Project Summary

The goal of this four-year effort was to create a framework for a sustainable global community of practice among digital government researchers and research sponsors. Funded by the US National Science Foundation Digital Government Research Program, the project included an international reconnaissance study describing the current status of digital government research, an annual research institute, and a framework for several international working groups.

Publications & Results

Reports and Working Papers (2)

Building On-ramps to International Research Collaboration: Replicable strategies for entry, productivity and sustainability
Wed, 31 Oct 2012

Globalization presents important opportunities and difficult challenges that demand internationally-trained, culturally-aware researchers to collaborate on topics that cross borders, political systems, and cultures. International research collaborations on topics such as livability of cities, political participation, or the health of civil society offer potentially great benefit, but such work tends to be sporadic and informal because traditional research training and funding structures make it logistically and financially impractical. In response to this problem, from 2007 through 2010, we experimented with two low-cost innovative approaches or “on-ramps” to international collaboration in digital government research: a set of three international working groups composed of scholars from a variety of countries and disciplines and an annual residential research institute for PhD students to develop an early appreciation for the global impact ICTs on the public sector. This evaluation report shows that both approaches are low cost, high impact strategies to forge lasting networks of relationships as well as long-term career benefits.

Mon, 31 Aug 2009

Today, digital government (DG) research is being conducted all over the world. Most of this work is focused within the geographic and political contexts of individual countries. However, given the growing influence of global economic, social, technical, and political forces, the questions embedded in digital government research are now expanding to international dimensions. A reconnaissance study such as this one focuses on the defining characteristics of a topic rather an in-depth analysis. In this report, we describe the size, scope, variety, and trajectory of the field illustrated with selected studies and organizational profiles. This study is part of a multi-year effort funded by the United States (US) National Science Foundation (NSF) to create a framework for a
sustainable global community of digital government researchers and research sponsors.

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Download complete EndNotes References File.

Journal Articles and Conference Papers (2)

Cultivating the Next Generation of International Digital Government Researchers: A Community-Building Experiment
Mon, 26 Sep 2011

Over the last two decades universities and post-secondary education policies have addressed globalization trends by internationalizing curricula and articulating global concern in their missions. This paper presents an evaluation of an international training program for early-career digital government researchers, designed to develop their interest and skill in cross-cultural, multidisciplinary, and practice-oriented research. The program overall appears to stimulate participants’ individual creativity, scholarly productivity, and professional networks, while broadening their appreciation for work that investigates internationally important topics and involves not only multidisciplinary but multicultural teams. The survey results also suggest that a short-term (one-week), intensive, immersive, and relatively inexpensive program can have strong and lasting effects on early-career scholars.

Promoting International Digital Government Research Collaboration: An Experiment in Community Building
Sun, 12 Jun 2011

Global issues present many opportunities for digital government (DG) researchers to form long-lasting relationships that lead to shared research agendas focused on questions of international importance. The practical feasibility of international DG research partnerships is of interest for both investigators and funders. This paper reports the evaluation of an experiment to create sustainable international digital government research collaborations by providing legitimacy and modest funding within a minimal set of structural and management requirements. Participants rated the experience as highly positive, contributing substantially to their research productivity, community building, international awareness, and professional growth. While the working group strategy is not a substitute for direct research support, it is a readily replicable method to build international research communities, and to stimulate and enhance their scholarly work.

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Press Releases & News Stories

Press Releases

A Global Network of Scholars: UAlbany’s Center for Technology in Government Holds 2010 iGov Research Institute in The Netherlands
Mon, 19 Jul 2010

UAlbany’s Center for Technology in Government Holds 2009 iGov Research Institute in Seattle, WA
Mon, 22 Jun 2009

UAlbany’s Center for Technology in Government Holds the 2008 iGov Research Institute in Manchester, UK
Mon, 14 Jun 2008

UAlbany’s Center for Technology in Government Announces 2008 iGov Research Institute
Tue, 18 Dec 2007

UAlbany’s Center for Technology in Government to hold First Annual Institute on International Digital Government Research in New York City
Mon, 09 July 2007

UAlbany’s Center for Technology in Government to Host Chinese Official from the State Information Center in Beijing
Tue, 13 Feb 2007

UAlbany’s Center for Technology in Government Announces First Annual Institute on International Digital Government Research
Mon, 05 Feb 2007

UAlbany’s Center for Technology in Government Announces Selection of Four International Working Groups on Digital Government Research
Wed, 13 Dec 2006

UAlbany’s Center for Technology in Government Receives $1 Million to Create International Digital Government Research Community
Tue, 13 Jun 2006

UAlbany’s Center for Technology in Government Receives $1 Million to Create International Digital Government Research Community
Fri, 21 Oct 2005

www.ctg.albany.edu/projects/dgi
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News Stories

First Annual Institute on International Digital Government Research
Government Technology
February 5, 2007

Funding Sources
This project is sponsored by a $1.3 million grant from the US National Science Foundation Digital Government Research Program.

