

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:       EFFICIENCY VERSUS DEMOCRACY:  
                              POLICY TRENDS AND ASSESSMENT OF  
                              STATE E-GOVERNMENT

David Adam Anderson  
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Directed by:            Professor Paul T. Jaeger,  
                              College of Information Studies

Assessments of E-government literature have noted a lack of both broadly-drawn studies and policy-oriented research. This paper addresses this gap through a systematic, content-based assessment of E-government strategic planning documents from 37 states, meant to determine the holistic policy orientation of American E-government. Specifically, this study tests the proposition that state E-government policies can be said to exhibit either an *evolutionary* or *revolutionary* orientation towards affecting desired changes in matters of *efficiency*, *democracy*, or both.

This orientational framework is drawn from examples found in federal E-government policy and academic E-government literature. It is also used to outline biases of existing E-government implementation models, and to frame discussion of a model for gauging progress in “E-democracy.” Other issues explored include the ultimate legitimacy of an E-government that fails to implement democracy-oriented tools, the potential Constitutional conflicts of a transformative approach to E-government, and the wisdom of re-conceptualizing citizens as “customers.”

EFFICIENCY VERSUS DEMOCRACY: POLICY TRENDS AND ASSESSMENT OF  
STATE E-GOVERNMENT

By

David A. Anderson

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Advisory Committee

Professor Paul T. Jaeger, Chair

Professor Jennifer Golbeck

Professor Dave Yates

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### ***The Research Problem***

Researchers and policy makers have suggested that citizen-facing E-government (G2C), the use of the Internet by government entities to deliver information and services to constituents, can and should have a revolutionary effect on the public's interaction with government.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the literature reveals two commonly expressed hopes for change that can be respectively characterized as *efficiency*- and *democracy*-based:

1. E-government can improve government service delivery for the sake of bureaucratic efficiency, cost-savings and customer convenience, and/ or
2. It can enhance and better facilitate democratic participation by citizens in the political process.

As the first full presidential administration of the E-government era draws to an end, and as there are now some 15 years of state and federal policy making from which to draw, the degree to which these changes are discussed and desired, if at all, by American state governments can be determined with a good degree of clarity. Doing so will allow us to determine the present, overall thrust of American E-government policy, isolate best practices, and, if necessary, recommend desired changes.

To date, however, a holistic, policy-based assessment of American E-government trends does not exist. In fact, efforts to determine gaps in E-government scholarship as a whole have noted a dearth of both broadly-drawn studies and of policy-focused research. West (2004) has noted that “of the empirical projects that have looked at e-government,

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<sup>1</sup> The Presidential Management Agenda of George W. Bush outlines three external stakeholder groups around which to focus E-government efforts. Besides *Government-to-Citizen* (G2C) initiatives, the PMA also discusses *Government-to-Business* (G2B), and *Government-to-Government* (G2G), as well as defining a fourth “portfolio” initiative as *Internal Efficiency and Effectiveness* (IEE). These abbreviations have become common descriptive shorthand for E-government (Office of Management and Budget, 2003, p. 9-11).

most have limited their analysis to single American states or small number of Web sites, weakening the generalizability of the findings” (p. 17-18). Yildiz (2007) claims that most E-Government research has been focused on “the study of outcomes and outputs of the e-government projects,” and thus lacks “a more in-depth analysis of the political nature of the e-government development processes, and a deeper recognition of complex political and institutional environments” (p. 647). In short, studies often look at *what* is on a narrow cross-section E-government websites, without a broader, policy based consideration of *why*. A narrow focus on just the implemented reality of E-government, divorced from a consideration of expressed ideals, can lead to a skewed perspective of the true policy environment. Worse, it may indicate the lack of any awareness of a relevant policy environment at all. E-government does not just spring up from nowhere, but is often rather the product of formal planning supported by a specific understanding of what it is and why it is needed.

This study thus addresses the lack of broad, policy-based findings by presenting a content-based analysis of E-government strategic planning documents from 37 states. These plans have been coded for language that, it is argued, indicates *efficiency*- and *democracy*-based policy orientations. Using these orientations, this study proposes a framework within which the policy of a given state can be comparatively located alongside those of other states, allowing for a more systematic assessment of overall trends. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that American E-government policy discusses *efficiency* much more than *democracy*, and proposes recommendations for the future assessment of democracy-based implementation.



### ***Conceptual Framework***

Despite claims that no leading theory or consensus definition of E-government exists (Yildiz, 2007, p. 650; Schedler, Schmidt & Summermatter, 2004, p. 5), this study argues that two pairs of common definitional orientations can be isolated, and are useful for holistic policy assessment. The first, already mentioned, concerns the *functionality* of E-government, i.e. are the functions, information, and services offered on government websites oriented towards an increase in *efficiency* or *democracy*? Central issues here include the degree to which E-government is meant as an extension to the public-sector of those benefits reaped by businesses and consumers through E-commerce, the applicability of business methods to government processes, and the wisdom of re-conceptualizing citizens as “customers.”

The second pair of isolated orientations describes the *nature* of E-government, i.e. is E-government an *evolutionary* or *revolutionary* concept? Is E-government merely a means of improving existing processes, while leaving more foundational structures relatively untouched, or does it denote an entirely new epoch of government administration and/or democracy due to the (potentially) radical impact of the Internet? As I will show, a *revolutionary* approach to *efficiency* promotes a collaborative, cross-agency/ jurisdictional approach to information and service delivery which blurs formerly strict lines dividing horizontal and vertical levels of government. A *revolutionary* approach to *democracy*, rather, desires to not only enhance those avenues of political participation already open to citizens in our representative democracy, but also to open up entirely new ones that give citizens a more direct voice in policy making. In sum, this study argues that state E-government policy can be said to exhibit either an *evolutionary*

or *revolutionary* orientation towards affecting desired changes in *efficiency*, *democracy*, or both.

Additionally, I will show that the differences in proposed models which aim to measure the progress of E-government across multiple stages of implementation (e.g., Layne & Lee, 2001; Ronaghan, 2002; West, 2005) can be accounted for using this orientational perspective as well, displaying differing degrees of an *efficiency*- or *democracy*-orientation while all oriented towards a *revolutionary* outlook. Given that some authors (Jaeger, 2002; Seifert, 2002) have pointed out the potential Constitutional conflicts a reorganized government, or a shift to a more direct brand of democracy may face, the ultimate wisdom of a *revolutionary* focus in these models—and in E-government in general—must be considered. A discussion of these potential conflicts serves as the basis for a preliminary model for E-democracy that I will propose and test on the programs of three states.

### ***Need for the Research***

Besides addressing the aforementioned lack of holistic, policy-oriented research, this study means also to assess the degree to which state policy mirrors an observed lag in democracy focus compared against the efficiency focus of E-government in other jurisdictions. For instance, a 2001 study of 32 European E-government strategy papers showed implementation supporting efficiency gains (37%) and government reform (29%) far outdistancing that which supported political participation (12%) (Schedler, Schmidt & Summermatter, 2004, pp. 7-8). Further, although George W. Bush made “citizen-centered,” “results-oriented” and “market-based” E-Government a centerpiece of his

2001 President's Management Agenda, aiming to both increase efficiency, while expressing a seemingly democratic desire to make government "more transparent and accountable," federal E-government policy can be shown to be primarily efficiency-focused as well (Office of Management and Budget, 2002, p. 4).

In November of 2002, Congress passed the E-Government Act (P.L. 107-347) in support of the President's initiative, establishing an Office of E-Government within the President's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) (Office of Management and Budget, 2003, p. 14). OMB's new E-Government task force quickly thereafter created 23 Internet-based initiatives focused on improving and streamlining transactions between the Federal government and its various stakeholders (Office of Management and Budget, 2003, pp. 12-13). The citizen-based initiatives, such as Recreation One-Stop, GovBenefits Assistance Online, and EZ Tax Filing, all emphasize easy access by customers to government services, leaving aside programs that may aid citizens in locating the sort of "transparent" information they may require in order to keep their government "accountable."

Given both the oft-stated dictum that the states can act as "laboratories of democracy," often innovating in areas ahead of the curve of the Federal government, as well as findings of the Congressional Research Service that the federal model of E-government "has been important to relatively few states' e-government planning and execution" (Seifert & McLoughlin, 2007, p.13), the relative degree of democracy- and efficiency-based policy orientation in state E-government is an area ripe for research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### ***The Emergence and Implications of Efficiency-Oriented E-government***

As noted by the Center for Digital Government,

Digital Government was born of the promise of public services delivered faster, better and cheaper. Indeed, the motivation – in large measure – was to increase convenience and choice for citizens and businesses, generate efficiencies for government, and mine costs out of existing processes so scarce public funds could be better used in supporting other priorities.

(Center for Digital Government, 2003, p. 5)

In 1993, Vice President Al Gore’s National Performance Review (NPR) introduced the new notion of “Electronic Government” as an interest of the Clinton administration (Gore, 1993).<sup>2</sup> The NPR—a comprehensive reform initiative to evaluate “the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of every federal program and service” (Relyea, 2003, p. 12)—outlined seven initiatives meant to “inaugurate the electronic government,” providing both “dynamic opportunities to improve the efficiency and easy use of government services,” and a “substantial return on investment through increases in productivity” (Gore, 1993). Among these was what Gore termed “Integrated Electronic Access to Government Information and Services,” in order to provide convenient “one-stop shopping” through E-government “Kiosks” similar, in Gore’s vision at that time, to automated teller machines (ATMs) (Gore, 1993).

From its inception, then, interest in G2C E-government has been driven, at least in part, by an efficiency-based approach concerned above all with cost savings and improved customer experience. The roots of this approach, however, go deeper than the arrival of mainstream Internet use and the National Performance Review. Rather, it can

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<sup>2</sup> Harold Relyea of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) cites a 1997 NPR report as the “first” use of the term “Electronic Government,” but, if indeed Gore and the NPR are the true originators of the term, earlier uses can be found in the initial NPR reports of 1993. See Relyea, H.C. (2002). E-gov: Introduction and overview. *Government Information Quarterly*, 19, 9.

be traced back at least as far as the post-WWII resurgence of interest in the classical liberal economics of John Locke and Adam Smith, which emerged as a countervailing trend to the vast expansion of the federal bureaucracy in the New Deal era (Heeks, 1999, pp. 9-11). Summarized simply by Richard Heeks as “market good, government bad,” neo-liberalism “emphasizes the economic efficiency of markets, of the forces of competition and of individual decisions” as well as “the inefficiency of governments and of the forces of collective, planned intervention” (Heeks, 1999, p. 9). By the time of the Republican resurgence characterizing American politics from the 1970s to today, neo-liberalism had become the official economic stance of the “New Right.”

