

Foreword

Just over five years ago, a hundred key professionals in e-government came together at the University of Sussex, UK to discuss the emerging field of mobile e-government, at a conference I organized. Among the key participants was Professor Norm Archer, one of the editors of this book, who has made contributions to the field of e-government and who has helped to establish “mobile government” as an umbrella domain to create an identity for all professionals working with mobile technologies in e-government.

Since then, a number of exciting developments and approaches have helped to modernize public sector organizations and to serve the public better through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). These innovative approaches in the public sector are mainly driven by two major incentives. One is related to the modernization of activities and roles of public sector organizations, so that governments can act more efficiently and improve their reputations. The second is related to offering services to citizens that are convenient for them and that serve their needs better. Since e-government has become recognized as a field of research and practice, these incentives, perhaps, remain the same in general, but it continues to be challenging to achieve desired outcomes via various systems, applications, and services. Serious work in this area is always linked with overcoming these challenges by producing innovative ideas and practical solutions.

In recent years, these challenges have taken a quite unusual shape and form. There are a number of issues in successfully adopting and implementing e-government projects country-wide, by key public sector organizations that wish to improve key government activities. These issues range from cultural and social (e.g. having effective leadership backing, implementing effective change management, etc.) to technical and organizational (e.g. project management, interoperability, financial planning, etc.). New social networking methodologies, the evolution of Web 2.0, and the bottom up strengthening of the ability of citizens to participate and influence policies and decisions are also having a great impact, but they also create challenges for successful e-government system implementations.

These new developments and challenges have led to new considerations in e-government. Our understanding of, and approaches to, e-government are moving from the conventional to more complicated and broader views. In these views, e-government is more comprehensive and distributed to many activities that take place in any organizations having business or other relations with public sector organizations. It is no longer easy to view e-government simply as technology that is presented as a central portal and a gateway backed up with certain key back office capabilities. Such systems are designed mainly top-down and are more or less closed to (or have slower responses to) changes in requirements from highly IT sophisticated citizens and both governmental and non-governmental organizations. In this way, e-government becomes a distributed effort involving these activities, which were not in the past an aspect

of ordinary e-government implementations. An important difference from past developments is that this approach requires a bottom up design to respond to citizens who may be participating more actively in government operations as reporters, publishers, and other participants in the networked civil society. E-government is therefore becoming a much broader concept than what it was originally conceived to be.

The collection in your hands is a significant effort by the editors to bring together articles containing knowledge on these new developments and to provide the e-government community with an opportunity for a deeper understanding of recent developments in e-government. The collection starts with a number of (country-based) cases where ideas on the very definition and content of what e-government actually involves are revisited and evaluated in the light of recent developments. It then continues to discuss interoperability - a core issue in e-government - from the point of view of an expanding and more comprehensive nature of e-government that involves recent challenges in (personal) data handling, revenue generation, and adoption of mobile technologies. The next group of articles examines how e-government is reflected itself in a relatively new area: financial and capital markets. Finally, the collection contains articles discussing an essential but mostly neglected implementation issue: adoption and application of e-government services by citizens, and related issues in this challenging domain.

Similarly to all domains of ICT work, e-government is a field which continues to evolve quickly in order to respond to needs emerging from organizational dynamism in the public sector and the changing needs and improved capabilities of citizens in the networked world. Drs. Shareef, Archer, and Dutta, and the contributing authors of this book present a range of valuable examples and cases showing recent approaches and responses to emerging needs in the ever changing domain of e-government. In this way, the book contributes significantly to the body of cumulative knowledge on e-government, even as this domain continues to change continuously both in terms of technological breakthroughs and innovative applications and services. This book will serve e-government professionals, both as a source of practical knowledge and an interesting reading experience for establishing a deeper understanding of the e-government domain.

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Ibrahim Kushchu is an expert in mobile government with a background in management systems and artificial intelligence. Combining his management studies and his expertise in artificial intelligence, Prof. Kushchu has been working for business schools in the UK and in Japan, and teaching various information communication technology courses especially related to electronic business and mobile business. Prof. Kushchu is an internationally recognized pioneering practitioner and researcher in developing the mobile government field by bringing into the light the issues related to the use of mobile technologies in electronic government. His work also extends to impact of mobile technologies for economic and social development. He has edited and co-edited three books and has a number of publications in various international journals and in the proceedings of reputable conferences. He is also very active in international community of researchers through speaking, organizing, chairing, and co-chairing various international conferences and serving on the committees. He has been working with various multinational companies including Gates Foundation, Cisco, Nokia, Hitachi, and NTT DoCoMo on projects involving consultancy, research, and educational events. He also offers advisory services to local and central government organization and their agencies. Prof. Kushchu holds a first degree (BSc) in management. He also has an MBA and a Master's degree (MSc) in artificial intelligence from the University of Edinburgh, UK. He was awarded a PhD degree in evolutionary artificial intelligence from the University of Sussex, UK.