Preface

Electronic government or e-government has impacted all countries of the world. E-government is not just a movement that has transpired in one particular country, it is truly a global phenomenon, impacting both developed and developing nations. Essentially, e-government has influenced nations on all corners of the earth to different degrees. The discussion of e-government does not necessarily imply that Web sites are the only mechanism for its expression; many new and emerging technologies have appeared recently and are part of the e-government movement, such as wireless and new social media technologies. This book is one of the first of its kind to examine e-government across different nations.

The research on e-government took off with the commercialization and rise of the Internet in the mid-1990s. The Internet became a viable tool for businesses to reach more customers and essentially made it more accessible to a broader array of individuals. Emerging in a new millennium many scholars touted some of the promises of e-government to be revolutionary having the ability to change both the nature of government operations and the way the citizens interact with their government. We now know that e-government as envisioned during this period has not lived up to expectations, but it still resonates given the broad and continued discussion on the topic and its continued application throughout the world.

E-government has multiple meanings and has been defined numerous times by both scholars and practitioners. As mentioned, government Web sites were what e-government was originally envisioned upon, but as we know new technologies have emerged and are also part of e-government. One common thread, through most definitions of e-government, indicates its ability to transform government and make it more responsive and accountable to citizens. The chapters in the book address the transformational impact of e-government in many nations of the world.

The book Comparative E-Government examines the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on the governments throughout the world. The focus of this book is to examine the adoption of e-government in countries both by comparing different countries, and by focusing on individual countries and the success and challenges that they have faced.

This book has 32 chapters from leading e-government scholars and practitioners from around the world. There is representation of developing and developed countries in this book and their different stages of e-government adoption. There
are three parts in this book. Part I compares the adoption of e-government in two or more countries. The purpose of these chapters is to discern the development of e-government by comparing different countries and their individual experiences. As the reader will see from Part I e-government, although a global phenomena, has more of an impact on some countries than others. Its impact is global, but the degree of adoption varies with the nature of the country, its social and demographic characteristics, and degree of economic development.

Part I in its analysis of e-government across different countries had some interesting common findings. The chapters in this part demonstrate that many developing countries are struggling with providing the most basic infrastructure for ICT, which limits citizens’ use of e-government. However, mobile technologies make Internet connectivity more promising for developing countries. E-government development across both developing and developed countries seems to be more at the publishing and two-way interaction stages of development. There is not a lot of wholesale transformation as a result of e-government. Some factors that are associated with more successful e-government adoption are leadership, collaboration, and civic engagement. In order for governments to effectively implement more advanced e-government systems, they need to listen to their stakeholders. One way for more successful e-government adoption is a bottom up approach where adoption is driven by stakeholders and their opinions and uses of systems. The digital divide is one of the most pressing issues that all countries face in the adoption of e-government, an issue that is not likely to go away in the near future.

Part II of this book provides more in-depth focus of case studies on the adoption of e-government in select countries. Similarly to part one, the Part II shows that development is global, and varies in the context of the country. The lessons learned here is that e-government cannot just be applied from one country to the next, the context of the country must be taken into account. Essentially, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to e-government that will be successful, therefore, more research should be conducted on providing individual country case studies.

For instance, some of the chapters discuss that implementation of e-governance in many developing countries is weakened due to challenges such as the lack of transparency and broadband infrastructure. Another issue addressed in the second part is that many countries are approaching e-government as service delivery rather than enhancing democracy and participation. The cultural and legal aspect of the country has a tremendous impact on e-government adoption. Many chapters discuss the state of the art in e-government development, examining political, infrastructure, and funding issues.

Part III, the last part of the book, examines emerging innovations and technologies in the adoption of e-government in different countries. Some of the emerging technologies are the new social media movement, the development of e-participation, interoperability, and geographic information systems (GIS). The purpose of Part III is to leave the reader with some of the new issues that have emerged and will become part of e-government in the future.

Some of the issues discussed in Part III are e-government adoption and participation through GIS systems. Usability of e-government and the digital divide in
general are issues that still need to be addressed. Access to information laws will enhance transparency and accountability of governments and some nations are more developed in this than others. New social media technologies such as Web 2.0 can influence citizen participation in government. Other issues such as performance measurement, accountability, and budget transparency are addressed as important issues for the future of e-government.

This book would not be possible without the tireless work of the authors. This book was peer reviewed, with each chapter reviewed by at least three reviewers. Without the helpful comments of these reviewers this book would not be possible. I believe that both scholars and practitioners will find this book useful, having both theoretical and best practices in e-government. In addition, the global coverage of *Comparative E-Government* provides insights into the development of e-government in both developed and developing countries throughout the world, which is unmatched in existing books.

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