

Spring 2005



01001100 01010100 01000101 01010010
LTER DataBits
Information Management Newsletter of
The Long Term Ecological Research Network
01001100 01010100 01000101 01010010

Good Read: Building the Virtual State: IT and Institutional Change

- *Florence Millerand (PAL/CCE)*

Jane Fountain. 2001. Building the Virtual State: IT and Institutional Change. Brookings Institution Press.

The book addresses the implications of information technology for institutional change in government. Anchored and illustrated through three case studies, the author points out that the challenges that face the government to build a virtual state are not technological but are largely organizational and institutional. A virtual state -a government organized in terms of virtual agencies, cross-agency and public-private networks - requires more than a technical infrastructure for linking the computers of the government, it demands an institutional infrastructure to support new coordinated practices and procedures between a range of organizational systems. Useful both for information management scholars and for data management practitioners, this book helps to understand the frequent gap between the potential of 'objective' technology (the existing technology product or plan) and the reality of 'enacted' technology (the actual implementation of the planned technology) that results from the introduction of the 'objective' technology in pre-existing social relationships, organizational cultures, and institutional structures.