Much of the scholarly research on e-government argues that this technology will have a positive influence on politics and democracy. The book bolsters the claims that e-government has enabled increased citizen participation, but there is much more that can be done. E-government will ultimately improve service delivery and accountability of government to its citizens, according to many authors of this book.

This book examines how e-government impacts politics and democracy in both developed and developing countries. This is accomplished through an examination of participation of citizens in government service delivery. There is growing body of research that examines participation and service delivery, but there is no book, that I am aware, that examines how e-government influences this important function of governing.

I believe that the audience for this book is both academics and practitioners that need to know leading edge research and theories on e-government and its influence on politics and democracy. Another secondary audience is students of political science where they want to know about how e-government impacts governance. This book, I believe, provides a comprehensive discussion of the role of e-government on politics and democracy. There are chapters from leading e-government scholars and practitioners from around the world explaining how e-government influences democratic institutions and processes.

There are twenty four chapters in this book, which are divided into three sections, with each of the sections examining an important area of e-government influencing politics and democracy. The first section examines the role of electronic participation, or e-participation, on government. E-participation is the influence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) on the citizens’ ability to participate in the governance of their country. E-government is said to enhance participation since citizens have access, more readily, to governing institutions through various electronic means. In this section e-participation is examined in both developed and developing countries such as South Korea, Mexico, European Union, United States, Chile, Mexico, and Turkey. After reading this section, readers will have a very solid grasp of e-participation and its impact on governments throughout the world.

The second section of this book examines electronic democracy, or e-democracy, and its influence on citizens and government. In this section there is a demonstration of the role that ICT has had on democratic institutions of government. The e-democracy theory argues that e-government will enable citizens more opportunities to participate in their government because of information technologies like electronic voting, internet and democracy, online public diplomacy, and online social activism. Many of these chapters in this section support the importance of ICT to enhance democracy, but there are chapters more skeptical of its actual impact on democracy.

The third section of this book examines e-governance or the role that ICT has on political institutions and public administration. In this section, there are chapters that examine the digital city, the digital divide, and e-governance in developed countries such as Australia and developing countries such as Brazil. After reading this section, readers should understand that e-government has a very broad impact on the
governance and its development varies from country to country. The following sections will provide a summary of the key contributions of each of the chapters in this book.

E-Participation

In Chapter 1 Lombardi, Huovila, and Sunikka-Blank deal with the issue of e-participation in decision making and sustainable development evaluation. They examined the types of policies currently adopted by cities to engage their citizens in public participation in the European Union (EU). According to the authors, e-government has the potential to play an important role in accelerating the transition to a more sustainable way of life, revolutionizing business and how citizens use cities. The case studies presented in this chapter provided awareness that e-participation and empowerment processes in policy making are an important aspect of more sustainable communities in the EU.

In Chapter 2 Kurtz, Cole, and Cole examined successful techniques for increasing citizen use of electronic applications for two common activities — vehicle registration renewal and income tax filing — in four Midwestern states (Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio) in the United States. Usage patterns depend, in part, on an individual citizen’s technological sophistication. This chapter examines the impact of marketing efforts made by state government agencies to expand citizen use of e-government service options. In general, the experiences of these four states indicated a direct relationship between a state government’s level of effort in promoting e-government services for individual income tax filing and vehicle registration renewal and citizen participation rates.

In Chapter 3 Moreno and Traverso analyzed the participation opportunities for citizens that use websites in Chilean government ministries. Their conclusion is that there is a wide range of available information regarding ministerial management but, websites lack of participatory mechanisms. The evaluation of the Chilean ministries websites revealed the lack of open channels throughout these websites. Essentially, these authors argued for the potential of citizen participation in e-government, but their evidence does not support this in Chile.

Chapter 4 Gil-Garcia and Miranda conducted an analysis of the 32 government web portals in Mexico. This chapter proposed an index of citizen participation opportunities, ranking the portals according to this index, and explored some of the determinants of the availability of these participation opportunities through the case of the Mexican state of Michoacán. In Mexico, implementations of e-government have made significant progress. More and more government processes are becoming available through Web sites and other Internet technologies, including opportunities for citizen participation, but the progress is very modest at best.