Original Scope of Work

An Emerging Global Research Domain
Over the past decade, growing evidence demonstrates the emergence of a global field of inquiry at the intersection of government, society, and information and communication technologies. This domain is often characterized by "e-government," "e-governance," "information society," and other related terms. We use the term "digital government" to encompass this collection of research ideas. In the United States (US), the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Digital Government (DG) Research Program has provided leadership and support for this relatively new domain of research. In Europe, the European Commission, as part of its Information Society Technologies (IST) program, sponsors an ambitious e-government research program. At the same time, the research councils of individual European states support comparable research programs within their borders. Similar efforts are established or emerging in Canada, Australia, India, the Pacific Rim, Latin America, and Africa. International organizations such as the United Nations and World Bank support e-government development and are also becoming interested in associated research.

Because of the relative newness of the DG field, there is insufficient interaction among researchers in different countries compared to what one finds in more established scientific disciplines. Most funded research around the world addresses DG challenges within the context of a single country. Only a handful of investigations have tackled problems that are international in scope. A few others have rested on comparative research designs that with the explicit goal of comparison across national, cultural, institutional, and language boundaries. Such international DG research efforts are still quite limited for several reasons. This is a relatively new domain of inquiry, it involves multiple disciplines (a challenge within a single country, let alone internationally) and there are very few support mechanisms and forums to engage DG researchers with their peers working in this domain around the globe. Furthermore, once a potential collaboration starts that could lead to joint research efforts, it is logistically and financially difficult to sustain it to the point of joint research proposals and reliably funded projects. Consequently, comparative and transnational issues in DG, which are of growing importance in an increasingly networked world, are not receiving the attention they deserve.

An International Digital Government Research Community of Practice
Trends in digital government research and the limited international experiences gained so far suggest at least three ways to internationalize investigations and bring the benefits (and the challenges) of multi-cultural perspectives to this important worldwide field of research:

• Create opportunities for scholars interested in particular domains of study to encounter the work of international colleagues and to engage in discussions that can lead to shared research agendas and joint projects, as well as the more traditional exchange of individual methods and findings.
• Encourage the investigation of international problems that governments routinely must address, such as drug interdiction, immigration, global trade regulation, or border control.
• Support comparative studies that seek universal theories and transferable practices by studying selected phenomena in a variety of cultural settings using consistent designs and methods, with explicit points of comparison and evaluation.
This project focused primarily on the first item as the means to achieve the second and third. It followed a four-year strategy to create opportunities and venues for international discussions to enable DG researchers and educators to advance their work through international collaboration. This strategy had several mutually reinforcing streams of work as follows:

1. International Digital Government Research Review (Reconnaissance Study)

A reconnaissance study identified and summarized the state of international DG research. The results are being used as a baseline benchmark for assessing its subsequent growth and development. The study is also informing the development of a global research network and associated comparative and transnational projects in the digital government domain. The study relied on interviews, literature reviews, and documentary analysis and addresses questions such as the following:

- What international problems are or have been the subject of digital government research efforts? What has been learned?
- What topics have been investigated using comparative methods across national boundaries? What has been learned?
- What problems and topics are or have been emphasized by different research sponsors?
- What are the patterns of investigation (problems, topics, methods, funding sources and mechanisms) in different parts of the world?
- What are the most important international organizations, and units, involved in this research area? Who are the principals?
- What are the most important research institutions, research conferences, journals, blogs, or other online sources of research information that span countries?

2. International Digital Government Research Working Groups

The investigators organized a competition to select and provide support for topical working groups modeled after the US–European "Transatlantic Transport Research" community of practice known as STAR-STELLA. Three groups were selected by peer review. Each group involved about 12-20 people, including both established researchers and doctoral students. For each group selected, travel support was provided from NSF funds for US participation over the course of three years, including travel support for at least two US doctoral students in each group. (As with STAR-STELLA, travel by participants from other countries was supported by other sponsors). The working groups provided an excellent way to introduce doctoral students to international research issues and programs, by participating under the supervision of their mentors in meetings and investigations that have the potential to become ongoing thematic areas early in their careers. The relationships formed in these venues will also create long-lasting professional connections that serve to further strengthen the network of international digital government researchers.

