Foreword

As public administration enters a difficult new era characterized by budgetary austerity, the privatization of public functions, and public demands for greater accountability, many have looked to information and communications technology as a critical component of public-service adaptation to the 21st century. Much of this response has been left to technically trained individuals who have not had the background afforded by public-administration education for managerial positions in the public sector. Public administration as a discipline, reflected in the essays contained in this book, brings a more holistic viewpoint to bear on central problems of e-government and the implementation of public information technology. Widespread and spectacular failures of information-technology projects, often driven by technocratic ignorance of human and political factors, which the public-administration literature emphasizes, provide an immediate and compelling reason to go beyond technical reasoning to a broader, more systemic understanding of the challenges involved in this domain. If this work can provide some small contribution to the field, it is simply that a government that works must be based on principles long understood in public administration and adapted to the context of modern public information systems given by authors in this anthology.