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Technology  
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Government

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Albany, SUNY

## Resource to Help Managers Use Information in Government

Government managers constantly face obstacles when using information to do their jobs. But they'll soon have a new resource to guide them through the issues that influence and shape public sector projects.

*Putting Information to Work: A Guide for Government Managers* is the working title for this Web-based resource designed to make public managers more informed and effective information users. The Guide presents the lessons learned during CTG's two-year *Using Information in Government Program* involving seven New York state and local agencies. The site, which will be accessed from [www.ctg.albany.edu](http://www.ctg.albany.edu), is scheduled to launch in November.

The Guide builds awareness of the issues public managers should consider when using information to develop plans, create and assess programs, and deliver services to citizens and businesses. The Web site addresses these issues, which fall into five categories:

1. Policy – This section covers the laws, policies, and regulations that govern the use of information.
2. Data – Here we discuss the issues related to data quality, standards, integrity, and use.
3. Skills – This topic details the variety of skills needed to both use information and manage information initiatives.
4. Cost Factors – The costs associated with using information in government are outlined here.
5. Technology – In this area, we present how to find the right technology fit for your organization's needs.

Each of these areas contains a brief discussion of the pertinent issues, key points, practical examples from

New York government agencies, and links to external resources. For example, here's how the policy category is presented:

- The policy story covers the two main policy principles that guide information use. The story explains the principles and provides links to specific examples of relevant state and federal government policies.
- The key points briefly outline the most important policy issues that are discussed more extensively in the full story.
- The practical examples in the policy area illustrate how government agencies in the *Using Information in Government Program* handled such information policy issues as confidentiality, information use, decision support, availability of data, and electronic records.
- The policy links give users direct access to a variety of external sources of information-related policies from government, academic, and other organizations.

The Guide's contents can be accessed several ways. You can:

- Get the full overview – The topic stories contain a full overview of the issues and practical examples.
- Read FAQs – A list of frequently asked questions links users to the sections of the site that contain the answers.
- View the Guide summary – This gives you links to a white paper about the Guide, agency cases, and key points about each category.

All of the lessons and knowledge contained in the Guide were gleaned from our work on the *Using Information in Government Program*. The goal of that research was to help state and local governments



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work through the policy, management, and technology issues they face when using information to carry out their missions. Our work with these government partners on the following projects proved invaluable when developing the content for the Guide.

- NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Shelter Services – A prototype information resource that integrates data from disparate sources and enables the evaluation of services for homeless people
- Office of the NYS Comptroller, Division of Municipal Affairs – A business case to garner support for a system that will provide desktop access to information needed to assist the Division in supporting municipalities
- Central New York Psychiatric Center – A business case to generate executive support and funding for an Intranet database designed to increase staffing efficiencies at 19 satellite facilities
- Office of the State Comptroller – A stakeholder analysis to determine the current and future needs of agencies that use the state's central accounting system
- NYS Office of Real Property Services – A stakeholder analysis to learn how the Office can support local assessors in their efforts to implement annual property reassessments
- NYS Department of Transportation – Lessons on assessment and analysis tools to help refine a new information technology investment process
- New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications – A series of workshops to determine the issues operating agencies face when using information and to inform the development of a strategic information management model

The site is the result of an intense six-month development and testing process. CTG staff spent the summer developing the framework, writing the content, and designing the user interface. The CTG Standing Committee provided advice that enabled us to improve the navigation and make it easier to use. We piloted two areas of the site—policy and data—at the Government Technology East Conference in Albany in September. There we asked a



number of government practitioners to review the site for usability and content. Their feedback helped us refine the Guide and complete the rest of the content. We're on target to publicly launch the site in November.

If you'd like to know when the Guide becomes available, call CTG at (518) 442-3892 or send an e-mail to [info@ctg.albany.edu](mailto:info@ctg.albany.edu) and we'll add you to our notification list. We'll also post a notice on the CTG Web site, so you can check [www.ctg.albany.edu](http://www.ctg.albany.edu). And we'll send out a CTG Web News so subscribers to this e-mail list know when the Guide is launched.

