

FINAL

PUBLIC



Thematic Workshop on E-Government

Supported by the National Research Council's Institute for Information Technology, SSHRC, and CGI Inc.

In Conjunction with



October 21-22, 2003
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Prepared by
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Table of Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Participants | 4 |
| Workshop Organization | 10 |
| Agenda | 12 |
| Organizational Issues | 13 |
| Findings | 13 |
| Research Issues | 14 |
| Feedback | 15 |
| Future Developments | 15 |
| Conclusion | 16 |



From E-Commerce to the E-Economy

Thematic Workshop on E-Government

Report Prepared by: National Research Council - Institute for Information Technology
Fredericton, New Brunswick
October 21-22, 2003

Introduction

On October 21 and 22, the National Research Council's (NRC) Institute for Information Technology, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), and CGI Inc., supported a national thematic workshop on e-government in Canada with the generous support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and CGI Inc.. In all, 31 invited delegates from academia, the public, and the private sectors were in attendance. The afternoon session also involved students from an undergraduate course at the University of New Brunswick entitled "Information Society Policy." We had representation from provincial and federal governments, universities, non-governmental organizations, and e-government consultants. Geographically, we had representation from Ontario, the Maritime Provinces, Alberta, British Columbia, and Australia.

The goal of this workshop was in keeping with an Industry Canada initiative entitled, *From E-Commerce to the E-Economy* (www.e-economy.ca), which is aimed at the establishment of thematic networks of researchers across Canada in the fields of e-government, e-health, e-security, e-learning, and e-business. The organizing committee aspired to bring leading e-government practitioners and researchers together for an intensive round of discussions shaped by the goal of mapping the current state, and future possibilities, of e-government research in Canada. We also sought to include young researchers and interested students wherever possible. We feel that this workshop was successful in addressing the research gaps and opportunities in E-Government in Canada through the willingness of participants to share their diverse experiences and knowledge with other participants. The overwhelming participation and engagement which this workshop engendered promoted a widespread feeling of collegiality and collaboration which is sure to carry on to future research initiatives, NRC-sponsored or not, throughout Canada.



The organizers of this workshop sought to create an environment in which practitioners and researchers alike would feel encouraged to share experiences and concerns with one another. This goal required that the majority of the day's time was spent collaborating with others in breakout groups and reporting back to the plenary session under the direction of our facilitator. While there were formal presentations during our two panel sessions, the goal of each session was to invoke and inspire conversation and commentary rather than to promote a single issue or cause of particular importance to the individual panel members. Panel presenters were specifically asked to construct their presentations to build on personal experience in such a way as to promote explorations of broadly-defined research issues identified by the committee in interpreting Industry Canada's requirements.

Participants

Participation in this workshop was by invitation only. The organizing committee solicited participation from leading professionals in academia and the private and public sectors. Given the focus on research trends and opportunities, it was hoped that approximately ¾ of our delegates would be from academia. In actuality, our ratio of non-academics to academics was approximately 1 to 1, signaling the need to unite e-government researchers throughout Canada in order to more fully solicit the academic community's involvement. We are also confident in noting that we feel participation rates reflected an inability to find Canada's e-government researchers, and not unwillingness on the part of the researchers themselves to participate. While it proved a little more difficult than originally planned to attract national scholars to this event, we were successful in securing the participation of a significant group of leading academics and others dedicated to effectively researching e-government in Canada.

We asked that all panel members forward a brief biographical note to be included in the participants' information package. We suggested that this biographical note should include contact information where applicable. Having contact information readily available for participants both during and after the workshop helped ensure that our goal of encouraging participants to actively engage in effective dialogue by drawing them into the discussion was facilitated. Panel presentations were treated as introductions to broad issues instead of presentations of particular research agendas. While we encouraged panel members to build on the strengths of their research, they were chosen primarily for their ability to contribute to the goals of your panel discussion in a broad, informative, way, and promote active dialogue, with the help of our facilitator, of within the audience. The remainder of this section will list our participants and highlights the contributions made by our keynote speakers, our facilitator, and our panel members.

