

NEWS RELEASE

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Five New York State Agencies Present Results from UAlbany's Center for Technology in Government's XML Testbed

Albany, NY - This morning, five New York State agencies presented the lessons learned and benefits gained from their participation in the Center for Technology in Government's (CTG) XML Testbed. The Testbed served to assist New York State agencies in examining the benefits as well as the challenges of Web site management using the emerging technology of XML.

"There are relatively few examples of the use of XML for Web site management in government settings," said Derek Werthmuller, director of technology at CTG. "The goal of the Testbed was to provide a unique environment for the participants to collaborate and to explore whether or not XML is a viable solution for government Web sites. This goal was achieved, and we have all learned many valuable lessons that will help us evaluate the key management, policy, technology and cost implications of XML for government."

The featured speaker at the presentation was Tim Bray, co-inventor of XML and director of Web technologies at Sun Microsystems. He addressed the audience of 175 state employees, corporate vendors, and University at Albany faculty and technical staff about the significant technical and business benefits of using XML for content management. "XML is the best tool for creating a file format to ensure that things written today will have an excellent chance of being available for centuries to come," said Mr. Bray. "The early results that the New York State agencies are getting from the Testbed are really pleasing – the future is looking increasingly open and nonproprietary."

The Testbed was undertaken in partnership with the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER), the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), and the Office for Technology (OFT). Beginning in the summer of 2005, five New York State agencies were selected to take part in CTG's XML Testbed and underwent six months of intensive hands-on training and workshops, which led to an XML-based Web site prototype and a business case analysis for each agency. The five participating agencies are the NYS Department of Civil Service, NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal, NYS Higher Education Services Corporation, NYS Office of Cultural Education, State Education Department and NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.

XML is an emerging technology that is generally understood as one which supports effective data exchange between applications. However, XML has another value that is much less exploited or understood – it offers a viable long-term solution to many of the shortcomings of HTML because it structures and describes Web content in a meaningful way. As a technical strategy for managing Web sites, XML and associated organizational strategies offer management and productivity benefits, content consistency, and accessibility enhancements. While many businesses are starting to take advantage of the significant technical and business benefits of using XML for content management, CTG's Testbed is the first to examine how government agencies can experience similar business improvements and competitive advantages.

At the presentation, the participating agencies explained how over the course of the Testbed they learned the value of creating a single source, open standard document to achieve streamlined workflow processes, content consistency and reusability, and multichannel publishing.

Michael Short, chief of enterprise development at the Department of Civil Services said, "An examination announcement publication process that allows us to work with one document, so that stakeholders have the information they need in a format they can use, will enable us to produce a consistent final product."

Dan Irizarry, public information officer at the Division of Housing and Community Renewal said, "The prototype not only served as a proof of concept, it is also already saving the Internet Unit an estimated five hours per week."

"The benefits gained from this process are not originally what we anticipated, however we have gained a knowledge base of what our next steps should be," said Kevin Anderson, Webmaster, New York State Higher Education Services Corporation. "Based on the prototype, it will enable us to move forward to our original goal of converting our public Web site to XML."

“Once fully implemented, customers will find OCE’s Web sites more usable, because of more consistent presentation of information, with built-in accessibility, and the ease of adding links to related information as it becomes available,” said Diane Madrigal, associate computer programmer/Analyst, Office of Cultural Education, State Education Department. “The improved workflow will allow each institution to make more publications available faster, with better management of the maintenance and revision process.”

“XML will serve as a tool with great potential for enhancing our ability to offer more output formats to better meet the needs of our diverse audience; save time and effort and reduce opportunities for errors; reduce the amount of server space needed; and to deliver more accessible Web pages with considerably less effort,” said Lizette Rivera, Web site manager, Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.

In the second phase of the Testbed, CTG will examine the Testbed activities and the agency results to produce a set of practical guidelines and case studies that draw on the experiences of Testbed participants to provide guidance for others trying to improve the management, performance, and value of their Web sites. In addition, the Testbed will produce a sharable library of XML technical resources to be made available in the spring of 2006.

More information on the XML Testbed Project can be found at: <http://www.ctg.albany.edu/projects/xmltb>

The Center for Technology in Government is an applied research center devoted to improving government and public services through policy, management, and technology innovation. The Center, located at the University at Albany, works with government to develop well-informed information strategies that foster innovation and enhances the quality and coordination of public services. For more information visit www.ctg.albany.edu.

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