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1535 Western Avenue  
Albany, NY 12203  
(518) 442-3892 (phone)  
(518) 442-3886 (fax)  
[info@ctg.albany.edu](mailto:info@ctg.albany.edu)  
<http://www.ctg.albany.edu>



Writer/Editor:  
*Stephanie Simon*  
Designer:  
*Sally Goodall*

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# Electronic Records Project Produces Practical Guidelines

E-government. E-commerce. E-solutions. But what about e-records? Whether your agency is doing business via the Internet or just keeping track of contacts through a database, it's important to understand the unique issues relating to managing and providing access to electronic records.

CTG recently completed a two-year project on how public and private sector organizations save, maintain, and retrieve electronic business records for primary and secondary uses. *Gateways to the Past, Present, and Future: Practical Guidelines to Secondary Uses of Electronic Records* involved experts from across the country and resulted in a set of practical guidelines that will help organizations respond to the growing demand for information in electronic form and for direct access to these electronic records.

"The growing demand for information available in electronic form and for direct access to electronic records—including data sets, documents, images, and audio files—is changing the design and management of records access programs. Programs are becoming increasingly focused on electronic records and electronic access models as the means of providing access to users," said Theresa Pardo, CTG project director.

"This transition involves the complex process of designing and implementing electronic records access programs," she said. "It involves an assessment of the users,

uses, content, operation, and cost of a desired program."

That's where the main product from the *Gateways* project enters the picture. "A Practical Guide for Designing Electronic Records Access Programs" details four tools—for assessment, diagnosis, program design, and cost estimation—organizations can use to create effective, manageable, and affordable electronic records access programs. The guidebook can be used to develop new programs or to revise existing ones.

The tools in the guidebook help electronic access providers work through the various stages of electronic records access program design and development:

- Assessment tool – Use this tool to get the "big picture" of the considerations you must take into account when designing such a program.
- Diagnostic tool – This exercise helps you understand the interactions among different policies, management mechanisms, and technologies involved in the access program.
- Program design tool – Use this activity to study characteristics, interactions, and alternatives that will enable you to determine the main features of the program design.
- Cost estimation tool – This tool helps you work through the various costs of implementing and operating the program.

The guidebook was created through a collective effort and extensive research. The project team investigated current practices in electronic records management. Researchers interviewed more than 20 people from across the country whose jobs involve providing access to electronic information for secondary uses.

CTG also organized the Gateways Advisory Committee to provide advice and feedback. This group of information technology and electronic records professionals came from such organizations as the NYS

Division of the Budget, Syracuse University Center for Science and Technology, and Xerox Corporation. The full Committee met twice and dealt with such issues as the definitions of primary and secondary use, models of information use, and the contents of the practical guidelines.

"The Advisory Committee gave us excellent reactions to our work," Pardo said. "They were very engaged throughout the process and gave us very useful feedback."

The project team also studied two CTG projects with significant electronic records components—the *Kids Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse* (KWIC) and the *Homeless Information Management System* (HIMS). The KWIC is a prototype Web-based resource that addresses the need for more rapid and timely access to indicator data about children. The HIMS prototype is a Web-based integrated data repository with homeless service information from local governments, program providers, and state agencies. These two projects were chosen for their potential as providers of electronic records for secondary uses.

Once the bulk of the *Gateways* work was completed, the project team convened an Expert Panel to provide feedback on the findings. This group of electronic records experts hailed from such diverse organizations as the Washington State Archives, Rand Corporation, the National Archives and Records Administration, and the University of Cologne, Germany.

The *Gateways* project was funded in part by a \$350,000 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

The *Gateways* report will be published by the end of the year. Stay tuned to CTG's Web site to learn when it is available. You can also call 518-442-3892 or e-mail [info@ctg.albany.edu](mailto:info@ctg.albany.edu) and request a copy be mailed to you once the guide is published.

# New Project Reports Available

Determining the needs of system users was the focus of two recent CTG projects, both of which are detailed in new reports.

As part of the *Using Information in Government Program*, we engaged in collaborative projects with the Office of the State Comptroller and the NYS Office of Real Property Services. We worked with both agencies on a series of workshops to determine the needs of system users. The Comptroller's Office wanted to find out the current and future financial management needs of agencies that use the central accounting system, while Real Property Services wanted to learn how to support local assessors as they implement annual property reassessment programs.

