

Summary

The emergence of social media, open government, big data, and ICT-based forms of public participation, transparency and accountability hold promise for improving democratic processes and tackling intractable societal problems. Thanks to these trends, more sources, kinds, and amounts of information are infused into public interactions and policy decisions. However, these same technological and data-driven forces are significantly challenging traditional forms of governance, policy analysis, and service design. To address these challenges, we need a new kind of collaboration between research and practice and across academic disciplines. This situation presents both challenges and opportunities:

- the problems of ICT-supported policy making and governance are multi-faceted and therefore multidisciplinary
- these problems occur world-wide and therefore encompass different cultural approaches to research, development, and application
- the problems are both social and technical and thus demand integrated efforts across disciplines to develop and deploy innovative approaches and tools that are usable in practice settings.

CTG is involved in cultivating a new community of inquiry and practice (CoIP) within the public policy research and management arena, which is coming to be known as policy informatics. The goal of policy informatics is to find effective ways to use information and computation to understand and tackle complex problems of society. This goal demands not only new tools and methods, but a re-alignment of interests and relationships within the academic community and across research, education, and practice.

Scope of Work

CTG is involved in several activities geared toward cultivating a new community of inquiry and practice (CoIP) within the public policy research and management arena, which is coming to be known as policy informatics.

eGovPoliNet/Crossover

eGovPoliNet/Crossover is an opportunity to engage with an expanding international network of research institutions on the globally important challenges of information for governance and policy making. Unsolved problems in this domain exist simultaneously in different parts of the world. The project offers the opportunity to investigate in an international setting the social and technical networks that influence policy making and the data and information dimensions of policy analysis, decision making, and policy evaluation, with the potential both to identify universal factors and to understand how the same challenges play out differently in different cultural and political settings.

For CTG, involvement in eGovPoliNet/Crossover will enhance our work in the US which is focused on the value and use of government data for governance, policy-making, and social and economic benefit. CTG's current research on the value and use of government data (Cresswell, 2006; Harrison, et al., 2011; Dawes, 2011), public sector knowledge networks (Dawes, et al., 2009), and social media (Hrdinová, et al., 2010). eGovPoliNet will also advance our research interest in the formation and performance of transnational knowledge networks (Dawes, et al., 2012)) in that it is building a world-wide knowledge community in which we would participate as designers and contributors.

CTG is conducting a literature review on research in the US political environment about the use of ICTs for policy modeling, governance, and related topics such as evidence-based policy making and policy informatics. We will also participate in a comparative international analysis on these topics. A US-based workshop will be conducted to gather input from the digital government research and practice community about the existence of, need for, and concerns about the use of ICTs in this domain. We will also participate as senior faculty in annual doctoral colloquia; contribute and stimulate contributions to the international knowledge base and on-line community to be established under the project; and serve on the project steering committee.

Creating an informatics community among policy analysts

The 2011 APPAM Research Conference fostered the emergence of a new community of inquiry and practice (CoIP) within the APPAM community. Dubbed, "Policy Informatics," over 70 researchers and practitioners brought new energy and interest to the 2011 conference. This section came together as a result of the leadership of outgoing president-elect Sandra Archibald, University at Washington. As conference chair she created the conference theme that emphasized complexity in public policy inquiry and practice and encouraged practitioners

from communities not traditionally associated with APPAM to join discussions at APPAM. The result was a vibrant set of conference panels, symposia, and workshops organized around the dual themes of complexity and computation in the public policy process. In these sessions, a number of papers were presented on agent-based simulations, system dynamics simulations, data visualization methods, as well as on topics related to digital government, data sharing, and electronic governance.

Efforts are ongoing to develop this community of inquiry and practice in policy informatics within the APPAM community and to keep in touch with each other and invite our colleagues. Other goals specifically include:

- Promoting a rich program of policy informatics sessions at the APPAM 2012 and future conferences.
- Working toward special issues or edited volumes or other joint research-related to policy informatics.
- Creating structures and activities that relate our group to others in Europe and elsewhere.
- Creating structures that relate our group to communities of inquiry and practice (such as INFORMS, the System Dynamics Society, the Digital Government Society, the American Society for Public Administration's complexity section, and others).

Partners

Academic Partners

- David Andersen, Distinguished Service Professor, Department of Public Administration and Policy, Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, University at Albany, SUNY
- Alan Borning, Professor, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, University of Washington, Seattle, WA <http://www.washington.edu/>
- David Landsbergen, Chair, Doctoral Studies Committee, Ohio State University

Funding Sources

NSF grant IIS-0540069

Links/Join

Project Websites

- EgovPoliNet Project
- Crossover Project
- Policy Informatics Network

Join the Network by participating in one of the following open groups:

- LinkedIn Group: Policy-making 2.0
- ListServ: Policy Informatics Network (to join send a blank email to: PIN-L-SUBSCRIBE-REQUEST@LISTSERV.ALBANY.EDU)

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