The first working group meeting in each topical area was a formal research agenda including both comparative questions (i.e., problems that occur in multiple countries) and transnational questions (i.e., problems that are international in scope). Over the course of two years, the working groups were in routine communication, co-authored journal articles as appropriate, participated in international conferences, such as "dg.o", "EGOV", HICCS, etc. Following the final meeting, each group produced a white paper authored jointly by the US and international participants that discusses the research challenges, recommended strategies for undertaking this research, and the accomplishments within its sub-domain. The white papers will be disseminated broadly within the international DG research community. We also expect these papers could be submitted in revised form to established journals or international conferences.

3. Summer Institute on Digital Government Research

An international summer institute on digital government research has provided an intensive residential program for comparing research themes, methods, and results, as well as for building a deeper mutual understanding of the multi-disciplinary nature of DG research. In the first year, an annual institute program for doctoral students was designed to address such topics as (1) explicit comparisons of the philosophies, questions, and methods among the disciplines that make up digital government research, (2) a review of pressing comparative and transnational research questions and ways to study them, (3) how to design an international investigation (4) how to manage an international project, (5) how to apply multi-method and multi-disciplinary approaches, etc. The grant provided a modest honorarium plus travel and residential expenses for five U.S. faculty per year, and
scholarships for up to ten U.S. doctoral students. International faculty expenses and similar student scholarships were covered by other sponsors. During the third year, CTG developed a business plan for making the institute self-sustaining, and is currently seeking funding for future Institutes.

Outcomes

Outreach and promotional activities included traditional mechanisms such as posting announcements, research papers, and calls-for-participation in events on various websites including the U.S. digital government research website (http://www.digitalgovernment.org), the Center for Technology in Government website (http://www.ctg.albany.edu), and the EU's e-government research website (http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/egovernment_research/index_en.htm). In addition to widely disseminating the results of the benchmark (reconnaissance) study, the study itself helped identify new outlets and mechanisms for increasing awareness and community building.

The knowledge created by the developmental working groups has been disseminated through presentations at international conferences, publications in scientific journals, and through other mechanisms such as list-serves, monthly electronic newsletters, etc. Each of the developmental working groups hosted an international workshop in conjunction with the Annual International Conference for Digital Government Research (dg.o). U.S. researchers receiving travel support for participating in conferences outside the US also publicized the existence of these efforts to encourage participation.

The international summer institute has increased awareness among doctoral candidates around the globe to sustain the next generation of digital government researchers, by extending their knowledge of support mechanisms and helping them to build a network of collaborators for future research endeavors.

Related Web Sites

Partnerships for International Research and Education (PIRE)
http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=12819

Partnerships for International Research and Education (PIRE), a program initiated in 2005 by the National Science Foundation, seeks to catalyze a cultural change in U.S. institutions by establishing innovative models for international collaborative research and education. The program will enable U.S. institutions to establish collaborative relationships with international groups or institutions in order to engender new knowledge and discoveries at the frontier and to promote the development of a globally-engaged, U.S. scientific and engineering workforce. Successful proposals will describe excellent, focused science and engineering research projects that are based on integrated research and education efforts, and substantive intellectual contributions from international collaborators who bring unique capabilities to the research activity.

E-Gov Golden Book
http://www.worldegovforum.com/?lang=en

The E-Gov Golden Book is an initiative of the World E-Gov Forum of 2006. It will feature biographies of 250 public and private sector individuals who have made a significant worldwide impact on the fields of e-Government and e-Democracy over the last five years. It is a starting point of a social network that is meant to enable worldwide collaboration and exchange of good practices among people facing similar issues and obstacles.

International Research Fellowship Program (IRFP)
http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5179

The objective of this fellowship program of the National Science Foundation is to introduce scientists and engineers in the early stages of their careers to international collaborative research opportunities. This will allow them to further their research capacity and global perspective and to forge long-term relationships with scientists, technologists and engineers abroad.

U.S. digital government research program website
http://www.digitalgovernment.org
The Digital Government Program funds research at the intersection of computer information sciences and government information services, with the goal of bringing advanced information technology to the government information community.

European Union's e-government research website

This thematic portal is an online guide through all relevant European union policies and activities related to a new information age. It provides information to address the recent transformation in the industrial landscape of the developed world, which through telecommunications liberalization, the explosive growth of the Internet, and the increasingly networked nature of business and society, have led to the birth of the Information Society (IS).

Roadmapping eGovernment 2020
http://www.egovrtd2020.org

CTG partnered in this project sponsored by the European Commission, and led by the University of Koblenz in Germany, involving nine international partners from European regions, the U.S., and Australia. The project identified and characterized the key research challenges and possible implementation models for holistic and dynamic governments in 2020 and beyond. The project is global in nature and included a review of the current status of e-government research, followed by a series of regional scenario-building workshops in which government, academic, and other participants collaborated to describe possible futures.

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