Summary

While the primary use of records in government is to support and document specific business processes, responsible records managers must also ensure that these records are available for other important uses.

The growing demand for records to be available in electronic form and for direct access to these electronic records is changing the design and management of records access programs.

New technologies such as the Internet make it easy to share information, while data warehousing and data mining can help translate traditional historical analysis into a strategically useful day-to-day planning tool.

CTG and the New York State Archives and Records Administration partnered with National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) to develop a set of practical guidelines to support and promote secondary uses of electronic records. Through a combination of best practices and project-based research, the project addressed recordkeeping requirements in the context of the broad spectrum of historical and other secondary uses.

The project produced a guidebook called Opening Gateways: A Practical Guide for Designing Electronic Records Access Programs.

Publications & Results

Practical Guides (1)

Opening Gateways: A Practical Guide for Designing Information Access Programs
Wed, 18 Apr 2012

This Guide was originally published under the title of *Opening Gateways: A Practical Guide for Designing Electronic Records Access Programs* in 2000 and revised in 2002. Since it was issued, technological advances have given us a much broader array of tools and approaches to providing access to information. These advances have created a broader and in some ways more sophisticated community of potential users and stakeholders whose expectations of ease of access and immediacy of information have grown exponentially. These changes, combined with a social and political environment that demands public sector entities be more open and transparent in their operations, have put increased pressures on government to provide access to more and better information through readily accessible means such as the Internet.This guide is designed to help government agencies develop affordable, manageable, and effective information access programs. Given the changing technological and social environment, the type of planning processes facilitated by this Guide are more relevant than ever. The revisions have focused on updating many of the examples provided and language used as well as including an expanded discussion of program models available due to technological advances.

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Online Resources (1)

Opening Gateways: The Guide and Online Workbench
Sat, 01 Dec 2003

The online workbench is provided as a companion piece to **Opening Gateways: A Practical Guide for Designing Electronic Records Access Programs**. It is an interactive version of the Guide enhanced with features that support groups of people as they collaborate on the development of electronic records programs.

The growing demand for information to be available in electronic form and for direct access to this information is changing the design and management of electronic information access programs. Programs are:

- Increasingly focused on electronic rather than paper as the format desired by users.
- Shifting from staff-supported access models to direct-user access models, now made possible over the Web.

Making a successful transition to increasingly user- and usage-focused programs requires careful assessment of any desired program in terms of:

- the users
- the uses
- the content
- the operation
- the cost of a desired program.

This shift often requires program managers; the content experts, to join traditional information access professionals in a new way of working.

The Opening Gateways Guide and Workbench support this new way of working; they guide program managers and information access professionals in the creation of electronic information access programs that are effective, manageable, and affordable. They provide a framework for a design team to account for the specifics of the environment within which a program will exist.

Taking the environment into account in the design of electronic information access programs is a human process. The Gateways Guide and Workbench are not intended to replace that process, but to support it through a cycle of individual effort, group discussion, and integration of the best ideas from the group. This process depends on project managers who are skilled at cultivating individual commitment and group process and participants who have a stake in the outcome. The Workbench supports this process by organizing and sharing the information needed to reach a sound design. Together, the Guide and the Workbench provide a process and an analytical framework to ensure that a design team is able to focus on the complexity of information access program design.

The Opening Gateways Guide is a paper and a web based document that presents a strategy for designing electronic information access programs. The Guide presents a set of analytical tools to help groups of people as they collaborate on the design of electronic records access programs.

The Gateways Online Workbench is provided as a companion piece to the Guide. It is an interactive version of the Guide enhanced with features that support groups of people as they collaborate on the development of electronic information access programs. The Workbench design supports this group process by allowing multiple users to capture individual ideas and to contribute to group efforts through the Workbench's collaboration features.

Reports and Working Papers (1)

Exemplary Practices in Electronic Records and Information Access Programs
Thu, 01 Jul 2004

This current practices research report identifies and describes exemplary practices in providing electronic access to information.

This current practices research report identifies and describes exemplary practices in providing electronic access to information. It includes an examination of the professional academic literature, a review of Web-based resources, and a study of best practices in selected organizations.

Journal Articles and Conference Papers (1)

Designing electronic government information access programs: a holistic approach
December 13, 2003

That electronic government information repositories are growing in number, use, and diversity is one manifestation of the emergence of e-government. These information-centered programs both shape and respond to user demand for electronic government information as computer-mediated user access has displaced traditional staff-mediated access. These programs are no longer concentrated in statistical agencies but increasingly are offered by a wide array of mission-driven operating agencies to complement their other services. This study identified the design dimensions of electronic information access programs by examining mature existing programs. These dimensions address users, uses, organizational capabilities, data characteristics, and technology. The study then explored the application and interdependence of these dimensions in three efforts to design and develop new access programs. The study produced an empirically based, testable model of observable dimensions that shape the cost, complexity, and potential performance of these programs. In addition, the article offers government managers some insight into the practical implications they will face in designing and operating electronic information access programs.