Since the 1970s then, reform efforts have been a focus of the federal executive, aimed at smaller government, a streamlined bureaucracy, and a more cost-effective administration of government services (Relyea, 2002, pp. 10-23). By the 1990s, the desire for market-based bureaucratic reform had become an international trend transcending partisan politics, popularly termed New Public Management (NPM). A “kind of merger or compromise between public administration and neo-liberal ideology” (Heeks, 1999, p. 12), NPM has been characterized as a “loose collection of policy and management initiatives designed to increase efficiency, accountability, and performance in bureaucratic states largely through the greater use of markets and market-based management systems” (Fountain, 2001, p. 19).

The National Performance Review can be thus characterized as a federal attempt at New Public Management. Central to this effort was the implementation of a market-based customer service model, as dictated by President Clinton’s Executive Order 12862, dated, 9/11/1993:

In order to carry out the principles of the National Performance Review, the Federal Government must be customer-driven. The standard of quality for services provided to the public shall be: Customer service equal to the best in business.

Federal E-government, as a part of this new model, is seen primarily as a business strategy, a way to offer better service to constituents “online, not in line” (Gore, 1997, p. 70), while simultaneously reducing costs.

Some commentators have suggested, however, that private-sector business models and government administration may not necessarily be all that compatible. King discusses the use by the British government of “CRM”—the private-sector concept of Customer Relations Management—in developing its E-Government program, noting that, “the appropriateness of this technology to organizations striving to meet complex goals such as improving the quality of life for vulnerable people is open to question” (King, 2007, p. 47). Further, Schedler & Summermatter (2006) point to many other voiced criticisms of “customer-oriented government,” including Constitutional challenges and “conflicting notions of citizenship and private consumption” (pp. 293).

Al Gore’s 1997 NPR publication *Businesslike Government* reminds the reader that “taxpayers are customers too,” implying that constituents think in terms of “buying” certain services from the government, and as such expect the quality and delivery of these services to match similar transactional experiences from the private-sector (Gore, 1997, p. 7). Governments have a monopoly over many of the services they provide and, with no profit motive or competition driving product quality or service delivery, have been decried as inefficient, unresponsive, and wasteful. Some commentators see this as a prime reason for the widespread public loss of confidence in government affecting world democracies in recent decades (Kamarck & Nye, 2002, p.1; Ferdinand, 2000, pp. 5-6).

Schedler & Felix (2000) have pointed out that, as a solution to this, “the quality of services delivered and the resulting customer satisfaction could...help to legitimize public administration” (pp. 125-143). New Public Management addresses this new motivation, replacing the profit drive with an emphasis on cost-savings (spending *less*, if not making *more*), increasing efficiency and reducing bloat, all the while restoring faith among the constituency through better services provided at a reduced tax burden. Legitimacy, not profit, incentivizes government service delivery.

But what of more traditional, democratic notions of legitimacy? As expressed by Mintzberg (1996), in an article about customer-focus in government management, “I am not a mere customer of my government...I expect something more than arm’s length trading and something less than the encouragement to consume...most important, I am a *citizen* with rights that go far beyond those of customers” (p. 77). American citizens do not just receive services from its government, rather they constitute it and determine its membership. Further, they express policy preferences, if not always directly, then at least indirectly through the electoral and lobbying process. To keep their government accountable, citizens require access to information about their government. As noted by Jaeger (2007),

Democracies are based on the presumption that citizens are sufficiently educated to play an intelligent role in participation and deliberation. Without access to adequate and appropriate information related to governance, such informed participation and deliberation are impossible.  
(p. 4)

Legitimacy, then, is also founded upon the degree to which citizens are allowed to exercise their rightful oversight in an informed manner. Easy online access to a vast array of government information and rapid lines of communication with government

officials are just some ways this oversight can be better facilitated, and legitimacy further increased, within an E-government program that caters to both *efficiency*-based customer needs and *democracy*-based citizen needs.

### ***E-democracy and Other Potentially Revolutionary Orientations***

By 2002, the Pew Internet & American Life Project claimed that all 50 states had developed some degree of web presence, and reported survey results showing that 58% of American users (68 millions adults) had visited a government website (Larsen & Rainie, 2002, p. 5). Pew further asked users *why* they visited, and reported this list of top five uses:

- 1) Get tourism and recreational information (77%)
- 2) Do research for work or school (70%)
- 3) Download government forms (63%)
- 4) Find out what services a government agency provides (63%)
- 5) Seek information about a public policy or issue of interest to you (62%) (Larsen & Rainie, 2002, p. 4)

While uses one, three, and four seem to justify present federal efficiency-based initiatives as Recreation.gov, Forms.gov, and Benefits.gov, uses two—and especially five—imply that users also desire the sort of information, and level of accountability, beyond that found in a purely efficiency-based model. If legitimacy is indeed a driving impetus behind American E-government implementation, then policy makers would do well to implement features that promote and better facilitate democratic participation, something E-government scholars have been urging all along.

Coincident with the rapid expansion of E-government implementation, has been a growing body of E-government research and scholarship, often at least implicitly advancing opinions about the full possibilities of E-government. Some scholars take a



narrow view of E-government, noting that it may be “nothing more than the existing government streamlined and automated” (Evans and Yen, 2005, p.367). In this view, the Internet is the latest in a line of communication and information technologies (e.g. the printing press, the telegraph, the telephone) that have increasingly better facilitated government dissemination of information, administration of services, and communication with constituents without necessarily altering the fundamental nature of how a government operates or relates to constituents. This view is in keeping with Fountain’s claim (2001) that, “Organizations tend to patch information systems onto existing structures in ways that may enhance efficiency and capacity but that otherwise maintain the status quo” (p. 19). In other words, some feel that E-government may just denote the next stage in the ongoing *evolution* of government administration.

Alternately, some writers take a more transformative or *revolutionary* view of E-government, casting a wider net over those things an E-government program is meant to accomplish for the good of its citizenry. The National Research Council posits E-government as,

the application of information technology (IT) and associated *changes in agency practices* to develop more responsive, efficient, and accountable government operations *while fostering a more informed and engaged citizenry*. (National Research Council, 2002, p. vii; emphasis added)

Put more simply, as in the words of scholar Darrell West, some think of E-government as the online delivery of “services, information, and democracy itself” (West, 2005, p. 1).

In current usage, it seems that the term E-government often specifically implies an efficiency-orientation, while E-democracy has become the preferred term, not only for the use of government websites as means of democratic information dissemination and accountability, but also to denote a new era of democratic possibility. Grossman posits E-

democracy as the third great democratic stage, coming after the direct democracy of ancient Greece, and the representative model of the modern age (Ferdinand, 2000, p.2).

Darrell West elaborates, noting how the limitations of representative democracy, previously necessitated by the sheer geography and demographics of modern democratic countries, can now be overcome:

One of the virtues of technology is that it long has been thought to be an ideal way of restoring direct democracy to large-scale societies. In an era where it is physically impossible to bring together all citizens under one roof and have them participate in communal decisions, technology offers the prospect of electronic communication and participation in communal decision making. It overcomes the problem of geographic distance and disparity of interests in the representation of citizen viewpoints. (West, 2005, p. 104)

Steven Clift, somewhat less grandly, describes E-democracy as use of the Internet “to enhance our democratic processes and provide increased opportunities for individuals and communities to interact with government and for the government to seek input from the community” (Riley & Riley, 2003, p.11). Ferber et al. (2004) notes that, “Proponents of cyberdemocracy maintain that website design should encourage interaction with government officials and provide opportunities to provide input into the decision-making process” (p. 5). These definitions show that hopes for E-democracy do not just focus on increased information access, but also on previously unprecedented levels of citizen input and government-citizen collaboration in policy making, uniquely possible through the nature of the Internet. Whether or not E-democracy will—or should—lead to a revolution of pure, direct democracy in the United States, or simply maximize the possibilities of our representative model in an evolutionary sense, has yet to be seen or answered.

The literature also shows that revolutionary hopes have not been limited to a democracy focus. Recent publications, such as *E-Government: The Next American Revolution* and *The Paradigm Shift* attest to the revolutionary nature of efficiency-oriented strategies in government administration as well (The Council for Excellence in Government, 2000; NIC, 2007). President Clinton, in his 1996 State of the Union Address, proclaimed “We know big government does not have all the answers...The era of big government is over” (Clinton, 1996). Midway through the Clinton administration, federal policy thus began to focus on ways efficiency-oriented E-government might affect changes to the very makeup of the federal executive. In 1997, Gore’s NPR released a report entitled *Access America: Reengineering Through Information Policy*. In the report, Gore notes that:

The idea of reengineering through technology is critical. We didn't want to automate the old, worn processes of government. Information technology (IT) was and is the great enabler for reinvention. It allows us to rethink, in fundamental ways, how people work and how we serve customers. (Gore, 1997)

“Rethinking” became the key concept of the NPR, and in 1998 the entire enterprise was rechristened the National Partnership for Reinventing Government.

Central to this rethinking has been a topical—not agency based—organization of Government information and services on the web, what Jane Fountain has termed “virtual agencies.” Though traditional brick-and-mortar agencies—e.g. Education, Agriculture, Justice—all boast websites as well, the virtual agency,

following the web portal model used in the economy, is organized by client—for example, students, seniors, small-business owners, or veterans; each site is designed to provide all of the government’s services and information from any agency as well as links to relevant organizations outside government. (Fountain, 2001, p. 4)

Someone interested in starting a business could, for instance, go to virtual agency like Business.gov to find relevant information that otherwise would have to be gathered separately from the Small Business Administration, the Department of Labor, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Ideally, the prospective business owner could also download relevant forms, and eventually even apply directly through the site for needed permits and Tax IDs for a true “one-stop” experience. Hopes for this model often focus on a breakdown of strict agency silos of effort, resource use, and jurisdictional responsibility. This could lead to a government that, at first, increasingly begins to mirror this sort of digital organization in the brick-and-mortar world before finally becoming one and the same, a “Virtual State” organized in terms of “virtual agencies, cross-agency and public-private networks whose structure and capacity depend on the Internet and web” (Fountain, 2001, p. 4).

A second element to government reorganization on the web is the combination of these virtual agencies into a single, centralized web portal. On December 17<sup>th</sup> 1999, President Clinton issued a memorandum announcing the creation by the General Services Administration (GSA) of a one-stop federal web portal to arrange online government information, “by category of information and service—rather than by agency— in a way that meets people's needs.” Further, this website was meant to “provide better, more efficient, government services and increased government accountability to its citizens,” and agency leaders were told, in order to increase efficiency, to identify and adopt “‘best practices’ implemented by leading public and private sector organizations” (Clinton, 1999). This website was launched on September 22, 2000 as Firstgov.gov and remains online today, re-launched as USA.gov on December 5, 2006. The E-government Act of

2002 further devoted funding to Firstgov and mandated that “to the extent practicable” federal websites provide integrated service delivery, directing government information and services towards, “key groups, including citizens, business, and other governments, and integrated according to function or topic rather than separated according to the boundaries of agency jurisdiction” (P.L. 107-347, Title II, Sec. 204(a)(2)(A)).

