<div align="center">**Chapter VI**</div>

# E-Government: An Overview

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Shannon Howle Schelin

North Carolina State University, USA
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## ABSTRACT

*Information technology has fundamentally altered many aspects of daily life, including interactions with the government. The role of the Internet continues to increase as more citizens use it to find pertinent information, purchase goods and services, and to participate in virtual communities. By capitalizing on the Internet revolution, governments can create new channels of communication and new methods for participation via e-government. The changing environment, coupled with citizen and business demands, encourages government involvement in e-government initiatives and related uses of information technologies. This essay offers an overview of the historical premises, theoretical constructs, and associated typologies of e-government. These typologies posit a framework for understanding e-government, its potential benefits, and its related challenges.*

## INTRODUCTION

E-government (electronic government) has become a "buzz" word in local, state, and federal government. The era of e-commerce and e-business

began with the widespread adoption of the Internet in the mid-1990s, and today many citizens expect the same responsiveness and access to government services as found in the private sector. According to the 2002 International City/County Managers Association e-government survey, over 73 percent of municipalities with populations larger than 2,500 have websites. The 2002 Pew Internet and American Life Project indicates that 58 percent (68 million people) of American Internet users have accessed at least one governmental website (Larson & Raine, 2002). Not only are citizens looking for improved ways to interact with the government, elected officials demand improved services to enhance their legacies. Competitive governments do not want to be seen as slow adopters of e-government (Sprecher, 2000).

Although there is widespread interest in the topic, e-government lacks a consistent, widely accepted definition. It is often related to revolutionizing the business of government through the use of information technology (IT), particularly Web-based technologies, which improve internal and external processes, efficiencies, and service delivery. The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and United Nations Division for Public Economics and Public Administration (UNDPEPA) have defined e-government as "utilizing the Internet and the World Wide Web for delivering government information and services to citizens" (UN and ASPA, 2001, p. 1). Based on this working definition of e-government, this article seeks to examine the theoretical constructs, historical premises, and associated typologies of e-government.

# HISTORICAL PREMISES

E-government has evolved from the information technology revolution. Information technology enables new methods of production, increases the flow and accuracy of information, and even may replace traditional standard operating procedures (Landsbergen & Wolken, 2001). Information technology in government has long been acknowledged as a method for improving efficiency and communication (Norris & Kraemer, 1996; Kraemer & King, 1977). However, until the advent of the Internet, the use of technology in government primarily dealt with batch processing of mass transactions using mainframe computers. Now, IT developments such as electronic mail (e-mail) have changed interpersonal communications to eliminate the constraints of geography, space, and time, with profound organizational consequences (Rahm, 1999). The ability to buy and sell goods and services via the Internet has led to new private-sector industries, constituting a new business model which the public sector now seeks to emulate. In addition, IT has promoted

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