In Chapter 5 Parlak and Sobaci examine Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) which is a democracy project aiming at enhancing the public’s participation in the processes of political and administrative decision-making in Turkey. Through an analysis of websites, this study found that e-participation services offered by LA 21s in Turkey on their websites were insufficient. According to these authors, despite the progress in the recent years, the efforts of e-government in Turkey are still unsatisfactory.

Cho and Hwang in Chapter 6 examine the various e-participation tools and services of e-government in South Korea. Although South Korea’s e-government seems to be heading in the right direction, more information sharing across the agencies and jurisdictions is needed. South Korea is still at the very early stages of Government 2.0, but scholars need to engage in assessing the effectiveness of these e-participation services, particularly the impact of certain policy proposals put into practice through e-participation.

Baumgartner in Chapter 7 examined the relationship between the use of the Internet for campaign information and dimensions of the political engagement of young adults during the 2008 United States presidential campaign. In spite of the promise the Internet holds for increasing political interest and
participation among this disengaged age group, those who rely on the Internet as their main source of news do not seem to be any more inclined to participate in politics.

In Chapter 8 Aikins indicates that a well designed participatory e-planning system can serve as an enabler for collaborative decision-making and help reduce conflict and mistrust between planning officials and the local community. E-planning has a great potential to improve public participatory processes, the geographical capabilities as well as interactivity and consultative features of many existing systems, helping to bridge the gap between participatory e-planning theory and practice. This author believes that for future e-planning systems to be effective as enablers, the features of existing software will have to move beyond mere documented feedback and allow more real-time dynamic consultation. The following section presents chapters on the impact of e-government on democracy.

E-Democracy

In Chapter 9 Powell, Bock, Doellman, and Allen analyze public opinion data using subjects from two different age groups of young adult voters and seniors in the United States through a survey to determine the factors affecting their intent to use online voting systems. The results indicate that performance expectancy, social influence, and computer anxiety are factors affecting the intent to use online voting. Significant differences were found between the young adults and seniors study groups on all four independent variables as well as on intent to use online voting. The results of their study indicated that government should consider using different approaches for different age groups with regard to online voting systems.

In Chapter 10 Williams describes the evolution of Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick’s website through a content analysis of its features and functionality and interviews with key officials in his election campaign. This website provides an interested case study of how to encourage citizen participation in an election. There was a high turnout from online supporters in large part from this innovative website. This case study shows the idea of the permanent campaign, or the blurring of the lines between campaigning and governing.

Liptrott in Chapter 11 discusses electronic voting or e-voting in the United Kingdom, through a review of the literature and using semi-structured interviews with key officials in the implementation of this program. The results of this chapter indicated that the UK has adopted an incrementalist approach towards the introduction of e-voting as a strategy to address falling voter turnout at the polls. Liptrott concludes that that voting methods will not enhance voter turnout primarily due to public disengagement with conventional political activity.

In Chapter 12 Romano examines digital democracy and this author notes that the Internet had not fulfilled any democratic promise, but instead has become a forum for “new elites.” Romano believes the Internet has created a “Long Tail” effect; this is where single websites witness a disproportionate amount of web traffic in comparison to other sites, thereby, reducing the level of citizen participation in a democracy.

In Chapter 13 Deakin examines what is called the fourth phase of digital government; the development of digital technologies as socially inclusive platforms through city government web portals. At this stage e-government is open, transparent, and accountable with the increased adoption of democratic principles to include citizens in the process of governance. Deakin believes City Web portals are gateways to services and should increase the democratization of government.

Lake in Chapter 14 argues that in the European Union (EU) the ability of e-government initiatives to increase citizen awareness does not necessarily correspond to an increase in democratic legitimacy. This chapter discusses the EUs e-government initiative called the Information Society, which is antici-
pated to have a positive impact institutional transparency and democratic legitimacy. This Information Society initiative was expected to increase awareness of EU democratic institutions and provide more legitimacy of the system of governance.