A revolutionary approach to E-government has thus been enshrined in law. But, just as efficiency-based E-government can lead to an overly narrow recasting of political legitimacy, some authors have pointed out that a revolutionary approach can be equally problematic in terms of Constitutional standards rarely considered in discussion of E-government policy. A discussion of the relevant Constitutional context is thus in order.

### ***Potential Policy Conflicts of a Revolutionary Orientation in E-government***

Regardless of how we may conceive of E-government in the abstract, the bounds of its possibilities are constrained by the same law that guides the brick-and-mortar institution for which it is a counterpart. As Jaeger (2002) notes,

The Federal E-government must be conceived and implemented in adherence with the constitutional principles that guide the Federal government. A tremendous number of laws, at all levels of government, could have an impact on the design of Federal electronic government policies and on the implementation of those policies. (pp. 357-358)

Authors have cited legal challenges that revolutionary implementation strategies at their most extreme may face, in both efficiency- and democracy-oriented contexts. In short, hopes for widespread government reorganization may be frustrated by the Constitutional doctrines of Federalism and the Separation of Powers, while pure, direct democracy stands in opposition to the well-established American tradition of what we may term

Madisonian Democracy. Troublingly, it has been noted that “discussions about E-government usually do not even acknowledge that laws should be considered in the creation of E-government policies,” and such foundational American E-Government legislation as the E-Government Act “does nothing to address these Constitutional issues” (Jaeger, 2002, pp. 357-8, 365).

As has been shown, visions of government reorganization often focus on breaking down the strict lines of jurisdictional demarcation to mirror the fluid nature of the Internet. West (2005) notes,

Unlike traditional bricks-and-mortar agencies that are hierarchical, linear, and one-way in their communications style, digital delivery systems are non-hierarchical, nonlinear, interactive, and available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week...The fundamental nature of these advantages has led some to predict the Internet will transform government. (pp. 3-4)

Arguably, such jurisdictional boundaries, however, are neither arbitrary nor a mere expedience necessitated by a now-outmoded form of government administration. Rather they follow from philosophical attitudes enshrined in the Constitution that mean to limit the potential threats to freedom posed by an overly centralized form of government. Such threats are diluted through a *horizontal* distribution of responsibility among independent branches of government (the “Separation of Powers”), and a *vertical* distribution among independent tiers of state and Federal power (Federalism).

Seifert (2002) of the Congressional Research Service notes that “the advent of E-government has the potential to effect significantly the power relationship between the national and state governments,” pointing out that USA.gov features links to state websites and services that are provided through “some form of national, state, and/or local cooperation.” He concludes that, “these same efforts to improve the delivery of

government services could also diffuse political responsibility and credit, making it less clear from where the funding and direction are originating” (pp. 2-3). Jaeger (2002) also argues that, though an erosion of jurisdictional boundaries may be a boon to constituent experience online,

This would present the information in a way that ignores the intentional divisions in the government structure. Similar problems could arise with the records of usage and of individuals maintained by such a website. Considerable imbalances of power within the government could occur if those controlling the government website had unequal access to or control of the information. (p. 360)

In short, organizing government and its digital counterpart along incompatible lines could eventually cause severe policy and jurisdictional conflicts, as well as public confusion as to the true distribution of government power.

Similarly, authors have pointed out that the Constitutional form of representative democracy envisioned by James Madison also remains relevant in the Internet age, despite the hopes of some for a more direct model. Applbaum (2002) notes that Madisonian democracy is based on “enduring facts about human nature”—passion, bias, faction—that the Internet, and our possibly more egalitarian and educated age, has arguably done nothing to change (Nye, 2002, p. 26). As Madison himself wrote in the *Federalist* #55, “Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates; Every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob.”

As previously noted, some proponents of E-democracy feel that the social networking possibilities of the Internet can overcome the great geographical dispersion of interests that has stood in the way of direct democracy. By making solid blocs out of a previously diffuse group of lone voices, various interests can have a more organized and powerful role in reasoned online deliberation and direct political action. Conversely,

other research has shown that “for all of the potential to bring people together over great distances and to bridge differences, the Internet does not always foster inclusion of diverse perspectives,” and may encourage undesirable levels of “group polarization” (Jaeger, 2005, pp. 705-6). As such, there may yet be value in what Appelbaum terms Madison’s “institutional prescription” to dilute the power of majority rule:

Representation, separation of powers, and an extended republic of sufficient size will diminish the chances that any one faction will gain a majority or be able to act in unison. In short, the great evil is tyranny, the cause is faction, and the solution is an institutional design that deters the formation of majority factions by making ambition counteract ambition and mediates passion through representation. (Nye, 2002, p. 26)

In sum, we would do well to remember that 1) the revolutionary possibilities of E-government may neither be an inevitable—nor even necessarily desirable—outcome of E-government, and that 2) the present American conception of government organization and democracy is, at least in part, a result of deliberately instituted political values that have not, by definition, been rendered moot by the Internet. As such, discussion of revolutionary approaches to E-government, and models that assess E-government progress must, at minimum, begin to take these Constitutional considerations into account.

This overview of implementation and scholarship thus shows us that four distinct conceptual trends in E-government can be isolated: *efficient*, *democratic*, *evolutionary*, and *revolutionary*. Efficiency-oriented E-government began within internal government efforts at reform, motivated by a desire to reduce profits and increase legitimacy among customers. Alternately, democracy-oriented E-government has been discussed largely outside government, as scholars propose a wider and more legitimate scope in regards to the full possibilities of E-government, seeing possibilities for an increased role in



political decision-making standing alongside needed efficiency gains. Further, a revolutionary orientation to E-government, however desirable, must be balanced against the wisdom of long-established American political standards. These standards should be taken into account when measuring the revolutionary progress of E-government. The rest of this study will focus on determining the degree to which these various orientations can be said to exist in state E-government policy, and recommending ways to proceed with future assessment.

### **Chapter 3: A Framework to Assess Policy Orientation and Model Future Progress**

#### ***Potential Policy Orientations***

This study tests this author’s claim that state E-government policy can be said to exhibit either an *evolutionary* or *revolutionary* attitude towards affecting desired changes in *efficiency*, *democracy*, or both. The validity of the claim will be assessed by attempting to determine state policy orientations through a content-based analysis of strategic plans, looking for terms and concepts that I argue to be indicative of efficiency, democracy, and revolutionary orientations. Put another way, this study means to assess if this proposed framework can be said to accurately and systematically describe the holistic policy orientation of state E-government. The potential orientations are visually represented below:

**TABLE 1: Potential Policy Orientations in E-government**

	Evolutionary	Revolutionary
Efficiency	<i>“New Public Management”</i>	<i>“Virtual Agencies”/ Executive Branch Reorganization</i>
Democracy	<i>Enhanced Citizen Oversight</i>	<i>Direct Democracy</i>

In sum, efficiency and democracy refer to the intended functions of E-government. For the purposes of this study, the primary purposes of E-government covered by these trends are defined as:

1. improving government service delivery for the sake of bureaucratic efficiency, cost-savings and customer convenience, and/or

2. enhancing and better facilitating democratic participation by citizens in the political process.

Efficiency approaches can emphasize either the *evolutionary* nature of bureaucratic development, as E-government increases the efficiency of the status quo, or a revolutionary approach to government reorganization, as brick-and-mortar institutions are eventually reconfigured to mirror the cross-agency, topical arrangement of information and service delivery enabled by the Internet. Similarly, a democratic orientation can also exhibit either an evolutionary or revolutionary bias, depending on the degree to which E-government is meant to either enhance citizen oversight in a representative democracy, or to bring about a new phase of mass direct democracy.

After determining the holistic policy orientation of state E-government policy, it will be important for future research to continue identifying best practices and measuring progress in the actual implementation of E-government and E-democracy. Particularly because, as I will show, there is much less of a holistic policy orientation in terms of democracy than efficiency, and because I could locate no model that focused solely on the measurement of E-democracy, this study proposes such a model to begin assessment of that democracy-oriented implementation that does exist. An analysis of existing models, using the orientational perspective this study has outlined, with reference to relevant Constitutional considerations, has been undertaken to show their limitations for the assessment of E-democracy.

### ***A Critique of Existing E-government Development Models***

Since at least the initial years of the present decade, scholars have developed various multi-stage models through which the progress of an E-government program can

be gauged. These proposed models are useful for two reasons. First, they create a standardized framework within which a given E-government program can be placed for the purposes of analysis, benchmarking, and performance evaluation. An author of one such model noted, “The stages are a method for quantifying progress. They are representative of the government’s level of development based primarily on the content and deliverable services available through official websites” (Ronaghan, 2002, p. 11). Such models can outline where an E-government program came from, is now, and is potentially headed toward. Governments can use such models to think systematically about implementation and development based on defined benchmarks, while scholars can use such models to chart the relative progress and ideological purpose of different sites and programs. Second, these models, outlining as they do an idealized final stage of e-government development, implicitly advance theories about the desired functions and essential nature of E-government.

These models generally outline a government’s progression from developing a mere web presence, to leveraging IT to streamline existing processes and structures—creating a virtual surrogate for traditional brick-and-mortar institutions, then finally reaching some sort of paradigmatic shift with which IT is inextricably linked. As such, they can be said to presuppose a revolutionary outlook. Depending on the author, various intermediary stages are added, and the extent of proposed transformation accomplished by the final stage varies widely as well. Three models in particular— Ronaghan (2002), Layne & Lee (2001), and West (2005)—are particularly illustrative of these similarities and differences. I propose that these models can further be summarized as progressing

through stages that are 1) information-focused, 2) services-focused, and 3) transformative. A visual summary of this analysis is presented below.

**TABLE 2: Three Proposed Models of E-Government development**

<u>Ronaghan (2002)</u>	<u>Layne and Lee (2001)</u>	<u>West (2005)</u>
<i>Information Based</i>	<i>Information Based</i>	<i>Information Based</i>
1. Emerging Presence	1. Catalogue	1. Billboards
2. Enhanced Presence		
	<i>Services Based</i>	<i>Services Based</i>
<i>Services Based</i>	2. Transaction	2. Partial Service Delivery
3. Interactive Presence		
4. Transactional Presence	<i>Transformative</i>	<i>Transformative</i>
	3. Vertical Integration	3. Portal Stage
<i>Transformative</i>	4. Horizontal Integration	4. Interactive Democracy
5. Seamless/ Fully Integrated		

### ***Ronaghan Model***

The Ronaghan model, outlined in a 2002 UN report assessing global E-government progress among UN member states, is possibly the most straightforward. This is a five-stage model, focused on the level of sophistication of an E-government program’s online information and service delivery. Stages one and two (“Emerging” and “Enhanced”) are information-focused, as the initial government webpage expands into a hyperlinked, frequently updated, multi-page source of both static and downloadable government “publications, legislation, and newsletters” (Ronaghan, 2002, p. 13). Stages three and four (“Interactive” and “Transactional”) are services-based, as downloadable and electronically submittable forms and applications take their place alongside purely informative documents. Eventually, these applications give way to “complete and secure transactions” for passports, visas, the paying of taxes, etc. Further, the mere contact

information for politicians and civil servants provided in stages one and two becomes a formal means of interactive communication, such as e-mail or comment posting (Ronaghan, 2002, p.14). Finally, we reach stage five (“Seamless/ Fully Integrated”), where all of these electronic information and service applications are offered in a single, 24/7 “unified package” or portal. Further, “Ministerial/ departmental/ agency lines of demarcation are removed in cyberspace. Services will be clustered along common needs” (Ronaghan, 2002, p. 14).

