

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Alison Heaphy
(518) 442-4598

UAlbany Center for Technology in Government Receives Federal Grant to Explore the Role of Public Libraries in Open Government

The Center for Technology in Government (CTG) at the University at Albany will bring together thought leaders from academia, government, and private and non-profit organizations to explore the ways public libraries can help governments achieve their open government agendas.

The project is supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) through a 2013 Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program (LB21) grant.

State and local governments across the U.S. are investing in new ways to open their governments by using technology to engage citizens and increase transparency and accountability. Such efforts have placed increased pressure on public libraries as citizens turn to those libraries for both access to and assistance in their interactions with government.

"This is an important investment for CTG at the University at Albany to explore new ways for people to access and engage with government," said U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. "Libraries have always played an important role in our communities, and this initiative will ensure that they continue that service by helping to open governments to better engage citizens and increase the accessibility, transparency and accountability of government."

"We expect this national forum, led by the University at Albany's Center for Technology in Government, will build understanding of the evolving role of libraries as public information hubs in the digital age," said Dr. Nancy L. Zimpher, Chancellor, State University of New York. "SUNY is proud to bring together leaders in open government and the library community for this important initiative."

"One missing element in our efforts to create more open governments is full understanding of the role of public libraries in the larger open government ecosystem," said Theresa Pardo, CTG Director. "Citizens regularly turn to their public libraries for help when engaging with government, but how new investments in open government are influencing the nature and frequency of interactions between citizens and libraries is unclear. This grant will be instrumental in building new understanding of the current and future role of public libraries in the open government ecosystem."

Through a briefing paper and national forum slated for 2014, the project will explore:

- Issues faced by local governments and public libraries in building open government partnerships in the context of a community information ecosystem;
- Benefits and opportunities such partnerships would offer to both types of entities;
- Capabilities needed by librarians and local government officials that would be prerequisites to engaging in partnerships; and
- Environmental or ecosystem factors that could facilitate the development of effective partnerships.

"Public libraries have always helped citizens find information about local government programs and services," said Susan Hildreth, director, IMLS. "As government agencies provide more services online, public libraries are taking on an ever greater role in connecting the public to these services. We are pleased to be supporting a project that explores ways libraries and local government can work together to ensure that citizen access goes beyond services to engagement."

"As home to one of the world's first colleges of computing and information, UAlbany has a long history of educating librarians through its undergraduate and graduate information science program," said Peter Bloniarz, Dean, College of Computing and Information. "We are excited for the opportunity to participate in CTG's national forum to share our knowledge and expertise. This is an important collaboration between library professionals, researchers, and local governments, as they explore best practices in the realm of open government and transparency."

Ultimately, UAlbany's LB21 project will propose actionable models to guide public libraries and local governments as they work together to support and enhance open government and transparency initiatives. The LB21 invests in the nation's information infrastructure by funding projects designed to address the education and training needs of the professionals who help build, maintain, and provide public access to the world's wide-ranging information systems and sources.

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The mission of the Center for Technology in Government at the University at Albany is to foster public sector innovation, enhance capability, generate public value, and support good governance. We carry out this mission through applied research, knowledge sharing, and collaboration at the intersection of policy, management, and technology. For more information visit www.ctg.albany.edu.

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