

## Project Highlight:

# Digital Government Community-Building and Outreach

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## ABSTRACT

This paper outlines briefly the Digital Government Research Center's work to build partnerships and foster collaboration among academic researchers and government IT stakeholders under NSF Digital Government grants, and to increase public awareness and understanding of the Digital Government research field during 2004 and early 2005.

## Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.4 [Computing and Society]: Computer-supported collaborative work, re-engineering

## General Terms

Management, Documentation, Performance, Design, Experimentation, Human Factors

## Keywords

digital government, e-government, eGovernment, electronic government, collaboration, collaborative environments, interagency, stove-piping, digital divide, research, community, virtual community

## 1. BACKGROUND

Since its inception in the late 1990s, the Digital Government research discipline has matured and grown in scope and application. Once the broadly-defined intersection between government-related computer science and public-policy research vis-à-vis information technologies, Digital Government research has coalesced into more than a dozen distinct sub-disciplines spanning traditional courses of research ranging from system interoperability, metadata and human-computer interface studies to organizational behavior, e-rulemaking and the digital divide. Technologies and best-practices developed under DG grants are in wide use in government domains that include law enforcement, urban planning, education, environmental health, ecological evaluation and data privacy.

To stimulate and nurture the growth and interconnectedness of the community of Digital Government researchers and invite the active participation of government partners, the Digital Government Research Center (DGRC) has developed several distinct methods of community-building and outreach: it has established and continues to organize the annual National Conference on Digital Government Research; it has developed a suite of online tools and web and print/multimedia

publications that let computer scientists, policy scholars, government partners, potential participants and citizen stakeholders explore the field and its projects and make contact with active DG researchers; it has made contacts and coordinated collaborative workshops with the European Union's e-government research and development community; and it has disseminated news on Digital Government research to IT news media outlets, the public and the DG community itself.

## 2. ACTIVITIES

### 2.1 dg.o2004 Conference

The 2004 National Conference on Digital Government Research, held May 24-26 in Seattle, WA, drew together nearly 200 DG researchers and e-government practitioners from the U.S. and Europe. The DGRC arranged for peer and informal reviews of more than 100 submitted papers, Project Highlights, posters and system demonstration abstracts. The conference secured prominent keynote speakers and panelists from government agencies, research institutes and private corporations.

In addition, the DGRC organized the first official collaborative workshop between DG community members in the U.S. and e-government researchers, architects and public-private entrepreneurs from the European Union. This gathering produced a white paper on the findings and goals of the two communities. The paper can be viewed here: [http://digitalgovernment.org/library/library/pdf/nsf\\_eu\\_whit\\_epaper\\_0904.pdf](http://digitalgovernment.org/library/library/pdf/nsf_eu_whit_epaper_0904.pdf)

Other DGRC activities in 2004 under this NSF grant included conference preparations, internal-external communications and web-based tools and publications for dg.o2005, to be held May 15-18 in Atlanta, GA, U.S.A. Further, the DGRC arranged to present dg.o2005 in collaboration with the IEEE Third Symposium on Intelligence and Security Informatics (ISI-2005).

### 2.2 Online Publication

The DGRC has developed and continues to publish *dgOnline*, the Monthly Newsletter of Digital Government Research. The newsletter offers in-depth articles on recent DG projects and NSF initiatives, pointers to other announcements and publications, and headlines and links to articles of interest from journals such as Government Computer News and IST Results.

## 2.3 Online Toolset

The DGRC has developed and continues to refine a user-friendly toolset for searching and augmenting the NSF's database of Digital Government projects, researchers and institutions.

New development in 2004 included rebuilding the Perl-based database feed script in J2EE-compliant Java to mesh with a completely redesigned NSF database schema and retooling a new online conference registration system to improve functionality and usability.

## 2.4 Publications

The DGRC in 2004 published the Proceedings of the 2004 National Conference on Digital Government Research, in two formats:

### 2.4.1 Pre-conference: Proceedings book

In the weeks before the conference, the DGRC compiled, edited and published the text of the Proceedings, including research papers and abstracts for Project Highlights, Birds-of-a-Feather sessions, system demonstrations, posters, panel discussions and the keynote address.

### 2.4.2 Post-conference: Proceedings / Final Report

During the three days of dg.o2004, the DGRC produced more than 60 video-taped interviews with conference speakers, organizers and session moderators to help convey the human aspect and range of topics in DG research to a larger audience in colloquial terms. The DGRC then edited these interviews and compiled them with more than 350 papers, slide presentations, final reports, poster PDFs, URLs and supplemental documents into a multimedia CD-ROM of the center's own design. The CD was packaged with a three-color, bound conference guide that the DGRC also designed and produced, and sent to conference attendees, potential government partners and targeted members of the news media and the academic and government communities.

## 2.5 Direct Outreach

### 2.5.1 International Outreach

DGRC researchers made trips to three prominent gatherings of non-U.S. e-government researchers and practitioners, to make and strengthen contacts with the research community abroad: DEXA '04 in Zaragoza, Spain, in August; the EChallenges Conference in Vienna, Austria in October; and IST 2004 at the Hague in November.

### 2.5.2 International Workshops at dg.o2005

The DGRC has facilitated organization of two International Workshops at the 2005 conference to help foster collaboration among researchers and practitioners in the U.S. and overseas communities.

### 2.5.3 Outreach to Domestic Government Agencies

The DGRC approached the chief information officers of all 50 U.S. states and nearly every major federal government agency by mail, presenting them with conference reports and Digital Government brochures, and inviting them to participate in DG research, attend the 2005 conference in Atlanta, browse the NSF/DG web site (<http://digitalgovernment.org/>) for projects and contacts of interest, and subscribe to dgOnline.

### 2.5.4 Outreach to News Organizations

The DGRC disseminated news of DG research projects and program achievements to various news organizations in the national mass media, IT-related publications and to newspapers that are local to the projects' parent institutions.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Community metrics

The monthly publication of the dgOnline newsletter has helped disseminate news and promote understanding of the growing field of Digital Government research among several disparate constituencies. The mailing list has grown to nearly 900 subscribers, including academic IT researchers, public policy scholars, NSF program heads, government CIOs and CTOs, IT workers in numerous levels of federal, state, county and municipal government, the news media and some private citizens.

### 3.2 Site Metrics

The Digital Government web sites (including <http://digitalgovernment.org> and conference web sites) are delivering steady site traffic of approximately 1,000 page-views per day. This has remained constant since late 2002 after the DGRC completely rebuilt the site, which at the time brought about a near-four-fold increase in audience traffic.

### 3.3 Media Coverage of DG Projects

As a result of the DGRC's outreach work, Digital Government research has been covered in the past year by an array of news publications including IEEE Spectrum, Government Computer News and Federal Computer Week.

### 3.4 Requests for Participation & More Info

Chief Information Officers in the state of South Dakota and the District of Columbia have made formal requests to participate in Digital Government research into areas of specific interest. The CIOs of other entities including the state of Michigan and the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security have requested more information on DG research, which the DGRC has provided to them. The DGRC is following up on these and numerous other leads to potential government collaborators.

## 4. Future Work

The DGRC anticipates continuing with most of these outreach efforts.

In the coming year, the DGRC will also be: facilitating online forums to support a very large test-bed for digital archiving research in 50 states, being conducted by the Library of Congress' National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program; exploring potential collaboration with the National Coordination Office for Information Technology Research & Development; exploring collaborations overseas via communications with Information Society Technologies in the European Union; organizing dg.o2006; and facilitating the development of a Digital Government Society that will ultimately assume responsibility for developing and sustaining the Digital Government research community in the future.

## 5. Acknowledgements

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