

BoF Report:
State of the Semantic Web in Digital Government
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We invited DG researchers to speak for a few minutes about their semantic web activities. Our goal was to identify which areas of the semantic web DG researchers are involved in, and to foster a semantic web community of practice within DG.

Going in, we saw a few possible outcomes: recognition of the possibility of turning Digital Government into a semantic web or semantic web testbed; identification of possible DG-wide metadata standards; identification of opportunities for interoperability amongst DG projects; identification of opportunities for collaboration amongst DG projects (such as sharing of data, testbeds, ontologies, or tools); and suggestions for DG on how to promote interoperability and collaboration.

We took a broad view of what constitutes the semantic web, and encouraged DG researchers to share their work in Open GIS standards, web services, RDF, semantic mediation, and other related technologies. Turnout was good, and several researchers discussed their projects. Work described included web services and service composition; interoperability and integration of data, schemas, and services; ontologies; glossaries; and NLP.

Unfortunately, we did not have representation from either the Geographic Information System (GIS) or Biodiversity and Ecosystem Informatics (BDEI) community, as these communities were having BoFs of their own. Since these communities are both much involved in semantic web research, we recognized the need to include them in any follow-up activities.

Discussion ranged from implementation details of specific projects to the broader question of the relevance of the semantic web to the DG program. We didn't have enough time to even elucidate the most relevant areas for further discussion, and the idea of a DG sponsored workshop on the semantic web was brought up. Larry Brandt expressed willingness to fund such a workshop, and there was much enthusiasm and willingness amongst participants to write a proposal for and to organize such a workshop. An identified next step was an e-mail based brain-storming session on what the goals and scope of such a workshop should be.

Larry also indicated his willingness to offer supplemental support to existing grants for the specific purpose of promoting collaboration. Such supplemental grants could provide funds for travel or student support. The hope was expressed that such collaboration could lead to a growing level of interoperability within DG, and, perhaps ultimately, to a DG semantic web.