Ronaghan admits that the removal of such boundaries, “presupposes a reorganization of internal administrative” structures, and, while “sound strategic thinking” is nevertheless a “perfect world scenario” (Ronaghan, 2002, p. 20). He notes that entrenched organizational culture within a government can prove a great barrier to this step (though not, apparently, the Constitutional challenges outlined above). Finally, he assumes a hand-in-hand development of both efficiency-based (automated services) and democracy-based (legislation, comments posting) applications that prove an additional example of wishful thinking in the present environment. Given the efficiency emphasis in American E-government, such a hand-in-hand development has not proven a natural progression. Further, because of the different types of information and services needed within an efficiency- or democracy-oriented program, separate development models are needed to deal sufficiently with each context.

### ***Layne & Lee Model***

In contrast, Layne & Lee (2001) propose a model applicable specifically to countries with a “multi-layering of governments among federal, state and local agencies” such as the United States (p. 124). Less interested than Ronaghan in the specific content

of websites, Layne & Lee have proposed a four-stage model which instead measures technological and organizational integration and complexity. Stage one (“Catalogue”) and two (“Transaction”) account for the increase of technological complexity necessary when moving from the static online presentation of information to a transactional model of online service delivery. Stages three (“Vertical Integration”) and four (“Horizontal integration”) outline more specifically the organizational changes needed for the fully-integrated E-government spoken of by Ronaghan:

At this stage, the focus is now moving toward transformation of government services, rather than automating and digitizing existing processes...What *should and will be happening* are permanent changes in the government processes themselves and possibly the concept of government itself. (Layne & Lee, 2001, p. 131; emphasis added)

First, different levels of government jurisdiction would begin to work together to share information and provide a single point of contact and transaction for those functions shared vertically, such as law enforcement records. Later, full integration is achieved by a single, centralized point of contact for all government services, arranged topically by “horizontally integrating government services across different functional walls (or ‘silos’).”

This model—like Ronaghan’s—exhibits a revolutionary orientation, seeing drastic transformation as the desired end point of E-government implementation. Further, despite Ronaghan’s discussion of democracy-oriented information and services, both models essentially display an efficiency orientation as integrated, bureaucratic reform, rather than increased political participation, is posited as the key to final success. Finally, demonstrating that E-government scholarship does not take into sufficient account relevant Constitutional challenges, Layne & Lee’s stages merely imply

“fundamental changes in the form of government” rather than address their ultimate wisdom or validity under the law (Layne & Lee, 2001, p. 123).

### ***West Model***

The West model (2005) is the only one that considers both efficiency and democracy features, and does so as least somewhat separately. Further, while it also posits a desirable degree of revolutionary change without considering the potential Constitutional challenges, the desired degree of change varies between his account of efficiency and democracy contexts. Outlining a four-stage model first emphasizing informational government “billboards” and then initial efforts at interactivity and transactional services, the West model posits the most complete degree of transformation. First comes a portal stage with “online services, integrated across agencies.” West notes that,

The limiting factor of this stage, however, is that it is characterized more by a service-delivery mentality than by a vision of *transforming* democracy...This stage ignores the central virtue of the Internet: its ability to enhance the performance of democratic institutions and improve the functioning of democracy. (West, 2005, pp.10-11; emphasis added)

The final stage of the model accomplishes these democratic hopes, as E-government now boasts, “accountability enhancing features and technology for public feedback and deliberation.” Interestingly, however, this shows that West does not necessarily imply a full shift to direct democracy, focusing instead on improved accountability and citizen oversight. Overall then, the West model simultaneously displays an orientation consistent with both a revolutionary, efficiency-based—and an evolutionary, democracy-based—point of view. Though efficiency and democracy features are not by definition incompatible, models that display varied attitudes to the degree of desired change given



these separate contexts could ultimately lead to confused policy. Additionally, E-democracy is too complex and nuanced a concept to consider as a single, final stage. As such, the West model further demonstrates the need to consider and measure E-government and E-democracy separately.

***Implications for Future E-democracy Scholarship;  
A Proposed Model for Gauging E-democracy Progress***

Because of the unquestioned revolutionary bias and lack of sufficient democracy focus found in existing E-government models, the following recommendations and model framework is proposed for future research and further consideration:

1. Future models need to assess not just the possibility—or assume the inevitability— of a transformational E-government stage, but rather consider its ultimate value and desirability in balance with long-established, Constitutional standards. Such assessment needs to take into account more than sheer constituent convenience given expectations derived from the private-sector. Namely, efficiency-features should, at the least, be considered in tandem with issues of Federalism and the Separation of Powers. Democracy-features, by contrast, should be at minimum considered in tandem with the tenets of Madisonian Democracy.
2. Transformative stages must still remain a part of E-government models as, indeed they are still possibilities, however desirable and/or legal. However, they should not be presented as the desired end of implementation, unless accompanied by a justification in terms, at least, of the minimum standards discussed in recommendation #1.
3. E-government and E-democracy developmental stages need to be considered separately, due to varied citizen/ customer roles, differences in informational content and specific services offered, and separate legal/ Constitutional contexts.

As previously noted, the three E-government models analyzed above can be summarized into three main stages: 1) information-focused, 2) services-focused, and 3) transformational. This study suggests this as a basic outline for the beginnings of an independent E-democracy model, and means to test if E-democracy progress can be

independently accounted for in a manner similar, then, to efficiency-oriented E-government. Like Layne & Lee, stages one and two indicate the varying levels of technological complexity required when moving from the static posting of information to interactive services and communication options. Added to this is Ronaghan's emphasis on content, as a list of desired informational sources, transactional services, and lines (and methods) of communication is compiled and compared against the offerings of websites. Meeting the vision of the first two stages could be considered a maximization of the evolutionary status quo in terms of citizen participation and oversight in a representative democracy. Achieving stage three would indicate reaching the desired level of revolutionary change—in terms of moving towards a more direct democracy—that a model-maker would argue for, in light of, among other things, the supposed value of Madisonian estimations of democracy.

The usefulness of this model will be tested and discussed by applying it to the democracy-focused implementation of three states—Michigan, Kansas, and Nebraska—chosen due to the democracy orientation of these state's E-government strategic planning documents, as determined through a content-based analysis. After accounting for the analytical methodology used in this study, results of both the holistic policy assessment and the E-democracy model test will be outlined and discussed.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### ***Location and Selection of Strategic Planning Documents***

The data for the holistic analysis comes from E-government strategic planning documents for 37 of the 50 states (74%). Strategic planning has been defined as “a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why it does it” (Bryson, 2004, p. 6). Given this definition, and time constraints preventing the tracing of each state’s complete E-government paper trail, it was hypothesized that a state’s policy orientation could be surmised through an analysis of strategic discussion concerning what a state defines as E-government and why it chooses to implement it.

Because no comprehensive bibliography of such documents exists, a reliable method was needed that would not only locate these documents, but locate a sufficient number of them as to make up a significant sample. The eventual finding and use of 37 state E-government plans is consistent with a 2007 Congressional Research Service (CRS) survey of state E-government best practices. This CRS study also provided a list of common document and author-types of these plans, which became the foundation for a systematic online search strategy (see below, Seifert & McLaughlin, 2007, p. 18).

**TABLE 3: Document and Author-Types Used in Search Strategy**

<b><u>Document-Type Search Terms</u></b>	<b><u>Author-Type Websites Searched</u></b>
IT Strategic Plan	State Technology Council
Enterprise IT Plan	Office of the state CIO
E-government Strategic Plan	Office of the Governor
Statewide IT Policy/ Policies	State Information Technology Department
Information Management Plan	
IT Business Plan	

State by state, the list of document types were searched for in tandem with the state name (*Maryland IT Strategic Plan, Maryland Enterprise IT Plan, etc.*) using the Google search engine. “Information Technology” was searched for as well as “IT,” and E-government synonyms “electronic/ digital government” were also employed. This generally led to PDF document links from the authoring agency, office, or council. If this led only to an agency website instead, the site was browsed for any downloadable policy statements. When nothing turned up by this method, state names were then combined with the listed author-types in search of the websites of these offices or organizations, and these websites were then also browsed.

As noted above, this method netted E-government policy documents for 37 states. The CRS study notes that of the 37 states who responded to their survey, 34% update E-government strategic planning documents annually, 2% quarterly, and 31% on an “other” basis (Seifert & McLaughlin, 2007, p. 19). Accordingly, multiple documents for an individual state were often found, both in terms of successive editions of the same title, as well as of varying titles and formats. In choosing which of a state’s documents to include in the study, I used criteria of *currency, applicability, breadth, and authoritativeness*. These criteria were used as follows.

Whenever possible, the most recent plan that could be found online was chosen (currency). In the case, for instance, of Rhode Island, the only documents found were too old and vague to have relevance to a discussion of current E-government practices. As most statewide IT plans are not solely E-government focused, but have “E-government strategies and goals embedded in them,” (Seifert & McLaughlin, 2007, p. 5) prior plans were used if they spoke more directly to E-government goals than one propagated later

(applicability). Other aspects of applicability relate to documents that discussed only certain aspects of an E-government program (e.g. infrastructure security, state law enforcement database), or spoke in some other way to indicate state E-government implementation, but provided no policy data. An Illinois pamphlet was thus excluded, despite being the only document for that state found. Fully-outlined, departmentally-focused plans were favored over such shorter, public-facing documents as pamphlets and fact sheets (breadth), as well as documents authored by the agency, department or office most directly responsible for the implementation and development of the state’s program (authoritativeness). This process thus excluded some states from the study, not because documents did not exist, but because those that were found did not fit these criteria. Finally, the state of Connecticut was excluded because links to potentially relevant documents were broken. A full list of states excluded from this study is found below.