In Chapter 15 Seo and Thorson examined Café USA, which is an initiative by the United States Embassy in South Korean capital, Seoul, to reach out to its country’s citizens. Café USA is part of the Embassy’s efforts to interact with the younger generation of South Koreans, a substantial proportion of which are regarded as having anti-U.S. sentiments. These authors believe that social networking tools have begun to transform the practice of public diplomacy by permitting governments to build and maintain direct relationships with citizens of other countries.

In Chapter 16 Farinas examines radical activists who now can use the Internet as a significant source to mobilize support and disseminate information to other activists’. This author believes that activism online is alive and well. The Internet has enabled symbolic relationships with offline and real world activism. However, not everyone is amenable to the idea of “taking it to the streets” as the author notes; therefore online activism has served as a complimentary tool to real world activism. The following section provides examples of e-government impacting the governance of nations, focusing on government performance and accountability.

**E-Governance**

In Chapter 17 Anthopoulos and Fitsilis focus on describing the latest digital city architecture and experiences for the City of Trikala in Greece to examine how digital cities impact e-government. A digital city has all information systems linked virtually through technologies such as wireless. The author found that no one stop portal of a digital city exists so far, but there has been much progress in the development of digital cities in Greece among other countries.

In Chapter 18 Gulati, Yates, and Tawileh performed an analysis of the global digital divide using data from over 170 counties. There is little research, as the authors’ note, that examines the global digital divide through a large country data set. When controlling for economic, social, and political developments, there is a greater capacity for e-governance in countries that have a regulatory authority for telecommunications, competition in telecommunications industries, and higher financial investment in technological development. One key finding of this chapter is that enabling competition in telecommunications industries had the greatest impact on the capacity of a country for e-governance diffusion.

In Chapter 19 Caudill believes to bridge the digital divide technical solutions will have to be solution. The digital divide is the difference between the haves of technology and have-nots in society. Even knowing there is availability of technology in many developed countries, such as the United States, there are still many citizens who do not have regular access to this technology. Open source software and freeware and other alternative solutions can be beneficial to helping citizens get access to new media.

In Chapter 20 Burns and Wilson examined citizen engagement through e-government in Australia. They advocate for implementing e-government using a bottom up approach from citizen participation, rather than the traditional method of top down. The bottom up approach is where individuals and non-profit organizations debate current policy changes among themselves. They present the idea of political informatics, or customizing parliamentary information as a tool for political engagement to allow community dialogue on issues rather than have this information just presented from the top-down.

Filho in Chapter 21 examines the e-government from the view of Brazilian citizens examining two topical issues. In particular, this chapter analyzes the impact of e-voting and e-health on promoting citizenship in Brazil. This author found that e-government in Brazil, as in many other countries, is following a service first and democracy later approach. Filho believes that currently in Brazil, e-voting and
e-health initiatives merely reinforce dominant forms of power, and do not promote democracy giving citizens more say in these decisions.

In Chapter 22 Hamner, Taha, and Brahimi examine the potential barriers to implementing e-government in developing countries. These barriers include infrastructure, privacy and security, sustainability, culture, knowledge, skills and the abilities of citizens. These authors believe that developing countries can overcome these barriers more so than developed countries since they are more amenable to change because they do not have as rigid institutions in place to inhibit change.

In Chapter 23 Salhofer, Stadlhofer, and Tretter examine ontology and e-government. Ontology is an explicit specification or a conceptualization of a problem. According to their model there is an interaction split between citizens and public administration into two major parts: planning/informative and execution/performance. Planning is the activities that need to be taken to provide citizens with information necessary to find administrative services. The execution is essentially providing the output and communicating the results to citizens. The important contribution of this chapter is that it provides another way of conceptualizing the relations between citizens and their government through the field of software engineering.

In Chapter 24 Moody, de Kool, and Bekkers examined the degree in which Geographic Information Systems (GIS) neighbors websites improved service delivery by government to citizens. GIS has the potential to improve relations between citizens and government to promote new ways of service delivery and citizens’ participation possibilities. The results of a comparative case study indicated that when citizens have a large impact on the problem and solution to the problem, there is a higher degree of success in the e-government solution.