

CTG Online News

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Students Helping to Open Government

Students from UAlbany's College of Engineering and Applied Sciences completed the critical first phase of CTG's project to help Digital Towpath, a digital government shared service for small and medium sized local governments in New York State, improve its electronic records management system so that governments can operate more efficiently, easily comply with records management laws, and be more open.

A pressing challenge for many local governments is the issue of records management, particularly the management of records created in digital form. The most efficient way to maintain these records is digitally, however, this is a challenge for local governments with limited technical capacity. As a result, many governments rely on paper output and manual processes that consume staff time, slow operations, increase costs, and affect citizens' ability to access government services and information.

To mitigate these challenges, DTP, which provides highly functional, low-cost web based tools and services to more than 130 local governments serving more than 650,000 residents in NY, sought CTG's expertise. Beginning in November of 2015, CTG began working with DTP to improve its electronic records management system. Upon arrival at CTG, Masters of Computer Science students Lalitkumar Borse, Sneha Jain, Reena Sharma, and Rahul Srivastava hit the ground running with a major task: analyze the existing electronic records management system (ERMS) to include a comprehensive mapping of the current system's code. While this may sound simple, it was no easy task; together the students spent hundreds of hours reverse engineering, deconstructing code, building a roadmap for future developers, and more. The students presented their work to DTP officials in May and perhaps most notably, their work will minimize the costs and difficulty of developing the new software needed to enhance the ERMS.

"We are highly impressed with the professionalism and attention to detail that the student team has shown in their work on this project," said Jeanne Brown of Digital Towpath. "Their work will help provide DTP government members throughout New York State with important tools they have not had in the past, which will help them operate more efficiently," she continued.

Reena says working on this project at CTG "has been a breakthrough for my professional career in the IT industry."

As CTG has found time and time again, new and improved technology alone is not enough to be truly transformative. As such, even after the new system has been built, CTG will continue working with DTP and its member governments to take a comprehensive look at their government information by addressing the policies and management practices that will help them to be more transparent and open.