The Comptroller's Office project is outlined in "New York State Central Accounting System Stakeholder Needs Analysis," which was released in August. The 33-page report details the project's background, activities, and recommendations.

The central accounting system is the backbone of New York's financial and budgetary operations. The almost 20-year-old mainframe legacy system issues 15,000 payments every day and processes 17.5 million transactions each year. Despite its strengths, the Comptroller's Office recognizes the limitations of the system in terms of potential future needs and uses.

"Solid maintenance and enhancement of the system over time has allowed the (system) to keep pace with change in key areas, including pre-audit and payment processing," said Theresa Pardo, CTG project director and report lead author. "However, there is an increasing gap between what the (system) can do and the accounting and financial management needs of state agencies and other stakeholders."

The Comptroller's Office recognized the importance of gathering users' needs before pursuing any system modifications. The agency partnered with CTG on a critical first step of this process—a stakeholder needs analysis of the agencies that use the accounting system. CTG guided the Office through the problem definition phase, supported the agency's best practices research, collaborated in designing and conducting 13 user needs workshops, analyzed findings, and produced recommendations.



Those recommendations include:

- Improve and integrate existing business processes and workflows
- Formally study how other organizations have dealt with the pressure on their central systems to provide new and extended functionality
- Continue to develop relationships with agencies and seek opportunity for convergence of efforts
- Continue to assist users in understanding the current central accounting system functionality and terminology

These recommendations will help the Comptroller's Office move forward in its effort to ensure that decisions about the future of the system are made with the fullest understanding of stakeholder needs and the surrounding environment.

The Real Property Services project is detailed in "Reassessing New York: A Collaborative Process," which was released in September. The 34-page report details the findings.

Real Property Services is working to ensure fairness and equity in the state's real property tax system. Toward that goal, the agency recently instituted a program to provide more state aid to municipalities that conduct annual property reassessments. CTG joined with the agency to determine what kind of support assessors need to institute the program.

Six user needs workshops were conducted across the state. More than 160 assessors and county directors shared their reactions to the new annual reassessment program and identified the resources they need to

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implement it. A final workshop brought together representatives from Real Property Services and the local assessor community who collaboratively reviewed the findings and developed a series of recommendations based on these themes:

- Allow for multiple methodologies for achieving equity
- Formulate a set of rules, regulations, and guidelines that would standardize a full value assessment process
- Allow local governments to choose the methodology that works best in their particular setting within the established rules, regulations, and guidelines
- Educate and reach out to citizens and local officials regarding efforts for ongoing roll maintenance with the Office taking an active lead
- Funnel maintenance aid directly to assessors' offices
- Change the Real Property Tax Law to require annual reassessment for a period not to exceed three years at 100 percent of value, and provide appropriate enforcement, funding, and methods

A series of recommendations, coupled with a list of action items, will help the agency move forward with its program.

“All parties energetically engaged in this effort and expressed willingness to stay involved in the future,” said Mark LaVigne, CTG project associate and report lead author. “They have expressed their appreciation for the complexity of the property tax assessment system, and their dedication to improving equity for all New Yorkers—who, as taxpayers, are the primary stakeholders of this program.”

For hard copies of these CTG project reports, call us at (518) 442-3892 or send an e-mail to [info@ctg.albany.edu](mailto:info@ctg.albany.edu). You can download electronic copies from our Web site.

- The Comptroller's Office report is at [www.ctg.albany.edu/resources/pdfrwp/osc\\_cas\\_analysis.pdf](http://www.ctg.albany.edu/resources/pdfrwp/osc_cas_analysis.pdf).
- The Real Property Services report is at [www.ctg.albany.edu/resources/pdfrwp/uig\\_orps.pdf](http://www.ctg.albany.edu/resources/pdfrwp/uig_orps.pdf).

## Update Information Online

Want to receive CTG publications? Need to update your contact information? Now you can take care of these two tasks online.

A quick visit to [www.ctg.albany.edu/contact.html](http://www.ctg.albany.edu/contact.html) will take care of your needs. From this page you can fill out forms to: be added to our paper mail database and receive regular mailings from CTG, or change your contact information in that database. So whether you want to receive our quarterly newsletter, or just need to tell us that you've changed jobs, you can do it quickly and easily via our Web site.

