Book Reviews

Comparative Perspectives on E-government: Serving Today and Building for Tomorrow. Ed. Peter Heron, Rowena Cullen, and Harold C. Relyea. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 2006. 412 p. alk. paper, $50 (paper); $80 (cloth) (ISBN 0810857359;0810853574). LC 2005-33580.

As flexible and extensible tools that enable information access and distribution become more widely available to governments, many of the constraints once believed embedded in the structure of state bureaucracies are revealed as surmountable. Increasingly, citizens and their leaders find themselves not only at a point where they must rethink the means of distributing government information and social goods, but in a position to evaluate the core roles of government agencies in light of the new possibilities presented by information technology. Questions about the use of information technology in government are revealed as questions about the function of government in the era of the Internet. E-government, and its companion term, e-democracy, are the monikers assigned to the transformative governments and the governments transformed through and by the use of information technology.

Comparative Perspectives on E-government brings together the expertise of twelve scholars from schools of knowledge management and public policy to provide an overview of the history and issues involved in the creation and maintenance of national e-governments. As the title indicates, the editors take a comparative approach, including descriptive and evaluative essays focused on e-government policy and practice in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Case studies from other countries such as China and Singapore are also presented. Together these scholars assess the effect of information technology on government efficiency and efficacy and engage in the ongoing debate about best practices and future directions. Along with their appraisal of the cost-benefits of past and current initiatives, many challenges are addressed. Special attention is paid to how different e-government policies approach concerns about access to archives and archive life-cycles, government accountability and the transparency of its operations, issues about information security and privacy, and the persistent problem of the digital divide. Even in the United States, a nation with one of the highest percentage of Internet users, we learn that only sixty-six percent of the population uses the Internet. In some less affluent countries the percent of users drops precipitously. These studies reveal that access to the Internet is just the most obvious of barriers to e-government participation. The language and design of e-government can in the best-case scenarios positively communicate structure, but in the worst cases it can function as jargon, presenting a barrier to the social benefits of the State.

This book will be of interest to policy makers and political scientists interested in how people interact with the new electronic faces of governments. It may also be used by sociologists studying contemporary processes of citizen subjectification and forms of governmentality. A central topic is the citizen responses and citizen attitudes to different manifestations of e-government. Using focus-group interviews and questionnaires, Rowena Culler and Peter Hernon examined the impact of government services in the daily life of New Zealanders by recording their research behavior on government Web sites. Many of the challenges found will be familiar to analysts: questions of

citizen trust, cultural diversity, economic stratification, and educational attainment have long affected participation in democracy and access to government services. While there is no question that these obstacles persist in our era of e-government, the methodologically sound studies presented here offer social scientists a way to test how these challenges are mediated through different e-government initiatives as well as how to implement a variety of Internet discovery tools.

Librarians and students of information studies will also benefit from this book's careful analysis of end-user behavior in relation to Web sites, databases, and portal design. While the underlying goal of e-governments in democracies is to create systems that efficiently deliver needed information and services, different information structures, such as user-centered or agency-centered approaches, are shown to offer distinct advantages and disadvantages. Unlike commercial Web sites, democratic e-governments are quintessential public service institutions. As such, they can provide librarians with alternative models and (sometimes) innovative solutions to the problems of organizing a complex information environment for diverse end-users. Library Web designers undertaking Web usability studies will benefit from the performance metrics used to evaluate e-government portals.

Comparative Perspectives on E-government collects for its readers, in one volume, the thoughtful analysis of the discourse of information policy most important to researchers. It is a wonderful entrance into a developing political institution.—*David Michalski, University of California at Davis.*

Buckland, Michael. *Emanuel Goldberg and His Knowledge Machine: Information, Invention, and Political Forces*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited (*New Directions in Information Management*), 2006. 380 p. (ISBN 0313313326). LC 2005-34357.

A invented it, while B and C got the credit, fame, and glory. Sound familiar? That, in a nutshell, is a major aspect of the story Michael Buckland recounts in his biography of Emanuel Goldberg (1881–1970), one of Germany's most creative engineering geniuses. Writing a biography of a man whose career the Nazis attempted to discredit is no small challenge: many of the documents essential to learning about Goldberg's life and work were destroyed in air raids during World War II or willfully obliterated by the Nazis. Many people who knew vital details did not survive the war, while some who did survive were unwilling to concede genius to this inspired inventor. In addition, air raids destroyed the working models of one key invention that is a prime focus of this biography.

Buckland, former dean of the University of California's School of Information Management Systems at the Berkeley campus, is now an emeritus professor. Because of his deep and broad knowledge of library and information science, he is uniquely qualified to research the life and achievements of Emanuel Goldberg, a remarkable but little known scientist. What makes his book especially noteworthy is that Buckland was able to assemble a fairly detailed portrait of Goldberg's life from very meager and widely scattered sources. Buckland's achievement is the result of long, arduous labor and intensive research. Further, his persistent detective work enabled him to go far beyond his subject's substantial scientific achievements. In his book, we see the human being behind the technological achievements and we perceive the inventor as a person, not simply as a mind.

Russian born, Emanuel Goldberg received his early education at a Moscow gymnasium. Following completion of his secondary studies, in which he excelled in science and technology, Goldberg wanted to enroll at the Imperial Technical School of Moscow. However, despite outstanding grades, he was denied acceptance because a quota system allocated only