Our Keynote Speakers



Donna Wood
Director General,
Public Access Programs
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As Director General of Public Access Programs, Communication Canada,
Donna Wood is responsible for the primary access points for information on

Government of Canada programs, services and information products. These include the Government of Canada's toll-free information service (1 800 O-Canada), which answers over one million calls from Canadians each year; the government's primary Internet site, the Canada Site (canada.gc.ca); and the government's intranet site, *Publiservice*, which facilitates communication among public service employees. Ms. Wood is also involved in various issue-specific initiatives (e.g. Government On-Line, Service Improvement, and Service Canada) that are dedicated to informing Canadians and engaging them in public policy issues. In delivering public access services, Ms. Wood is responsible for establishing partnerships with other levels of government, and creating and installing the relevant infrastructure. Ms. Wood has 20 years of progressive experience in the communications field.



Leslee Fredericks
Smart Community - Project Manager
Western Valley Development Agency
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Leslee is at the centre of the Western Valley's Smart Community initiative, which challenges individual communities to develop new and better ways to employ emerging technologies in their local situations. She oversees the Smart Team in the development, implementation and maintenance of programs and applications. She handles the project's finances, communications, and reporting to stakeholders. She leads efforts to build a community-owned broadband network. Leslee serves on the Management, Communications, Social, Technical and Open House Committees. She started work with the WVDA January 1999 and took up her present position in August of 2001.



Brian Shoesmith, PhD
Edith Cowan University
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Brian Shoesmith is the General Editor of *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture*; Director of the Centre for Asian Communication, Media and Cultural Studies, Edith Cowan University (Perth) and a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Media Studies at that university. His research interests include Asian cinema, the influence of new communication technologies in Asia, and reconfiguring temporal and spatial relations through electronic media and capitalism.

Our Facilitators



Michael Ircha, PhD
Professor of Civil Engineering
Associate Vice-President (Academic/Students)
University of New Brunswick
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Professor Ircha is a member of the Transportation Group at the University of New Brunswick. He has degrees in civil engineering, urban planning, and public administration and a doctorate in ports administration from the University of Wales Cardiff. During his last sabbatical, he completed an international strategic studies program at Canada's National Defence College. Prior to his academic appointment, Mike was a city engineer, director of urban planning and city administrator in two municipalities (Amherst NS and Vanier ON). A former Associate Dean of Engineering, he now serves as Associate Vice-President (Academic/Students) at the University of New Brunswick. Mike has facilitated strategic planning projects for many organizations including the City of Fredericton, New Brunswick Research and Productivity Council, Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, Canadian Engineering Human Resources Committee, Centre for Nuclear Engineering Research, Mount Allison University, Belledune Port Authority, and various groups within the University of New Brunswick. As a consultant, Mike has also facilitated workshops and seminars relating to leadership, management, transportation, communications and environmental issues



Andrew Reddick, PhD
Group Leader, E-Government
Institute of Information Technology
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Andy's research work focuses on E-Government and E-Democracy, as well as issues relating to E-Health, E-Learning, Security, Privacy, and applications development. Previously, Andrew has worked as a policy and government relations consultant. Activities involved issues relating to public policy and regulation primarily in communications (broadcasting, telecommunications, Internet), but also in matters relating to transportation, financial services and privacy. He has a Ph.D. in Sociology and a Masters in Communications. Previously, Andrew has provided consulting services to a number of federal and provincial government departments and Ekos Research Associates Inc.. He has also acted as a policy advisor in the federal government, a Senior Consultant to the Public Interest Advocacy Centre in Ottawa, Canada and worked as a senior executive in the film and television industry. Andrew is currently a member of the Canadian federal government's Government On-Line Advisory Panel and until recently was a Director of the Canadian Internet Registration Authority. He is a frequent public speaker on policy issues, and commentator for television, radio and newspapers.