**TABLE 4: States not Included in Study**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>No Evidence of Strategic Planning Process Found Online</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alaska</li> <li>• Florida</li> <li>• Hawaii</li> <li>• New Jersey</li> <li>• South Dakota</li> <li>• West Virginia</li> <li>• Wyoming</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Documents Insufficient</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illinois</li> <li>• Rhode Island</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Documents Irretrievable</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecticut</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Web-Based Data Only</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maine</li> <li>• Ohio</li> <li>• Oklahoma</li> </ul>
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A final selection preference was for formal, freestanding, published documents, rather than mission statements or other policy declarations made on a state’s website.

The assumption here is that a comprehensive, updated, formal strategic plan distributed to agency employees and stakeholders is evidence of a more fully considered and realized program, able to provide more useful answers to the questions this study poses. The CRS reports a wide variety of state attitudes toward the overall usefulness of the strategic planning process, and one should keep in mind that states which do not create these documents may, nevertheless, have a sophisticated approach, and clearly formulated attitudes toward E-government behind the scenes. While many states put a “great deal of effort into their strategy documents,”

one Kentucky official said that it is not worth the time and effort required to write and maintain “glossy” strategy documents when considering the quickness of new program innovation and implementation in real time (Seifert & McLaughlin, 2007, 19).

It should be noted that Kentucky, nevertheless, does it anyway, and is one of the 37 states included in this study.

### ***Value of Strategic Planning Documents***

Kentucky’s comments, however, do beg the questions of how much these reports should be valued and the degree to which they mirror the true state of E-government thinking. Might it have been more useful to analyze the content of state E-government websites themselves for evidence of policy orientation? While content-based analysis is certainly useful for gauging important matters like accessibility, readability, or usability, cataloging *what* is on—or not on—an E-government website fails to answer the more fundamental question of *why* it is or is not there. A strategically planned E-government program can meet many real-world limitations such as manpower, funding, technological know-how, agency resistance, and bureaucratic red tape (though the successful plan no

doubt does much to foresee and account for such obstacles). While it is very easy to make grand plans or express great hopes at the drawing table, the process of implementation is fraught with much greater complexity. It is for this reason, however, that strategic plans are of great value to the policy researcher, as they can express a best-case scenario for what a given program is meant to achieve. Just because a certain state portal fails to offer any features supporting E-democracy, we should not necessarily assume the state has failed to consider the possibility.

Further, the CRS cites research that “defined processes, strategies, and performance measures...are necessary to achieve E-government goals” (Seifert & McLaughlin, 2007, p. 5). Strategic plans can indicate complex thinking, foresight, and deeper understanding of a given issue, all leading to a greater potential for success in implementation, however measured. Additional evidence for this can be gleaned from the data of two oft-updated efforts to rank state E-government programs—Darrell West’s *State and Federal E-government in the United States*, published annually by Brown University since 2001 (most recently in 2007), and the Center for Digital Government’s *Digital States Survey*, published bi-annually since 2000 (most recently in 2006). At least in terms of the rather wide range of criteria they measure, these studies can be used to demonstrate a strong correlation between the existence of formal planning documents and successful, realized state E-government programs. The 2006 Digital States Survey ranked the top 25 states in terms of “improved service delivery, increased capacity, and lower costs” (Center for Digital Government, 2006, Pg. 4). Only three of the 13 states excluded from this study—3<sup>rd</sup> place Ohio, 7<sup>th</sup> place South Dakota, and 19<sup>th</sup> place Illinois—appear in this top 25.

The most recent West study, concerned with online content, services offered, privacy and security, readability, accessibility, presence of ads and fees, and public outreach listed just six of these states—3<sup>rd</sup> place Maine, 9<sup>th</sup> place New Jersey, 14<sup>th</sup> place Oklahoma, 19<sup>th</sup> place Connecticut, 23<sup>rd</sup> place Ohio, and 25<sup>th</sup> place South Carolina—in its top 25. Additionally, none of the remaining seven states excluded from this study placed higher than 29<sup>th</sup> on West’s comprehensive ranking of all 50 states, while West Virginia and Wyoming, respectively, come in 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> (West, 2006, p. 12). Whatever the attitude of the states toward the strategic planning process, such plans are a strong indicator of success. Finally, they demonstrate engaged consideration of the sort that allows us a window into state E-government policy thinking.

### ***Content Analysis of State Plans***

As most state E-government programs are managed by that state’s IT department, whose duties extend far beyond that of just E-government, these documents often address E-government as only one of a number of ongoing goals or externally mandated responsibilities, and the department’s E-government policy orientation is not often explicitly stated. Mission and/ or vision statements, to the degree that they are present, focus on the organization’s role as a government-wide IT service provider and, as California’s strategic plan puts it, “delivering consistent, cost-effective, reliable, accessible and secure services that satisfy the needs of its diverse customers” (p. 2). While all 37 reports indicate that such services include those of the transactional, G2C-type, states do not often make a clear distinction between “E-government” and the rest of their day-to-day responsibilities. Only five of the 37 plans reviewed (13.5%) focus solely



on E-government,<sup>3</sup> while the term “E-government” (and “electronic/ digital government”) was entirely absent from eight of them.<sup>4</sup> Rather, language denoting an implicit orientation in efforts that can be construed as E-government is often woven throughout the document.

A systematic determination of policy analysis, thus, demanded a content-based analysis using a set of objectively verified terms deemed sufficiently indicative of the policy orientations this study sought to measure. Consistent with content analytic methods outlined in Kinicki, et al. (1986) these terms were derived both from the literature review of this study and engagement with the strategic plans themselves. An initial set of terms, postulated pre-analysis, was added to as other terms were found that, in context, were deemed to indicate equivalent meaning. A “closed” card-sort of the variety outlined at Usability.gov ([www.usability.gov/design/cardsort.html](http://www.usability.gov/design/cardsort.html)) was performed post-hoc by six test subjects to assess the objective validity of these terms. Subjects were asked to sort two piles of terms separately into categories labeled “efficiency” and “democracy.” The first pile represented terms used to assess efficiency and democracy policy orientations. The second pile represented terms used to assess the existence of a revolutionary approach within an efficiency or democracy context. An evolutionary approach was not coded for, under the assumption that discussion of the use of IT to enhance efficiency or democracy at all within a strategic plan (unless explicitly directed towards *decreases* in efficiency or political participation) is evidence of at least an evolutionary change in a state’s approach to efficiency or democracy.

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<sup>3</sup> Alabama, Delaware, Nebraska, Tennessee & Utah

<sup>4</sup> Arkansas, Indiana, Michigan, New York, Nevada, North Carolina, Washington & Wisconsin

A full list of coded terms is found in table 5 below, with those terms added during analysis designated by italics. Next to each term is the number of times, out of six sorters, a term was placed into the desired category during the post-hoc closed card sort. Grammatical derivations of terms and plural forms (e.g. Efficiency/ Efficient/ Efficiently; Citizen/ Citizens) were not tested separately during the card sort. The initial list of terms drawn up pre-analysis used noun and singular forms only. Grammatical derivations and plurals were coded when come across, and listed here. Additionally, it should be noted that while content analytic procedures generally include the coding of texts by multiple independent parties to determine a measure of inter-rater reliability, this step was not undertaken. The exploratory and evolutionary nature of the data collection precluded ease of initial replicability. Further, the potential analytic impact of mis-coding in studies like this which assess “both/ and” classifications (as plans could be deemed both efficiency and democracy focused) is less than in strictly “either/or” based studies.

**TABLE 5: Terms Used to Code for Policy Orientation**

<b><u>Efficiency</u></b>	<b><u>Democracy</u></b>	<b><u>Revolutionary</u></b>
<i>Terms Characterizing the Enterprise</i> Efficiency/ Efficient/ Efficiently (6/6) Cost-Efficiency/Efficient (6/6)	<i>Terms Characterizing the Enterprise</i> Democracy/ Democratic (6/6)	<i>Efficiency Context</i> Web Portal(s) (6/6)
<i>Effectiveness/ Effective/ Effectively (6/6)</i> <i>Cost-Effectiveness/ Effective/ Effectively (6/6)</i>	<i>eDemocracy (6/6)</i> <i>Digital Democracy (6/6)</i>	Agency Collaboration (6/6) Agency Cooperation (6/6)
<i>Terms Characterizing Users</i> Customer(s) (5/6)  <i>Customer-Service (6/6)</i> <i>Customer-Satisfaction (6/6)</i>	<i>Terms Characterizing Users</i> Citizen(s) (5/6)	
<i>Terms Characterizing Benefits for Users</i> Convenience/ Convenient/ Conveniently (6/6)  <i>24x7x365 Access (5/6)</i>	<i>Terms Characterizing Benefits for Users</i> Participation (5/6)  <i>Engagement/ Engage (5/6)</i>	<i>Democracy Context</i> Direct Democracy (5/6)  Increased Role in Decision Making (6/6)

Santos (2006) notes different proposed margins for error when considering terms valid for content analysis after a card sort, ranging from 50% to a “substantial portion” of times correctly sorted (p. 296). Smith (2000) proposes a more rigorous threshold of 85%. All terms in this study received a perfect score except “customer,” “24x7x365 access” “citizen,” “participation,” “engagement,” and “direct democracy,” each scoring 5/6, or 83%. Given the small test group (six subjects), and disagreement in the literature on an acceptable threshold, all terms were considered objectively verified despite falling just below the high standard advocated by Smith.

The initial terms postulated at the outset were suggested by the literature review of this study. As mentioned, other terms indicative of the same meaning were accepted as equivalents. For both the efficiency and democracy foci, terms were chosen that would indicate the overall nature of the E-government enterprise, describe the intended users, and indicate the intended benefits for users. Concepts the literature shows to be indicative of a revolutionary approach to both efficiency and democracy were coded for as well. A brief justification of this language follows.

In the words of Al Gore and the NPR, the end goal of an efficiency approach, as defined by this study, is a government that “works better and costs less” (Gore, 1994). Thus language designating the “efficient” and/ or “cost-efficient” nature of E-government was postulated to be indicative of an efficiency-based enterprise. “Effective/ cost-effective” proved also to be commonly used terms describing the same notion. Conversely, plans were coded for the use of “democracy” as a key indicator of that possible orientation. “Democratic,” “eDemocracy,” and “digital democracy” were found in plans as well.

Inherent tensions in the word choice between “customer” and “citizen” have been explored in the literature. As government use of “customer” is a recent phenomenon coinciding with New Public Management and efficiency-oriented E-government, might then “citizen” be more indicative of a democracy-context? Is “customer” used to the exclusion of “citizen (or vice-versa)? Were both used, and if so, were they used interchangeably, or in such a way to note the difference in meaning? Although mixed results were seen in the card sort for the clear contexts these words might indicate, Constituent-facing E-government is meant ultimately *for* public users, and different state conceptions of who the public is, and what they might desire from C2G E-government is useful to tease out. The terms “customer service” and “customer satisfaction” appeared as well in plans that didn’t explicitly refer to users as “customers” but expressed the importance of a customer focus in E-government.

