Introduction to Information Technology and Public Administration—
E-Government Minitrack

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Government at all levels (federal, state, and local) and branches (legislative, executive, and judicial) is the biggest single investor in and user of Information Technology. Given its enormously varied missions, government employs a vast range of information technology applications which have dramatically changed the way government is conducted and will continue to affect the way citizens and businesses expect government to function in the 21st century. Government is also a powerful incubator, creator, influencer, precursor, and director of information technology programs, initiatives, and trends. The creation of the Internet and the National Science Foundation’s current multiyear Information Technology Research and Digital Government programs are examples of this kind of government involvement in Information Technology development.

The close and complex relationship between information technology and government is beginning to become a major focus of academic research in fields such as public administration, organizational behavior, information science, and technology innovation. Though at first glance the “e-Government” initiatives as well as the underlying technologies in government practice may resemble those known from the private sector under the labels of “e-Commerce” or “e-Business,” the research agenda for e-Government cannot be assumed to be identical to its private-sector counterpart. In practice the implementation of e-Government technologies and processes in the public sector also follows different priorities and requirements, as do the organizational and political implications of e-Government which may have even more far-reaching impacts than those of the private sector.

Public administration obviously finds itself at the doorsteps of a major mid- to long-term transformation with respect to how governmental business is done (inter-branch, inter-level, intra-branch, and intra-level) but also regarding the government-to-business (g2b) and government-to-citizen (g2c) relationships. The availability of enabling information technology is at the core of this transformation. Unlike the private sector, however, the public sector enjoys fewer degrees of freedom when it comes to system changes. The eGovernment minitrack (along with the neighboring e-Policy minitrack) is chartered with advancing a research agenda that helps better understand the particular challenges and alternatives citizens and governments face when transforming traditional modes of governing and government into technology-enabled modes of the 21st century. The following seven papers contribute to this end.

The first paper, Web Portals: The Key to Enhancing State Government E-Service by Gant and Burley Gant, gives an account of the usage and the level of sophistication of web portals in governmental service delivery. The paper provides a ranking of these state web portals by state.

The second paper, Electronic Public Services in Singapore: Stepping through the Screen by Putteril, Tung, and Debreceny, presents the case and reports on the status of Singapore’s g2c eCitizen services.

The third paper, Service Flow Management: Caring for the Citizen’s Concern in Designing E-Government Transaction Processes by Klischewski and Wetzel, examines the challenges and limitations of integrated cross-organizational transaction processing when servicing citizens.

The fourth paper, Government Virtual Service Networks by Mauro Regio, proposes and elaborates on content/service syndication as a modus operandi for offering governmental services over the Net.

The fifth paper, Walking Atop the Cliffs: Avoiding Failure and Reducing Risk in Large-scale E-Government Projects by Pardo and Scholl, analyzes the causes of high rates of project failure, proposes remedies, and discusses a large e-Government project as case in point.

The sixth paper, The Back Office of E-Government: Managing Information Domains as Political Economies by Homburg and Bekkers, analyzes and discusses both potential conflict and cooperation in intergovernmental information exchanges.

The seventh paper, Framing Virtual Interactivity between Government and Citizens: A Study of Feedback Systems in the Chicago Police Department by Fulla and Welch, finds that virtual interactivity between citizens
and governments is complex and far-reaching to the extent that social context may be lost.