Special Guests



David Townsend
Faculty of Law
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Professor Townsend has taught administrative law, regulatory policy and introductory and upper level property subjects since joining the faculty in 1979. For the past 15 years his principal research activities have concerned the writing and implementation of legal and technical policies related to wireless communication. He has investigated the legal issues surrounding electromagnetic interference as a member of the McGill University Biomedical Engineering Group on Electromagnetic Compatibility since the group's inception in 1989. The McGill EMC Group has been Canada's leading research collective on managing the electromagnetic environment within hospitals. Professor Townsend has authored many policy papers on wireless communication issues for the federal government, including papers on the siting of radio antennae within municipal boundaries, the harmonization of radiocommunication standards with the USA, reform of the radio regulations, and police surveillance of wireless networks. In 1993, he received UNB's highest award for his teaching; the Alan P. Stuart Award for Teaching Excellence.

Don Lenihan
Director, Center for Collaborative Governance
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Don Lenihan PhD., M.A., B.A. is Director for the Centre for Collaborative Government, the public interest research division of the organization. Don is responsible for a variety of CCG initiatives that bring together elected and appointed officials, academics and members of public interest organizations to examine contemporary issues in Canadian public administration. He is currently the Chair of Crossing Boundaries, a Canada-wide initiative to explore the impact of information technology on governance and democracy. Don is the author of numerous articles and studies on public policy and public administration; he is also the co-author with Gordon Robertson and Roger Tassé of *Canada: Reclaiming the Middle Ground*, a book on Canadian federalism published by the Institute for Research on Public Policy. Don has over 20 years of experience as a researcher and analyst in areas ranging from Canadian federalism to business planning. As



Director of Research at the Institute for Public Administration of Canada, he developed and managed numerous action-oriented research partnerships, which combined expertise from across the country. As a result, Don also brings to the Centre for Collaborative Government a unique organizational vision, as well as a national network of contacts.

Our Panel Speakers

David Brown
Director, Special Projects
Public Policy Forum.
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A graduate in political science from the University of Toronto, David has spent most of his career working on public sector management reform initiatives in the federal government. This has included serving as Executive Director, Information Policy in the CIO Branch and Assistant Secretary, Policy Development in the Human Resources Policy Branch of Treasury Board Secretariat. He has also worked in the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, the Privy Council Office, the Department of External Affairs, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and on secondment to the Cabinet Office in the British Government. For a number of years he chaired the international committee of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada, and he is a past President of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, based in Brussels

David Bruce, PhD
Department of Geography
Mount Allison University
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David is the Director of the Rural and Small Town Programme, Mount Allison University. He has a BA in Geography from Mount Allison and an MA in Geography from UBC. David also teaches part time in the Department of Geography at Mount Allison University. David has knowledge and expertise in the field of rural community development and associated topics of housing, information technology adoption, home business issues, organizational growth and development, and community economic development. He has participated in more than 40 major research and outreach projects in many provinces and the NWT. He is a certified trainer with the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, a national CED technical provider through Carleton University's Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program. He currently serves as the Secretary-Treasurer for the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation. David was involved and continues to be involved in many aspects of the new approach to economic development in the Province of NB. He was a member of the stakeholder group that was consulted early on in the process. He also developed the orientation sessions for government staff, CEDA boards and staff, and the advisory forum participants, designed to provide everyone with appropriate information about the new approach. Together with colleagues at the University of Moncton, he has been delivering the orientation workshops since April of last year. He is currently a co-investigator on a SSHRC-INE grant examining "Building Capacity in Rural Communities in the New Rural Economy", where he heads up a theme group investigating a variety of issues related to communications and technology in rural communities.

