what balance should exist between rights of access and privacy. Different governments treat this balance in different ways.

Thus, there is a close interconnection between technical and social developments in information technology. The Internet, especially with respect to governmental e-commerce, depends on the development of trust between citizens and governments. Without that trust, participation in governmental e-commerce would be low and its impact muted. Similarly, e-government technologies are aimed at providing governments with increased capacity for more effective service but this increased effectiveness can only be achieved if organizations undertake changes in their processes and these changes also depend upon the actions of public managers, not just the technology. Thus, there is a need to keep up on research concerning technical, social, and managerial impacts of technologies.

All governmental organizations have been affected by these new technologies, ranging from small local governments to the largest nation-states. To what extent are the transformations due to technological change similar across organizations that differ in size and culture? These are questions that researchers are beginning to address.

In short, the sheer size and speed of change in public information technology is so broad and complex that it is extremely difficult even for those who have specialized in this area to keep abreast of these developments. There is a need for works that bring together these diverse strands of research on digital government. This volume provides a service to researchers in the field. It covers a broad range of research including hardware, software, social, managerial, ethical, and political issues of public information technology. Its coverage is international in scope, including the United States, Europe, and emerging countries. The breadth of coverage ensures that the book contains material relevant to a wide variety of researchers. The diversity of research is striking. For example, it includes chapters on radio frequency identification technology, service-oriented architecture, the bridging of the digital divide in Africa, and blogging. To summarize, this book will provide readers with an excellent perspective concerning the state of research on digital government.

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Bruce Rocheleau is a professor of political science in the Department of Public Administration at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois. In the area of information management in the public sector, he is currently pursuing empirical research concerning the use of computers and related information technologies in the public sector. His research includes the study of information management, geographic information systems, impacts of networks, and organizational problems involved in sharing information and resources. In the area of policy analysis and evaluation, his research includes the study of welfare, mental health, and aging policies. His research has included studies of the implementation and impact of programs in these areas. He is the author of numerous publications about governmental information management. He recently published the book Public Management Information Systems *(Idea Group Inc., 2006) and edited the book* Case Studies in Digital Government *(IGI Global, 2007).*