

CTG Online News

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Big Data, Open Data and Opening Government – Identifying Stakeholder and User Capabilities

CTG recently hosted and participated in four workshops bringing together different clusters of users to examine big data, open data, and opening government. Understanding the diverse interests and needs of different stakeholder groups within the larger big and open data ecosystem are cornerstones of CTG's research programs on opening government and governance informatics. Past research has found that stakeholder involvement is an integral part of building capability, essential for meaningful use, and needed to recognize the public value of the investments.

Understanding how value is created through the process of opening data and working with governments to develop the capabilities necessary to create that value is at the heart of CTG's open government program.

These workshops focused on communities of stakeholders within public libraries, state government, and higher education institutions.

State Government

Bringing citizens into the work of government through opening data is not easy. In March CTG, in partnership with the State of New York, led a collaborative workshop entitled, Shaping Open NY: Visioning a New Transparency Hub. This workshop brought together community members and open government leaders to develop strategies to take the State's Open NY program to the next level.

The group identified several priority areas to strengthen including:

- stakeholder engagement,
- API capability,
- linking open data sites across the state,
- identifying and engaging municipalities,
- marketing, and
- continuing to foster a culture of openness.

The State will launch the new hub in the near future, implementing the best strategies culled from the workshop. Andrew Nicklin, Director, Open NY giving opening remarks at Shaping Open NY: Visioning a New Transparency Hub.

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Higher Education and Data Science

Research and investment in big data is growing in all sectors of our economy. On Monday, May 5, CTG co-hosted the President's Inaugural Forum on Big Data for the University at Albany. Experts shared leading multi-sector practices important for advancing data analytics and how best to prepare a new generation of college graduates to fill the fast-growing data scientist job market. Together, academics, students, government practitioners, and industry explored future investment options, current uses, and the possibilities for new curricula in data science that will meet the needs of 21st century organizations.

Theresa Pardo, CTG Director, moderating panel at the President's Forum on Big Data for the University at Albany.

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Public Libraries

Libraries are essential community organizations that operate many different kinds of programs. On Tuesday and Wednesday, May 7-8, in Alexandria, Virginia, CTG hosted a workshop on the Critical Role of Public Libraries in Enabling Open Government Stakeholders.

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With a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, through the 2013 Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program (LB21), CTG brought together 40 thought leaders from public libraries, academia, local, state, and federal government agencies, open government advocates, and the private sector to examine the ways that public libraries are able to prepare their communities to share and use information generated through open government and data initiatives.

Participants discussed opportunities in several key areas:

- strengthening and creating new partnerships,
- improving basic civic and digital literacy,
- identifying community interests, and
- sharing information across organizations and among community actors,

Building capability in these areas is likely to improve accountability and trust within the community as well as develop citizens' skills for being better information consumers.

Participants brainstorming ideas at the Critical Role of Public Libraries in Enabling Open Government Stakeholders workshop.

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Higher Education and Policy Informatics

Policy analysts working in government or non-profit agencies and public managers and elected officials need useful data and information and tools to match the complexity of the public problems they address. On May 9, CTG hosted a National Science Foundation-sponsored workshop (Grant #054069), in collaboration with eGovPoliNet Consortium (an EC FP7 project) exploring the integration of data-intensive analytical skills in public affairs education.

CTG was joined by 32 academics and practitioners from institutions across the US including Carnegie Mellon University, Cornell University, University at Albany, University of Vermont, Arizona State University, San Francisco State University, University of Victoria, BC, University of Koblenz, Germany, Delft University of Technology, and Ohio State University and representatives from New York State, New York City, Kid Risk, Inc., and the Millennium Institute.

Sharon Dawes, CTG Senior Fellow, moderating panel at Policy Informatics in the Public Administration Curriculum Workshop.

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Participants identified several areas for attention including ways to enrich curriculum with an appreciation for data, analytic tools, technologies, and modeling of many kinds. Other considerations included the type of public affairs program, the size of the program, and whether students were 'just beginning careers' or were 'mid-level executives.' Participants also noted that curriculum needs to address the differences between 'information and data for policy-making' and 'policy-making for data and information,' but emphasized both involve concerns about privacy, confidentiality, ethical use of information, accountability, and other principles.

The results of the OpenNY, IMLS, and Policy Informatics workshops will be made available soon.