Jody Carr
Member of the Legislative Assembly
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In 1995, at 20 years old, Jody was the youngest Progressive Conservative Party candidate in the history of New Brunswick when he was candidate in the provincial general election in the riding of Oromocto-Gagetown. He was co-chair of the 1997 Progressive Conservative leadership convention and worked as a researcher in the Office of the Official Opposition. He currently chairs the Fredericton region government caucus. He is chair of the government caucus. He is from the community of Geary, N.B., and was first elected to the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick in the provincial general election held June 7, 1999. During the Fifty-Fourth Legislature, he was a member of the Standing



Committee on Private Bills, Standing Committee on Crown Corporations, Select Committee on Education, and Select Committee on Local Governance and Regional Collaboration. He was re-elected to the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick in the provincial general election held June 9, 2003. He chairs the Standing Committee on Law Amendments and he is vice-chair of the Select Committee on Education. He serves on the Standing Committees on Privileges, Public Accounts, and Crown Corporations. In addition, he is a member of the Select Committees on Health Care and Wood Supply.

Ann Dale, PhD
Science, Environment and Technology Division
Royal Roads University
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Ann is a faculty member with the Science, Environment and Technology Division at Royal Roads University. She chairs the Canadian Consortium for Sustainable Development Research (CCSDR), a consortium of all the heads of research institutes across Canada, and is active in the Canadian environmental movement. Dr. Dale chairs an organization she created, the National Environmental Treasure (the NET) and is the Executive Co-ordinator, Research and Public Policy for the Canadian Biodiversity Institute. From 1998-2000, she led an energy efficiency program on behalf of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. Previously, she was an Executive with the Federal Government, and was one of the two public servants behind the creation of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE). In 1987-1988, she was a senior advisor to the first Deputy Minister, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, and in 1986, served as the Assistant Director of Policy, Planning and Systems for the Privy Council Office. Previously, she managed the work of two of the Neilson Task Forces on Program Review - Natural Resources and Regulatory Reform. She has also worked with the Office of Regulatory Reform, the D'Avignon Commission and the Anti-Inflation Board, from 1976 to 1985. Dr. Dale is one of the General Series Editors for the Sustainable Development Series published by UBC Press. She is an advisor to the Metcalfe Foundation on funding for environmental programs. Dr. Dale holds degrees in psychology and public administration (major in environmental studies) from Carleton University, and a doctorate in Natural Resources Sciences, McGill University. Current research areas include governance and sustainable community development, biodiversity policy, and deliberative electronic dialogues (www.edialogues.ca). She is a recipient of the 2001 Policy Research Initiative Award for Outstanding Contribution to Public Policy for her most recent book, *At the edge: sustainable development in the 21st century*.

Linda Goldenberg, MSc
University of Calgary, Faculty of Communication and Culture
Senior Research Associate
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Linda has a wide-ranging background in social impact of broadband network deployment, and has worked extensively with Dr. David Mitchell (Program Director, Graduate Studies, The University of Calgary), on several major broadband network research projects. These include the CANARIE Mbone Knowledge Networking Project, focused on education, and the InSite Broadband Collaborative Research Project, focused on networked collaborative research. In addition to being Senior Research Associate responsible for Ethics and Community Relations, Linda is involved in the Disaster and Emergency subproject, and a major CIHR project. Her areas of expertise involve research design and evaluation, policy, ethics and all aspects of networks and complex systems, which has expanded to include social impacts of nanotechnology. Linda sits on the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Ethics Review Board, and teaches in the Faculty of Communication and Culture.

Vanda Rideout, PhD



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Vanda Rideout is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, N.B., Canada. She holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from Carleton University, Canada. Her recent publications include: *Continentalising Canadian Telecommunications: The Politics of Regulatory Reform*, McGill-Queens University Press, 2003; "Digital Inequalities in Eastern Canada," *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Sciences*, 2002/3; V. Rideout and A. Reddick, "A Multi Media Policy for Canada and the United States: Industrial Development as Public Policy", in *Continental Order? Integrating North America for Cybercapitalism*, edited by V. Mosco and D. Schiller Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002. She is currently working on a two-year SSHRC funded research project "Information Society Inequalities in Atlantic Communities," which is an in-depth study of the impact of information and communication technologies and electronic networks in communities in Newfoundland and Labrador as well as Nova Scotia.