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Press Releases & News Stories

Press Releases

UAlbany's Center for Technology in Government Launches Online Resource for Improving Access to Government Information
Fri, 19 Dec 2003

Meet the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)
Thu, 05 Jul 2001

First Gateways Project Chosen
Fri, 29 Jun 2001

Access to Electronic Records Focus of New Guidebook Center for Technology in Government Produces Practical Guidelines
Mon, 02 Apr 2001

Electronic Records Grant Awarded to New York Partnership
Sun, 01 Feb 1998

News Stories

CTG Awarded Electronic Records Grant: Celebrating a Research Opportunity

Innovations

February 1998

CTG Awarded Grant... Gateways to the Past, Present, and Future: Practical Guidelines to Secondary Uses of Electronic Records

Open Forum

January 1998

Partners

Government Partners
- New York State Archives and Records Administration
- New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Housing Services

Corporate Partners

- AlbanyNet, Inc. now known as VeraNet Solutions

Center for Technology in Government

- David Connelly, Graduate Assistant
- Meghan Cook, Project Management Specialist
- Sharon Dawes, Director
- Kristine Kelly, Research Associate
- Theresa Pardo, Project Director

Advisory Committee

The Gateways Advisory Committee will provide advice, information, and recommendations to the NYS Center for Technology in Government (CTG), and the New York State Archives on the activities and results of the project. The committee will be asked to provide feedback on the relevance of the issues and the design of the products and usefulness of the project results.

- Tora Bikson, Rand Corporation
- Lisa Brzezicki, MasterCard International
- Philip B. Eppard, Information Science and Policy, University at Albany
- Richard Farrell, University at Albany
- Paul Fisk, NYS Division of the Budget
- David Goodall, NYS Department of Motor Vehicles
- Steven Gorrie, State Farm Insurance Companies
- Eleanor Gossen, University at Albany
- Peter Hirtle, Cornell Institute for Digital Collections
- Robert Hord, Xerox Corporation
- Norman J. Jacknis, Westchester County
- Lloyd Lininger, School of Public Health, University at Albany
- Terrence Maxwell, NYS Forum for Information Resource Management
- Charles McClure, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University
- George Musa, NYS Psychiatric Institute
- Will Pelgrin, NYS Office for Technology
- Lisa Radcliffe, HELP USA
- Pamela Rinehart, US Patent & Trademark Office
- Kenneth Thibodeau, National Archives & Records Administration

Expert Panel

- Tora Bikson, Rand Corporation
- Phillip Coombs, Washington State Archives
- Philip B. Eppard, Information Science and Policy, University at Albany
- Robert Horton, Minnesota Historical Society
- Geoffrey Huth, New York State Education Department
- Alan Kowlowitz, NYS Office for Technology
- Ekkehard Mochmann, Central Archive for Empirical Social Research
- Andy Potter, National Archives & Records Administration

Funding Sources

Original Scope of Work

While the primary use of records in government is to support and document specific business processes, responsible records managers must also ensure that these records are available for other important uses: to support business processes in other agencies; to give the public access to needed information; to support the scientific analyses that are used to evaluate programs, inform policy-making, or plan facilities; and, finally, to serve as a legal and historical record of government decisions and operations.

Many people and organizations need government information: the researcher trying to understand trends in education, the local charity documenting the need for senior housing, an engineering firm preparing an environmental impact statement, a sixth-grader writing a term paper about the history of her town.

For example, information collected when issuing a birth or death certificate can have secondary uses for medical, genealogical, or demographic research. Data collected for police work can be useful in studying crime trends and meteorological data can be helpful in researching global climate changes. Increasingly, this information is being requested in an electronic format.

Many different kinds of organizations provide access to government information - libraries, government archives, and all kinds of public agencies at every level of government. Universities and nonprofit organizations may also be repositories of government information. They, too, are making the transition to a largely electronic way of working.

The growing demand for information to be available in electronic form and for direct access to these electronic records is changing the design and management of records access programs. Programs are shifting from staff-supported access models to direct user access models, now made possible over the Web. Making a successful transition to this increasingly electronic model requires careful assessment of the users, uses, content, operation, and cost of a desired program. This shift often requires program managers (content experts) to join traditional information access professionals in a new way of working.

The Center for Technology in Government and the New York State Archives and Records Administration will continue to expand their existing partnership with NHPRC to develop a set of practical guidelines to support and promote secondary uses of electronic records. Through a combination of best practices and project-based research, the proposed project will address recordkeeping requirements in the context of the broad spectrum of historical and other secondary uses. The project is designed to produce robust records management processes and models to ensure that the data maintained by government agencies will be available and useable for the widest variety of contemporary and future public needs.

The proposed project will address critical electronic records research issues. It will explore methods for ensuring long-term access to electronic records of outstanding social, cultural, and informational value for secondary research. It will investigate the use of innovative and emerging technologies for accomplishing this goal. The project will directly address the cost and benefits of preserving and making available electronic records of social and cultural significance.

The project will also explore the use of innovative resource-sharing approaches and emerging technologies to reduce the cost of preservation, access, and use. Most importantly, this project will conduct applied research that will yield practical tools with wide applicability across both public and private sector organizations. It will involve a critical partnership between records creators, a leading archival institution, and an award winning research institute known for applying academic knowledge to practical problems and generating implementable solutions.

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