I thus also tried to isolate language that captured the planners’ sense of why users would want to use E-government services. What constituent needs are these departments attempting to meet? If legitimacy is a root goal of E-government, what E-government offerings do states see as crucial to its accomplishment? On the efficiency side, E-government has been conceived of as a tool of “convenience,” and this term was thus coded for. Many plans discussed convenience specifically in terms of perpetual online availability of desired information and services. As noted by Evans and Yen (2006), “Given that citizens throughout the world have come to expect twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week availability in their commercial interactions, it is only natural that they would expect the same from their government” (pp. 207-208). As such, I felt that language denoting “24x7x365 Access” should be considered equivalent to “convenient.”

On the democracy side, E-government has been defined as a potential boon to political participation. I thus looked for “participation” language, finding the use of “engagement” as well.

Consistent with previous sections of this paper, I deemed the orientation of a plan to be revolutionary-efficiency based if it discussed elements of government reorganization in at least the online environment, i.e. “agency collaboration/ cooperation” and “portal” development. Similarly, the orientation was deemed revolutionary-democracy based if the discussed purpose of E-government was to engender a more direct form of democracy. Is thus the sort of “democracy” discussed within a plan “direct,” or does it provide an “increased role in decision making” to constituents? Again, if no evidence of desired change along these lines could be determined the orientation was deemed evolutionary.

## **Chapter 5: State Policy Assessment**

In terms of the orientations and language outlined in this study, analysis shows that state E-government policy is heavily oriented toward an *efficiency* orientation that tends towards *revolutionary* features. *Democracy* orientation is decidedly less prevalent, with appropriate language appearing in only 8 of 37 state plans (22%) and indicating an *evolutionary* approach. Democracy language never appeared in a plan that did not also express an efficiency focus. Efficiency results will be presented first, followed by those of democracy. Evolutionary and revolutionary orientations will be discussed within each context individually. Page citations refer to the strategic plan of the state being discussed, unless otherwise indicated. Bibliographic and online access data for state plans is found in Appendix A.

### ***Analysis of State Efficiency Orientation***

All 37 state plans use “efficiency/ effectiveness” language to characterize their E-government enterprise. 36 use the word “efficiency” and its grammatical derivatives, while Delaware uses only “effectiveness.” Language denoting “cost-efficiency” is less prevalent, appearing in 23/37 plans (62%). In these 23 plans, “cost-effectiveness” and its grammatical derivatives are used more often, used in 14 plans, as opposed to the 9 states using “cost-efficient.”

Other language I have identified as efficiency oriented is used prevalently as well. Users of state E-government are referred to as “customer” in 31/37 plans (84%). Of the six states that do not use this designation, three still mention “customer service,” and one discusses “customer satisfaction.” 28/37 reports (76%) discuss the need for

E-government implementation in terms of constituent “convenience.” Of these 28 reports, six use the “24x7x365 access” designation to the exclusion of “convenience,” but a total of 19 out of these 28 plans (68%) discuss persistent access in these terms.

With these results in mind, here is sampling of state language:

- The state of Arizona’s “IT Vision” includes the dictum that IT allows “agencies with limited time, money, and personnel to deliver services more efficiently and more effectively” (p .5).
- The vision statement of Iowa’s Department of Administrative Services is “To be a world-class organization that is customer-focused, innovative and efficient” (p. 5). They also note that the top three goals of legislation that defined the current mission of the department were to “Improve service to customers,” “Save Money,” and “Streamline” (p. 3).
- Explicit strategic goals of Nevada include an increase in customer service and to be “effective and efficient” (p. 6)
- An “objective” of South Carolina is to “Obtain efficiencies through expanded use of common infrastructure and IT applications across South Carolina State government” (p. 12).
- Tennessee promotes E-government because, “Providing state government services online increases customer satisfaction and improves government efficiency” (p. 2)
- A “guiding principle” of Kentucky IT is that it will be “efficiently managed to reduce costs and eliminate duplication, and will be continually simplified and modernized” (p. 6).
- The simply stated vision of Nebraska’s *E-government Strategic Plan* is, “The State of Nebraska will be open for business from any place and at any time through the use of e-government. “ (p. 2)

“Efficiency,” therefore, is seen as beneficial to government and constituents alike and is a dominant impetus for E-government implementation. From these statements, further, we can see the interwoven nature of an efficiency-orientation both with use by “customers,” and with private-sector derived expectations of “convenience.”

States seem virtually unanimous in the determination that, as expressed by Louisiana CIO Rizwan Ahmed, “In this technology era, all organizations, including state government will be judged by their ability to serve the needs of their customers” (p. 14). Indeed, the state of California aims to create a “customer-focused government” (p. 23). In Georgia state government, “Customer service has become a significant theme” (p. 3). Vermonters are called the “ultimate customers” (p. 9). Idaho means to sustain recent improvements in “customer satisfaction” (p. 10). Arkansas citizens are “the state’s most important customers” (p. 6). In Montana, citizens are “government customers” (p. 3). Finally, Utah touts its status as the, “first state to implement 24x7 customer support” (p. 4). In sum, a customer-service based efficiency-orientation can be seen as the state standard.

That said, where can this efficiency standard be located within evolutionary/revolutionary hopes? An easy answer to this question can be had by noting the mere fact that all 50 states currently boast an Internet portal linking to various degrees of cross-agency and cross-governmental information and services. The fact that only 29 of the 37 plans analyzed (78%) mention the state portal may help to explain the wide variance in usability, design, and overall quality of these portals, as some states simply do not apparently put much emphasis on their planning. However, it may also indicate that the implementation of a cross-functional portal is considered so obvious and commonplace that there is little need to mention its centrality to E-government. Of those plans that do include portal management and implementation in their strategic planning, none question potential legal issues such as those this study has previously discussed. The dominant attitude, as expressed by Arkansas, is that government services are now simply,



“expected to be delivered at the convenience of the user without respect to internal government structures, organizations, or jurisdictions” (p. 4). As such, the revolutionary approach, however potentially benign, has clearly taken hold in American E-government policy.

This estimation is further strengthened by the fact that 29 of 37 states (78%) also discuss the need for inter-/ intra-governmental collaboration/ cooperation. Many states—for instance Minnesota—note how “multi-agency cooperation and collaboration” along *horizontal* lines can lead to “a significant increase in perception of government efficiency” (p. 161). Hopes for *vertical* integration can also be found. Oregon hopes their approach to “geospatial data development, sharing, and stewardship will establish a new model for cross-jurisdictional collaboration, resulting in higher efficiency and greater effectiveness in delivering public services” (p. 23). Meanwhile, the state of Washington similarly looks to integrate certain state activities “with federal and local interests through enhanced collaboration and initiatives that cross jurisdictions” (p.11). While “collaboration” and “cooperation” are commonly used, a full list of the many phrases which I deemed to indicate “inter-/intra-governmental” is provided in Appendix B.

### ***Analysis of State Democracy Orientation***

In contrast, analysis shows, overall, that state strategic planning in the area of democracy is minimal. Further, the presence in plans of key democracy-oriented language as defined by this study proves somewhat misleading. In more plans even than the word “customer,” “citizen” and its derivatives appear throughout. All states but

one—New Mexico, which declines also to use “customer” in favor of “constituent”—refer to E-government users as “citizens.” Vermont’s citizens are “the sole reason State government uses technology” (p. 5). In Minnesota, where E-government is an integral part of the state’s “Drive to Excellence” reform initiative, all effort is directed at improvements which “put the citizen first” (p. 2). However, citizen benefits derived from E-government, as well as the assumed desired uses by citizens of E-government, are rarely conceptualized around those democratic activities which may differentiate a “citizen” from a “customer.” In other words, it is by and large unclear why a state uses “citizen” rather than “customer” and further unclear the degree to which—if at all—states consider the different contexts these terms imply. What is clear, however, is the predominance of the efficiency context in the final planning products these agencies produce.

The fact that only 8 plans (21 %) use the other categories of democracy-oriented language looked for in this study makes clear the policy gap in American E-government. Only seven states Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and Utah use a form of the word democracy (“democracy,” “democratic,” “eDemocracy,” “Digital Democracy”). Of these Michigan, Nebraska, and Kansas speak specifically of political “participation” (with Kansas using “engagement”). One other state—South Carolina—speaks of political “participation,” but not of “democracy.” Also, like “citizen,” “participation” and “engagement” proved problematic indicators of a specifically democratic context. While a total of 24 plans mentioned “participation/engagement” only four meant it in a political sense. However, because of the uncommon use of “democracy” and the sparse discussion of specifically *political* participation/

engagement, these results are still sufficiently clear in indicating a wide gap between efficiency and democracy in state policy.

It should be noted that other states use language that may constitute a democracy focus, though it ultimately does not prove useful for this analysis. For instance:

- “Massachusetts’ recent e-government initiative – *Mass.Gov* – has been tremendously successful in bringing the interaction between citizens and government much closer together.” (p. 175)
- Oregon IT investment “enables the citizens of Oregon to use their state government to shape their own future.” (p. 4)
- Central to the mission statement of Kentucky IT is to “improve decision making.” (p. 5)

These statements prove vague. For instance, “interaction” with government does not necessarily denote “participation” in democracy. Also, we are not told whose “decision making” IT is meant to improve. These statements, further, give no indication that such goals are to be met in way consistent with democratic political participation. While health information obtained efficiently from a government website may lead to decisions that “shape one’s future,” this is not an explicitly political choice.

The language of “democracy” and “participation” from the 8 states listed above, rather, attests to the more specifically democratic goals these states hope to accomplish through their strategic planning. For example:

- Kansas notes that “Citizens are the owners of their government. Digital government can be used to tailor that ownership to the people.” This can be accomplished through “A rising-tide of online service offerings, including digital democracy.” (p. 18)
- Michigan notes that E-government is a means, not only of efficient government, but to “include all of our citizens in our democratic processes.” (p. 4)

- Nebraska defines E-government as “the use of technology to enhance information sharing, service delivery, *constituency and client participation*, and governance by transforming internal and external relationships.” (p. 1, emphasis added)
- New Mexico includes E-democracy among its “strategic objectives,” in order to “Improve the voting process (e.g., electronic voter registration, voting, and vote counting) and enable expanded participation in government (e.g., Virtual Town Halls).” (p. 7)
- North Carolina’s *Statewide IT Plan* “presents an action-driven and results-oriented approach for aligning IT with government priorities” that include a desire to “further the democratic process.” (p. 9)
- South Carolina’s strategic IT vision is “to be a recognized leader in the use of technology to deliver cost effective services desired by citizens, businesses and government organizations, while maximizing constituent participation in the government process.” (p. 2)
- Texas addresses some of the previously mentioned cross-jurisdictional issues in E-government, noting “Although open government is a cornerstone of democracy, confidential information must be protected when sharing data among cross-jurisdictional programs and when fulfilling public information requests.” (p. 62)
- Utah hopes that “By using the best practices, technologies, and strategies, we will deepen democracy and ensure representation and citizen engagement in the information age.” (p. 6)

Through these statements we see a generally vague—though, under the circumstances, encouraging—desire to implement features of E-democracy to enhance citizen engagement and the democratic process. Also, we see at least some recognition (Kansas, Texas) of citizen ownership of government and of open government standards that should be considered in all state E-government implementation.