Our Participants

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Workshop Organization

The day began with opening comments from Dr. Andrew Reddick, group leader, E-Government, at the National Research Council's Institute for Information Technology, and a brief overview of the day's events. Introductions and acknowledgements aside, the keynote addresses followed. We incorporated three short keynote addresses, each approximately 10 minutes in length, aimed at providing as broad a conceptualization of the research and practice of e-Government as possible. Our opening keynote address, by Donna Wood, Director General of Public Access Programs for Communications Canada, was aimed at highlighting the role of e-Government in the federal context and outlining major Federal initiatives in electronic service delivery. This was followed by a presentation by Leslee Fredericks, Project Manager for Smart Communities, with the Western Valley Development Authority in Nova Scotia, which discussed the mechanics of promoting and fostering the growth of e-Government structures from a regional context. Finally, Dr. Brian Shoosmith of Edith Cowan University in Australia was asked to provide a brief commentary on the state of e-Government research and infrastructure in Australia. Together, the keynote speeches set the framework for the rest of the day's events and by highlighting the scope and depth of interest and focus in e-government on a global, national, and regional, scale.

PANEL ONE: Overview

E-Government Costs, Structures, Partnerships, and Transformations

Presenters

David Brown: Public Policy Forum

Jody Carr: Member of the Legislative Assembly, Province of New Brunswick

Ann Dale, PhD: Science, Environment, and Technology Division, Royal Roads University

Discussion

Mr. Brown's presentation discussed the role of the Public Policy Forum in e-government research in Canada. Mr. Carr's presentation outlined the strategy underway within the New Brunswick government to include young people in the policy formation process through e-government. Dr. Dale's presentation outlined the significance of Royal Roads' e-dialogues for sustainable development project which implemented an online portal for consultation with British Columbia's resource dependent regions on environmental issues.

Group Discussion Questions

What are the outstanding research issues in e-government structure, costs, partnerships, and transformations?

What are the barriers in the implementation of e-government in Canada today?

What is being done to make the best of current partnerships and build new ones?

Who should be responsible for the design and implementation of new government resources?

PANEL TWO: Overview



Citizens and Organizations

Presenters

Vanda Rideout: Department of Sociology, University of New Brunswick

Linda Goldenberg: Research Fellow, Alberta Supernet Research Alliance

Dr. David Bruce: Director, Rural and Small Town Project

Discussion

Dr. Rideout's presentation outlined some preliminary findings from her ongoing research in e-government in rural communities in Atlantic Canada. Ms. Goldenberg's presentation outlined the development and implications of the Alberta Supernet on Northern, Rural, communities in Alberta. Dr. Bruce's presentation discussed trends and findings in research into internet usage in rural communities.

Group Discussion Questions

What are the outstanding research issues in citizen engagement and inclusion in e-government?

What are the most important three questions about government online and e-Democracy (citizen participation and engagement) that the public should be asked right now?

What are the three main initiatives or issues that government CIO's and service delivery personnel should focus on for the development of GOL and e-Democracy?

What are the most appropriate ways in which citizens can articulate their needs in the context of e-government?

Our facilitator was Dr. Michael Ircha. With Dr. Ircha's help, each panel session consisted of the panellists presenting to six small groups which consisted of 5 to 6 workshop delegates from diverse backgrounds. After the panellists presented, each group was given one of three questions to discuss amongst itself. At the end of a specified time (between 30 and 45 minutes) each group was asked to report back to the others with their answers. When all the answers were shared, the floor was opened to the delegates to pursue topics of interest to them in greater detail. This option not only promoted dialogue amongst participants, but encouraged interaction between panel presenters and participants in an open, broad, way, while keeping the dialogue of interest to all delegates by stirring the conversation in the direction of the broad research questions which had been circulated beforehand, and away from questions dealing with specific, technical, questions concerning particular panel presentations.

