

An International Perspective on Web Content Management

Emerging issues and e-merging
countries

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The (R)evolution will be Webcast . . .

Today's Virtual World

- *In the U.S.*
 - every federal agency, state and over 1,500 municipalities and counties have Web sites
 - public sector spending on e-government topped \$1.5 billion last year
- Governments in over *220 countries* and territories have established 20,000 Websites
 - Sierra Leone, war-torn and last in the United Nation's 2000 Human Development Index, maintains a rudimentary Web site

Emerging Issues

- *Digital divides in e-government*
- *e-government \neq e-governance*
- *e-government hijackers*

Digital Divides in E-government

- *E-government haves and have-nots*
 - countries (rich vs. poor, democrats vs. dictators)
 - governments (visionary vs. myopic, national vs. local)
 - communities (e-literate vs. illiterate, rural vs. urban)

Digital Divides in E-government

- *Gap between expectations of officials and the public*
 - for officials: easier communication within government among agencies; better/faster service to traditional “clients”
 - for public: Hart-Teeter survey on e-government in US found public priorities are (1) greater accountability and (2) greater access to information (transparency).

Digital Divides in E-government

- *Divided we plan*

- a divide exists between governments that start with a formal (usually centralized) plan for e-government and those who create as they go along
- E.g., < 10% of US cities and counties have any formal e-government plan or strategy -- US/China vs. the rest
- Among many federal agencies and states as well as many other countries, e-government is being developed without much input from the public

E-government \neq E-governance

- E-governance is rarely an e-government priority -- despite public desires
- Why? e-governance requires that citizens are seen as the primary “customers” to be served as opposed to only other officials, vendors or professional intermediaries
- Why? benefits of e-governance hard to quantify in dollar terms; requires greater reinvention of government processes

E-government \neq E-governance

- *Example:* public input into policymaking
 - interaction with the public is rarely a priority for governments -- not just in US, but most countries (e.g., other developed, technology rich countries like Japan and Singapore)
 - many agencies don't post names and email addresses of officials; are non-responsive to emails from the public

E-government \neq E-governance

- *commenting on draft laws/regulations*

- not all federal agencies allow online posting/reading of comments on draft regulations (e.g., DOL, DOE)
- especially odd since several federal agencies in China have solicited public comments via Internet
- each agency manages own site with its unique system of handling public input
- other countries offer more organized system: UK's Citizen Portal; its "Citizen Space" allowing submission of comments/complaints gets more use than public services or information sections of site

E-government will not turn bad government
into good government

Transforming unresponsive government into open,
accessible government depends upon . . .

better information flow

and

willingness of officials
(political and career levels)
to change how they interact
with the public

E-Government Hijackers

- **Hijacking the homepage**
when politicians dictate content
- *the problem*: when the priority is to serve political interests rather than public interests -- political priorities can shift frequently and suddenly
- *example*: USDA homepage changed from more public service oriented to one dominated by press releases and statements by the Secretary

E-Government Hijackers

- ***The tension:***
 - between political appointees and e-government content managers and the public
 - few political appointees understand how their agency's websites are actually used by the public
- ***The risk:*** if the public equates e-government with politics we might see greater distrust of e-government
- ***The solution:*** content should be guided by the needs and wants of public constituencies (individuals, business, other public stakeholders)

It's a small world after all . . .

- *it's all so common*: emerging issues in e-government--digital divides, e-governance and politics dominating content--are common to most e-emerging countries
- *surprises abound*: from USDA's experience with online comments (500,000 of them) for draft regulations on organic food labeling to China's experiments e-government
- *leadership counts*: it's often the only to cut through bureaucratic resistance and mobilize resources