Assessment of an evolutionary/ revolutionary approach to democracy in these plans in a democracy context proved difficult. While none of the uses of “democracy” in these plans was modified by “direct,” the degree of citizen “role in decision making” was never fully specified. While six of these democracy-oriented states discussed “decision-making” or “decision-makers” this language always referred to internal practices.

Additionally, the above quoted language from state plans is vague in meaning. “Including citizens” in democracy, “furthering” or “deepening” the democratic process, and “enhancing”/ “expanding”/ “maximizing” political participation, could mean anything from e-mailing a member of the state assembly to replacing that whole assembly with a direct vote. However, given the lack of any explicit proposals for a profound shift in state democracy practice, it is reasonable to assess overall state democracy orientation as evolutionary in nature.

### ***Discussion***

The preceding analysis thus bears out the validity of this author’s claim that state E-government policy can be said to exhibit either an *evolutionary* or *revolutionary* attitude towards affecting desired changes in *efficiency*, *democracy*, or both. None of the policies assessed could be said to exhibit none of these orientations, and though the language chosen to code for democracy proved less than solidly indicative of that context, a clear holistic prevalence in favor of an efficiency-based focus can nevertheless be determined. The orientational framework proposed by this paper, thus seems a useful way to categorize policies and assess holistic trends in a systematic, comparative manner. Alongside a categorical assessment of state attitudes towards the purpose and nature of E-government, this analysis provides data in support of other important holistic trends as well. Despite questions about the Constitutional wisdom of government reorganization, we can determine that nearly three-quarters of states (74%) are pursuing a cross-agency/ jurisdictional approach to E-government and service delivery. Further, the persistent and equivocal usage of “citizen” and “customer” in these plans indicates that states may be

unaware—or ultimately unconcerned—about different possible contexts, despite questions in the literature about the full legitimacy of a solely efficiency-oriented E-government.

Because the current models for E-government development all focus on efficiency, or at least do not consider E-democracy a goal until later stages, we may, however, surmise that states just have not gotten to this point. This study focused on the most recent policies available, but a look back through past versions would provide a sense of where states are along the implementation path. Analysis such as this study has undertaken considers policies as more or less equal, but possibly the eight states that have begun to discuss democracy are simply further along. Also, 16 of the 37 reports looked at are at least three years old, indicating that they may not be the most accurate expression of current policy thinking. In the end, comparison of expressed policy ideals with actual implementation may provide a truer picture than either one could separately. Nevertheless, the wide gap between efficiency and democracy foci in these reports provides a sense of the relative consideration of these contexts at the state level.

Until states begin to express more specific hopes for E-democracy—the level of increased participation desired and the means to allow for this—state policy orientation will be hard to determine. While strategic plans help to assess state thinking concerning the purpose of E-government, its nature, and its uses and users, they do not necessarily tell us *why* ultimately it ought to be implemented. Some reports simply note the specific laws or executive orders that mandate the organization's implementation and oversight of E-government and leave it there. For this reason, state legislative and/or executive documents could prove a rich source for further research. Indeed, the job of these

departments is not really to debate the deepest questions of “why,” but simply to carry out their mandate.

For this reason, efficiency may also be an easier route to take, or a more immediately obvious one for IT departments to focus on. Radical shifts in democratic practice are policy issues—and, as discussed, Constitutional issues—that state IT departments have no control or jurisdiction over. Automating services like tax payment or license applications is simply a more straightforward activity, with a more immediate reward, and more directly measurable results. Providing various lines of communication with government officials or increased avenues for accountability may run into resistance from officials not used to new communication technologies, or complex legal issues that regulate access to government information. Mastering the administrative and technological complexity required for online, transactional government services is difficult and costly enough without adding these additional considerations. Finally, of course, because this technology costs money—ultimately taxpayer money—IT departments are responsible to the bottom line, and while E-democracy may lead to a full measure of E-government legitimacy in the future, whatever allows for the most cost-effective management and implementation in these early stages of E-government will help to ensure that E-government has a future at all.

## **Chapter 6: Use and Discussion of Developmental E-democracy Model**

### ***Method***

In light of the demonstrated policy gap between efficiency and democracy in state policy, future research should focus on the democracy-oriented implementation that does exist in order to assess best practices and suggest ways to move forward. Further this should be done with a model that is uniquely focused on E-democracy, such as this study has proposed. To reiterate, this is a three-stage model, progressing through 1) a static information-focused stage, 2) a dynamic/interactive services-focused stage, and 3) a transformational stage. It is also content focused, in that it looks for a predetermined set of information and services determined by the author to be consistent with the type of E-democracy being measured. Usually, this would be couched in terms of the relative degree of representative versus direct democracy desired. Full accomplishment of stages one and two would indicate a maximization of the evolutionary status quo by the measurer's standards. A movement into stage three should be assessed and/or justified in light of established Constitutional standards.

Of those states that exhibit a democracy focus in their plans, this study will evaluate three—Michigan, Nebraska, and Kansas—because they possess the most sophisticated and accessible degree of implementation. By *sophisticated*, is meant a range of E-democracy specific information sources and services that have at least begun to exhibit some degree of dynamism, searchability, and interactivity. By *accessible*, is meant that an independent webpage (or pages), or portion of a page, was clearly labeled as a state government-hosted source of democracy-oriented information and services, and



was clearly accessible from the homepage of that state's central portal. Only Michigan, Nebraska, and, to a lesser degree of accessibility, Kansas met these criteria.

As an example, three facets of democratic participation are proposed here which could be enhanced by state E-democracy implementation: 1) easy access to primary sources of legislative, executive, and financial information; 2) direct communication with government officials, and 3) voter's registration information. In the static/ information stage, states would provide:

- links to recent laws and legislative history, executive decrees, and/ or agency expenditure reports,
- phone and e-mail contact information for state officials and,
- information on how to register to vote.

In the dynamic/ services stage, states would provide:

- searchable databases for bills and bill trackers divided by legislative session ,
- means of e-mailing state officials directly from the website at the minimum, and hopefully means of a more interactive contact (i.e. chat, etc.),
- voting registration forms, downloadable at the minimum, and hopefully submittable online.

With these criteria in mind, a closer look as the states will now follow.

### ***Michigan***

Michigan is an acknowledged leader in American E-government, ranking 2<sup>nd</sup> by the most recent standards of Darrell West's *State and Federal E-government in the United States* (West, 2007, p.12), and 1<sup>st</sup> on the Center for Digital Government's *Digital States Survey* (CDG, 2006, p. 4). The state strategic plan is unique in the explicitness and degree of expressed hopes for state E-democracy, urging an altogether new sort of "E-

citizenship” (p. 21). In short, the state desires to “include all of our citizens in our democratic processes” (p. 4) through the implementation of E-democracy, defined as “a virtual town hall for the exchange of citizen views” (p. 20). The expressed vision for the state’s technology future is:

A connected Michigan where access is just a click away, where services are streamlined and secure, and where citizens have an immediate voice in an open and energetic public square. (p. 9)

As such, I expected much sophistication in its interactive communication features—possibly chat rooms and/ or comment posting areas.

From the state’s portal (<http://www.michigan.gov>), a prominent link for “Michigan eCitizens” appears in the top right, and leads one to an independent page, noting that “eCitizen is about expanding participation in government, encouraging community involvement, promoting a strong democracy, and improving government accountability” ([http://www.michigan.gov/som/0,1607,7-192-29701\\_31713---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/som/0,1607,7-192-29701_31713---,00.html)).

That said, the opportunities for communication fall short of the plan’s E-citizen ideal. From the eCitizen page a prominent link to “Government Contacts” leads to indeed a comprehensive list of such, where e-mail addresses can be found, for instance, for all state legislators, and will open a default e-mail editor to send a message. Contact information for the Governor is limited to a phone number and physical address, and while a host of podcasts, RSS feeds, and weekly e-mail newsletters are available from the Governor’s website, utilizing many personalizable methods for information access, such technologies are not exactly interactive.

Despite this, the amount of information retrievable is impressive. The “Measure our Progress” link from eCitizen leads to a host of executive budgetary documents and

agency strategic plans—including one used in this study. The site demonstrates a state commitment to open government by offering links to state and federal Freedom of Information Act websites. Further, links from the eCitizen page will lead to searchable bill trackers and online voter's registration, suggesting dynamism and transactional interactivity. Overall, while communication options could be improved to meet the expressed level of functionality, the democracy features of the site are solidly in stage two and future improvements could prove a maximization of needed functions for citizen oversight in a representative democracy. Finally, it should be again noted that the state's expressed vision—if not yet matching the full reality of its implementation—is commendable given the narrow efficiency focus of most state governments. This, again, shows that policy documents are at least as important in assessing policy orientation as the analysis of state websites.

### ***Nebraska***

The *E-Government Strategic Plan for Nebraska State Government* is only one of five documents from this study that boasts a sole E-government focus, and has a decided slant toward information, rather than service, delivery, citing Pew studies that show user preference for such (pp. 5-6). This is consistent with a state definition of E-government that sees IT as a means for, among other things, enhanced “constituency and client participation” (p. 1). Though the state ranks lower than Michigan on the West and CDG rankings—18<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> respectively—the state portal (<http://www.nebraska.gov>) similarly features an explicit E-democracy area on its homepage (West, 2007, p.12; CDG, 2006, p. 4).

Overall, the Nebraska “Digital Democracy” homepage offerings are much like Michigan’s eCitizen features, although less comprehensive. A few RSS feeds are the extent of Web 2.0 implementation, no interactivity with officials is enabled—although e-mails to state elected officials, governor included, can be sent directly through an e-mail editor—and the extent of information offered is less. That said, links to a legislative bill tracker and campaign finance filings have been implemented. Voter’s registration information was not made immediately available, and the portal search feature had to be utilized to find it. Further, registration could not be accomplished online. Given that the state strategic plan did not lay out as comprehensive an E-democracy goal as did Michigan, a lesser degree of implementation was expected, and the state still goes farther than many. In sum, the state has some work to do before stage two is accomplished.