At the end of the day, approximately an hour was scheduled to review all the key points that emerged during the previous two sessions. Again, participants were encouraged to make suggestions and clarifications in this process to ensure that points were captured in proper context. It was also during the closing plenary session that participants were asked what the next step for e-government research in Canada should be. The most important contribution to come from the closing plenary was the suggestion of the national network of e-government researchers which will be established with the help of the National Research Council, as soon as possible.



Agenda

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| OCTOBER 21, 2003 | EVENTS |
| 7:30 – 9:30 PM | Reception: Old Government House, Fredericton, NB |
| OCTOBER 22, 2003 | <i>EVENTS</i> |
| 9:00 AM | OPENING REMARKS: Dr. Andrew Reddick, NRC-IIT, Fredericton |
| 9:30 – 10:30 | E government – E Democracy Overview 9:30 – 9:40 – Keynote Address (Donna Wood, DG, Communications Canada) 9:40 – 9:50: The Australian Experience (Brian Shoemith) 9:50 – 10:00 – Regional Keynote Address (Leslee Fredericks, WVDA) 10:00 – 10:30 – Discussion of the "Crossing Boundaries" project – presented by Don Lenihan. |
| 10:30 – 11:00 | Nutrition Break – Fredericton Inn |
| 11:00 – 12:45 | E-Government Structures, Costs, Partnerships, and Transformation. PANEL MEMBERS: Jody Carr, NB MLA, Oromocto-Gagetown; David Brown, Public Policy Forum; Ann Dale, E-dialogues program, Royal Roads University. -What are most important issues in successful e-government in Canada today? -What are the barriers to e-government in Canada today? -What is being done to make the best of current partnerships and build new ones? -Government / Industry partnerships...Can they work? DISCUSSION - Chair, Dr. Mike Ircha, UNB-F |
| 1:00 – 2:15 | LUNCH – Fredericton Inn (Presentation By David Townsend, Faculty of Law UNB-F on the E-Town Hall Consultation Process developed for the National Antenna Tower Policy Review) |
| 2:15 to 3:45 | Panel Discussion (#2): Citizens and Organizations PANEL MEMBERS: Vanda Rideout, Department of Sociology, UNB-F; Linda Goldenberg, Alberta Supernet Research Alliance; Bruce Spencer, New Rural Economies Project -What are the most important two questions about government online and e-Democracy (citizen participation and engagement) that the public should be asked right now? -What are the three main initiatives or issues that government CIO's and service delivery personnel should focus on for the development of GOL and e-Democracy? DISCUSSION - Chair, Dr. Mike Ircha, UNB-F |
| 3:45 to 4:00 | Nutrition Break – Fredericton Inn |
| 4:00 to 5:00 | Plenary Discussion (Chair, Mike Ircha, UNB-F) main outstanding research issues research needs and gaps, research demands obstacles to research research networking opportunities |



Organizational Issues

Original planning called for between 40 and 50 delegates for the e-government workshop. While in reality our numbers were closer to 30, we are nonetheless very pleased with the outcomes of this workshop. Every person invited to participate remarked that this workshop was timely and important, however some have noted that because of its location in New Brunswick, and its timing (which is especially difficult for academics with teaching requirements), their participation was simply not possible. Many of those unable to attend, however, were very useful in passing our information along to their colleagues and in making suggestions for improvement early in the organization process. Possible changes to future workshops may be to consider a location in central Canada (although this was not a major setback for us) and to consider hosting the event during the traditional conference season of May through August, to allow more participation from the academic community by ensuring that the workshop will not compete with teaching and research requirements.

Findings

Numerous points of view were introduced during the group reporting sessions and each contributed to the emergence of general themes which seemed to dominate the day's discussions. The first guiding theme was one of being at a crossroads. It was pointed out by panel discussants as well as participants from the audience that the Canada is at a crossroads in e-government research and practice and that it is now necessary for leading practitioners and researchers alike to come together and discuss new methodologies for citizen engagement and inclusion for the future. At a more practical level, concerns were also raised regarding the practicality and usefulness of e-government schemes. One group mentioned that perhaps what the workshop should ultimately focus on was the notion of e-governance instead of e-government, the latter pointing to rigid constructs and technological infrastructures with little emphasis on the socio-economic implications of a system of e-government on the citizens of a democratic state. E-government in Canada is at a crossroads methodologically, practically, and philosophically. The time is right for research into all aspects of e-government which will help to set its direction in the years to come.

