

PREFACE

We have come a long way from the days when e-government simply signified a web presence of the various government departments to e-government now represents the complex IT enablement of back-end processes of the government in a manner that it allows the government not only to be more efficient and effective but also to perform new processes which would have been impossible to perform without technology. To do so various standards, architectures, tools such as ontology approach have been applied.

While the e-government community at large is grappling with the task of implementing projects, there is equally a need to anticipate the challenges that future may bring. We have to recognize the risk that e-government projects which are held to be great successes today may become quite irrelevant tomorrow. The next generation of technology is something we need to look for. E-government has a web presence but its time to achieve a one-stop portal for the government through the standards of integration and interoperability. Advanced privacy and security measures need to be undertaken. When a new technology will be deployed the need for re-engineering will arise. This book covers the latest thoughts on e-government systems, technology models of e-government and e-government infrastructure.

Since e-government is a relatively new field, the e-government initiatives of individual government agencies should not be postponed just because standards are not yet in place. In fact such an approach would be consistent with the decentralization and freedom which have made internet what it is today. However, another facet of the issue is that if it proves impossible or prohibitively expensive to integrate the disparate e-government schemes at a future date, then e-government will fail to reach the advanced stages of Layne & Lee's evolution model. Therefore, the importance of interoperability and standards cannot be ignored. E-government architectures and the design and organization of data centres will have a significant bearing on cost effectiveness, performance, reliability, and the ability to adapt to the changed requirements of the future. Privacy and security are well known concerns in e-commerce. Failure to protect the confidentiality of data could induce existing users of transactional e-government services to revert to traditional channels and repel prospective adopters. I find that a number of e-government projects simply computerize the existing archaic business processes, without considering the opportunity of re-engineering them. E-learning has a great potential and it represents a new developmental opportunity for government and its institutions who can now reach top quality education to even underdeveloped locations. While e-government has made great strides, new technologies will be required to meet the complex requirements of the future.

In concluding, research needs to have a close liaison with practice so that work on interoperability & standards, architecture & data centres, privacy & security, process re-engineering, and new technologies proceeds in a manner that would make the existing e-government designs robust against the future. This book provides the impetus for thought and action in this regard.

In publication of this book, generous support was received from IT & Communication Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, India and National Institute for Smart Government (NISG), Hyderabad, India, and the same is gratefully acknowledged.

Jaijit Bhattacharya