### ***Kansas***

Kansas was an early adopter of E-government, having launched their first web portal *AccessKansas* on January 1, 1996, four years before the arrival of the Federal portal USA.gov (Information Network of Kansas, 2001, p. 3). Such experience shows in what is one of the more attractive state portals, one that has seemed to solve the spatial organization problems that plague many of them, that approaches the smooth professional look of many private-sector websites, and that offers a great deal of customizability. Despite this, Kansas is the lowest ranked state by West and the CDG—36<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> respectively (West, 2007, p. 12; CDG, 2006, p. 4). Like Nebraska, the E-democracy features of the Kansas portal (<http://www.kansas.gov/government/>) are not as plentiful or comprehensive as those found on Michigan’s. Also Like Nebraska, Kansas does not go as far in its claims as Michigan.

The majority of the Kansas webpage is part of the customizable “MyKansas” initiative, and does not indicate a specific E-democracy section. However, arriving at the site as a non-signed in user, one sees the default MyKansas “tiles” and thus notices what the state wants to emphasize as main features. The Governor’s tile offers direct links to the “State of the State” address and contact information—including a direct e-mail option that does not require an e-mail editor. Similar tiles for other officials appear as well, including the state attorney general, to whom you can lodge a direct complaint online. A further tile for the current legislative session allows you to track a bill right from the homepage, and offers links to “current happenings,” including live audio feeds from legislative floor action.

A click on the “Government” tab across the top of the main homepage window leads you to a wide array of government links, a great number of which are grouped under the heading “Democracy.” These include access to websites of important state and Federal officials, campaign finance information, lobbyist expenditure reports, the secretary of state’s office (where you can download your voter registration forms). Though the amount of Executive branch, budgeting, and Freedom of Information links found on the Michigan site is much greater, the usability and arrangement of the Kansas material is far superior.

Overall, the two states share a reaching of stage two, having moved far past static information presentation and onto innovative, enhanced democracy-oriented services and features. Combining the content and presentation style of both sites will make a strong template for other states to follow in the future, while more thought is given to how exactly Michigan’s vision of E-citizenship, “strong democracy,” and collaborative, online

“public squares” can be implemented in a way that can maximize citizen participation in government, while preserving foundational political ideals.

### *Discussion*

Uniquely among the documents assessed by this study, the strategic plan of Kansas, notes the legitimacy-building aspects of E-democracy as “digital democracy will raise public support for digital government; therefore, Kansas must strive to offer a complete selection of services, not just high volume transactions” (p. 18). As shown, research has found that information access is a prime benefit of the Internet in the minds of many users, conflicting, it seems, with much of what has become the conceptual foundations of E-government. Concerned with public perceptions of inefficiency and waste, governments started implementing E-government to, among other things, increase legitimacy, but a truly legitimate E-government will need eventually to address all constituent roles, and meet a wider variety of needs than those accomplished in a sheer efficiency-oriented program.

While the legal and administrative contexts for democratically-oriented online information and services may potentially be more complex than those of an efficiency-context, their independent measurement can be accomplished in similar ways. This three stage model, derived from efficiency-based models, shows that an information-services-transformation progression, each with increased levels of administrative and technological complexity, can account for democracy implementation as well. Though the three states considered here do not indicate any trend towards revolutionary democratic practice, they show that the providing of certain kinds of information and

services—in much the same manner and with the same underlying technologies that drive efficiency oriented E-government—can meet a greater number of citizen needs.

Providing policy documents or allowing easier contact with certain officials may not be “high volume” transactions, but neither should they be particularly costly or difficult to provide for states that have reached a more sophisticated stage of development.

Admittedly, this paper has taken a rather simplistic, binary view of democracy, being either “representative” or “direct.” It is worth noting, as have Riley & Riley (2003),

Theories of democracy are as numerous as those thinkers who have written about it through the ages. So too the concept of the citizen and exactly who is to be included within the term has changed dramatically since articulated in ancient Athens. There are many conflicting interpretations of what constitutes a democracy, the meaning of political participation, representation, and scope of citizens’ capacity to choose freely. (p. 6)

As such, this model is not proposed to be final or definitive. Certainly, refinements and mediating stages should be added to reflect necessary considerations given various technological, administrative, and political contexts not addressed by this study. The model is meant, rather, to be a useful starting point for those with a greater expertise in the field of democratic theory, and to inspire contributions from the many disciplines E-democracy touches—Political Science, American History, Constitutional Law, Public Policy, Information Science, and Computer Science, to name only some.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

This study has sought to test the proposition that state E-government policy can be said to exhibit either an *evolutionary* or *revolutionary* orientation towards affecting desired changes in *efficiency*, *democracy*, or both. This orientational framework has proven a useful way to categorize individual state plans through a content-based analysis, and to systematically describe holistic trends in state E-government.

Terms used to code for policy orientation proved more clear for determining an efficiency focus than a democracy focus. In terms of efficiency, this study has shown that state governments are unanimous in desiring efficiency gains, mostly think in terms of “customer” uses and needs (84%), and focus somewhat less on creating conveniences (76%) and improving the cost-effectiveness of administration (62%) through E-government. Nearly three-quarters of states (74%) mean to accomplish all this through unprecedented levels of agency and jurisdictional collaboration, despite expressed Constitutional concerns.

A democracy focus, rather, could be found in only 8 of 37 states assessed (22%). Although words like “citizen” and “participation” appeared more often, they did not usually appear in a specifically democratic context, and states can be said to generally equivocate “customer” and “citizen” despite discussion in the literature as to their separate meanings. The full measure of democratic assessment in state plans was further frustrated by vaguely expressed desires for enhanced political participation, generally indicating neither a specific degree of enhancement nor the specific means for accomplishment.



The list of language coded for in this study was developed partly through assessment itself, and while terms were verified through a post-hoc closed card sort, inter-rater reliability was not established due to the evolutionary and exploratory nature of the study. However, this study represents the first systematic evidence of these findings, and the state policy gap in efficiency and democracy shown through this analysis remains clear. While equivalent terms for an efficiency context were noted when found and later verified, clearer or more useful terms than those initially postulated to denote a democracy context simply were not there to be discovered.

Though none of the plans failed to express an orientation outlined by this framework, it should be noted that the categories of efficiency and democracy were narrowly drawn and may have excluded other possible orientations this study did not focus on. For one, there may be crossover in these categories. Is online voter registration, for instance, purely a democracy-oriented service? While it promotes political participation it also potentially streamlines a bureaucratic process. This study fills a research gap in determining holistic, policy-based trends, and acts as a baseline upon which greater complexity and sophistication in categories of orientation can be built.

A recent E-government feature story in the *Economist* claimed that the “most conspicuous feature” of E-government thus far “has been a colossal waste of taxpayer’s money on big computer systems, poorly thought out and overpriced” (Economist, 2008, p. 8). E-government has not proven the magic solution hoped for early on, solving issues of rising budgets and falling legitimacy in one fell swoop. Bertot & Jaeger (2008) point out what they call an emerging “E-government paradox:” namely that for E-government

to achieve a cost-savings it must be used by citizens, for it to be used by citizens it must address citizen needs, and to address citizen needs governments must begin investing in costly needs assessments and usability studies. In short, “better customer service doesn’t necessary cost less” (pp. 1-5). An efficiency approach, driven purely by cost-savings, may simply not prove viable. As citizen needs become more of a known factor in state E-government implementation, the strict lines dividing categories such as efficiency and democracy may fade away. Further, as E-government expands and matures, some important G2C E-government features may fall outside the parameters of efficiency and democracy.

Many of these plans provide foundational data for a deeper, state-by-state look at the American E-government whole. While the strategic plans are a good starting point for holistic research, their authors may not be the most qualified or relevant state officials to determine or drive E-democracy implementation. More importantly, a clearer holistic assessment of state E-government will be determined by analyzing policy in tandem with implementation, and locating the point to which each state has developed individually. Considerations of what E-democracy is and of how we might measure it are important as this new stage of E-government emerges. Particularly, deeper considerations of the Constitutional, legal, and societal impacts of the potentially transformative nature of E-government are needed. Change, however alluring, should not automatically be considered progress.

That said, we should beware thinking too conservatively about E-government and E-democracy. As Marc Strassman, president of Citizens United for Excellence in E-Government, testified before a Senate committee in 2002:

So on top of all the discussions you've had already about "stovepiping," interagency cooperation and where to put the Federal CIO, there is also a more profound, even moral choice before you in the form of this bill. The essence of that choice is whether the Federal Government will embrace the Internet as a powerful tool to facilitate its work or merely relegate it to some peripheral role that fails to take full advantage of all it has to offer and then watch as its capabilities and energy are squandered on tasks much less worthwhile to the American people than upgrading the quality of their historical and unprecedented experiment in self-government. (S.hrg 107-148, pg. 257)

E-government and the Internet are tools that will be what we make of them. While they could provide us with easy access to tax forms, they could also help to affect an increase in the nation's ability to foster an informed electorate and a healthy democracy. Possibly, they could even do both.

**APPENDIX A:**  
**List of State E-government Strategic Planning Documents and Links**

1. **Alabama:** Electronic Government- Framework and Strategy (2002)  
[http://www.alabama.gov/PDFs/egov\\_pdfs/e-govFrameworkandStrategy.pdf](http://www.alabama.gov/PDFs/egov_pdfs/e-govFrameworkandStrategy.pdf)
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**APPENDIX B:**  
**Coded Terms Indicating Inter-/ Intra-Governmental Collaboration**

cooperate/ collaborate with federal and local agencies  
cooperate/ collaborate with other entities, including the Federal government  
cooperate/ collaborate with other state agencies to reduce effort

cooperation/ collaboration across agencies  
cooperation/ collaboration across boundaries  
cooperation/ collaboration across government boundaries  
cooperation/ collaboration across governmental agencies  
cooperation/ collaboration across state agencies  
cooperation/ collaboration across state government  
cooperation/ collaboration across state IT infrastructure  
cooperation/ collaboration among state agencies  
cooperation/ collaboration among state and local government agencies  
cooperation/ collaboration amongst all branches and levels of government  
cooperation/ collaboration between agencies  
cooperation/ collaboration between agencies and local governments  
cooperation/ collaboration between government agencies at all levels  
cooperation/ collaboration between political entities  
cooperation/ collaboration is critical to achieving the goals of E-government  
cooperation/ collaboration is needed to better serve the citizens

cooperative/ collaborative approach to E-government  
cooperative/ collaborative approach to providing government services  
cooperative/ collaborative efforts by federal, state, and local agencies

cross-agency cooperation/ collaboration  
cross-departmental cooperation/ collaboration  
cross-organizational cooperation/ collaboration

increase efficiency and effectiveness of government through cooperation/ collaboration

interagency cooperation/ collaboration  
interdepartmental cooperation/ collaboration  
intergovernmental cooperation/ collaboration

multistate cooperation/ collaboration  
need to promote cooperation/ collaboration  
promote cooperative/ collaborative efforts  
state agencies will work together  
transforming services through cooperation/ collaboration



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