Another theme to emerge from the workshop was that e-governance holds the potential to revolutionize the way decision making is carried out by breaking down the 'silos' or 'stovepipes' vertical integration models of government which have proven to isolate and polarize sectors of society. While there was some fear that e-government structures may, ultimately, lead to the same problems, it was generally agreed upon by the majority of participants that a properly executed e-government structure holds the potential to usher in advancements in citizen inclusion and engagement.

Another issue of importance was the impending need to renegotiate or even dismantle boundaries of all types. Geographic boundaries, it was argued, must be addressed. E-government structures were deemed to be of little relevance in areas lacking widespread broadband connectivity. It was noted that in many cases what appears on the surface to be effective e-government is largely superficial. This led to a discussion aimed at determining the degree to which e-government is necessary. It was posited that perhaps it is not useful to completely revolutionize the way government business is conducted. Rather than being treated as two points in a dichotomous relationship, it was noted that perhaps e-government and traditional government should be seen as operating along a reflexive continuum – one which responds to perceived need and balances it with the ability to act upon that need financially. It was noted that a user-friendly, highly-effective e-government structure of limited scope may be of more use than a poorly designed, unstable, and insecure e-government structure across the board. It was concluded that political and economic boundaries must be transformed if the immense costs of creating a sustainable, effective, and user-friendly e-government infrastructures are to be contained within the expenditures of the state or shared between the state and the information and communications technology industry.



Finally, some discussion was devoted to dealing with situations where citizens or groups feel a need to opt-out of e-government structures. It was argued that to be democratic, e-government structures must be voluntary, and while it may so happen that many individuals respond positively to the premises of e-governance, those who wish to avoid it or, implicitly, those who cannot afford to take part in it, must be given the opportunity to access government services in a more traditional manner. At a philosophical level, it was also mentioned that e-government is occurring unofficially in many locations throughout the world independently of formally-endorsed structures of e-government. Further to this it was noted that perhaps the goal of e-government research should be one of ensuring that official state policy does not hinder already functioning systems of informal e-government, and not one of ensuring that official e-government structures supercede informal practice already in place.

Research Issues

This workshop enabled a number of significant research issues to emerge. It became clear that e-Government research does not lend itself to attempts at generalization – even defining e-government, or indeed determining the whether the majority of research undertaken best personifies e-government or e-governance research was debated. There are a number of research initiatives underway in Canada, and an even larger number of essential research questions which are not being answered at the moment. The participants at the e-Government workshop highlighted several key areas of research that are open for development in the Canadian context currently.

It was widely agreed that research in e-Government should be broken into three components. First, and largely technical in nature, research is vitally important to issues of service delivery in the Canadian context. Secondly, issues surrounding the transformation of the government must be analyzed in depth if all the possibilities and implications of e-Government are to be truly addressed. Finally, issues of citizen participation and engagement must be examined in detail in order to map new directions for e-Government in Canada and to gauge the extent to which e-Government is already a reality for many Canadians and the barriers which, in part, limit its widespread applicability to countless more.

Service delivery is very important to the e-Government research agenda in Canada. Service delivery can be broken down into two related research agendas. First, technical research into the feasibility of providing broadband internet connectivity must be undertaken. Apart from infrastructure, however, research applicable to service delivery can also be seen as research which examines the extent to which e-government provides a viable alternative to traditional means of service delivery. It was argued that the technical and social aspects of service delivery are best examined in unison. Whereas technical shortcomings limit the social impact of e-Government service delivery, surplus technological infrastructure, and unused capacity, are financial drains on e-government and counterproductive to the e-Government research agenda in Canada.

Issues of service delivery are intimately tied to government transformation – often realized in the confrontation between traditional/established infrastructure and new/technologically-advanced infrastructure. While discussions of service delivery were deemed an essential starting point for e-Government research, many participants noted that discussion of technological capacity and the extent of human interaction in online environments must be carried on within broader philosophical debates surrounding the usefulness of e-Government structures and the extent to which e-Government should be seen as providing a viable, efficient, alternative for traditional structures. To have the capacity for e-government is one thing, to implement a complete transition to e-Government is quite another. Access to the former cannot be used as a justification in its own right for the implementation of the latter.

Discussion throughout the day returned to discussions of citizen engagement and participation. At the heart of e-government research is an underlying attempt to find new and viable options for increasing citizen engagement. Traditional means of citizen/government interaction are increasingly discredited in contemporary society. Proponents of e-Government structures promote them as viable alternatives for increasing participation rates. Of course, participation is not directly attributable to the availability of technology. Many factors are involved in examining decreasing interest in public affairs.



Efficient e-Government networks may encourage some people to participate some of the time, they are far from solving all participation and engagement issues. Any research into e-Government structures must address traditional issues of socio-economic class, literacy, region, and culture, if they are to provide worthy insight into improving citizen engagement and participation in Canada.

Feedback

As a tool to gauge participants' happiness with the workshop and its effectiveness as a tool for establishing a research agenda in e-government in Canada, the organizing committee distributed an anonymous feedback form at the end of the day. Participants were asked two structured questions and given the opportunity to provide additional information for us, on a voluntary basis.

What have you found to be useful about this workshop?

Many responses were very positive about the opportunity to participate in a workshop aimed at identifying trends and opportunities in e-Government research. The decision to use the panel presentations to stir conversation rather than solely to report on new research findings was also appreciated. Another highlight of the workshop appeared to be the evening reception sponsored by CGI Inc. and hosted at Fredericton's historic Old Government House. Participants generally arrived on the evening of October 21st and were generally very pleased that an informal setting had been arranged to allow them to meet with fellow delegates ahead of hectic pace of the 22nd. The reception offered a well-planned contrast to the formality of the workshop itself and allowed individual presenters to network with those with similar research foci and problems from across the country.

What would you have changed about this workshop?

The major criticisms offered by participants dealt with the timing of the workshop and its duration. Some participants noted that it would have been easier for them to commit to attending had the workshop been organized for the summer instead of the middle of the academic semester. More common, however, was the criticism that one day was simply too short a period of time to host the workshop. Many participants suggested a two or three day agenda which would allow more time for small group interaction, followed by an entire day of reporting findings, suggestions, and conclusions back to the plenary group.

Future Developments

We are pleased to note that one of the most exciting developments to come from the e-Government workshop was the proposed development of a national network of e-Government researchers which would remain actively united through the development of an online portal for sharing of research findings, opportunities, and problems. This online portal would be moderated by the NRC's e-Government group, but will be hosted on the UNB University server. The network's URL will be <http://egovnet.unb.ca>. We hope to have a preliminary web site ready to launch by the end of November. This web site will serve as a portal for information on the e-government workshop and will provide a discussion forum for emerging topics of interest. There was also a strong commitment to the development of a smaller Atlantic Canadian network, ancillary to the national network, which would focus on the research issues and opportunities facing e-Government researchers in the Atlantic region. This, too, will be moderated by the NRC's e-Government group.



Conclusions

The organizing committee is very happy with the success of this workshop. Many participants have expressed their appreciation for being included in the day's events and a significant number have expressed interest in remaining in contact in a formal capacity as a group and informally in smaller groups of those with similar academic interests. The NRC plans to build on the recommendation that an online forum be established for the continuation of the lively debate which emerged from the workshop. We feel the day provided a much clearer overview of what the Canadian research agenda in e-government looks like and what the emerging topics of interest and importance from a national and international perspective are. We are hopeful that the networking opportunities created by this workshop will lead to long term research opportunities and partnerships that are inclusive of the ideas expressed by our participants and receptive to the new challenges for e-government research and practice in Canada.