## Untangle the Web

Everyone's getting on the Web. From Fortune 500 companies to small towns, private and public sector organizations are clamoring to establish themselves and their businesses on the Internet. And while everyone wants to get on the Web, they don't all have the same resources and know-how to make it happen.

Local governments—with their often limited resources—face unique challenges when launching Web sites. CTG's upcoming publication, “Untangle the Web: Delivering Municipal Services Through the Internet,” is designed to help local governments work through the process of creating and implementing informational Web sites.

“Untangle the Web” is a short handbook that guides municipalities through a seven-stage process. Special attention is paid to the environment in which local governments operate. The guide provides strategies and techniques for local government managers to follow as they work through the following Web development stages:

- Assemble the right team
- Gather ideas
- Set objectives
- Design the site
- Implement the plan
- Manage the service
- Evaluate the impact

The guide will be published this fall. Stay tuned to CTG's Web site at [www.ctg.albany.edu](http://www.ctg.albany.edu) to learn when “Untangle the Web” is available. You can also call 518-442-3892 or e-mail [info@ctg.albany.edu](mailto:info@ctg.albany.edu) and request a copy be mailed to you once the guide is published.

# Site Redesign Keeps Users in Mind

CTG recently began an extensive process to redesign our Web site. And while some organizations make only cosmetic changes to update their sites, our main goal is to create a completely user-centered site.

The first stage of this comprehensive process can be seen now at

[www.ctg.albany.edu](http://www.ctg.albany.edu).

The new home page has a whole different look and organization structure. The page features a collage photo banner at the top, and a blue and beige color scheme.

The main section of the home page

describes the type of work we do and highlights the benefits of our research. This area also includes a “new features” section that lists new products written by, or about, CTG. At times, this section may also include announcements about CTG activities or changes to the Web site. The column on the left side of the home page showcases the seven topic areas that encompass all CTG projects and products.

Each topic area also has its own page detailing the projects and products that are linked under that heading. The new topic areas are:

- Building Interorganizational Knowledge Networks
- Making a Case for IT Investment
- Using and Sharing Information
- Creating and Using Electronic Records
- Managing Intergovernmental Projects
- Delivering Services on the Web
- Designing Digital Government



All of our projects, programs, products, and other work will be organized in these areas. Work with overlapping goals and outcomes may be linked in more than one area. The goal is to make it easier for users to quickly find and access the information they need. Instead of organizing the site by the way we do our work, it's organized by the way users try to access our information.

Over the next year, we'll continue to modify the site following the user-centered approach. We encourage you to visit the site periodically to check on our progress. And please e-mail your comments to [webmaster@ctg.albany.edu](mailto:webmaster@ctg.albany.edu).



*Through the CTG Speakers Bureau, Center staff share our innovations and practices with colleagues in the government, academic, and technology communities, as well as the general public. This column highlights some of the connections we've made in recent months.*

## July

We participated in the E-government Excellence Conference in Washington, DC, with officials from all areas of the federal government. "Building a Digital Government for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" was the subject of our talk.

"Beyond Technology: The Realities of Data Integration" was the topic of our presentation at the Digital Government consortium meeting in Washington, DC. The meeting brought together partners in the National Science Foundation's digital government program. We discussed the realities of data integration through our work on the *Homeless Information Management System* and *Kids Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse* projects.

Two Italian colleagues spent a week-long study visit at CTG. Francesco Nesci of Instituto RSO and Vittorio Macchitella of the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce learned about the CTG model first hand by working side-by-side with staff in meetings and project discussions.

Civic.com, which covers the state and local information technology field, featured an article on our first international project. The *Multinational Investigation of New Models of Collaboration for Government Services to Citizens*

project will study how public-private partnerships are created and maintained in different nations.

## August

Several CTG directors participated in the Academy of Management conference in Toronto, Ontario. They presented a paper, "Partnership Effectiveness in Public Sector Information Technology," to members of the Academy's Public and Nonprofit Division.

Change management was the topic of a presentation we gave at the New York State Probation Officers Association annual conference in Albany, NY.

We presented a paper, "Getting the Story Right: Talk and Text in the Restructuring of Public Sector Interorganizational Relations," at the Text and Talk at Work International Conference in Gent, Belgium.

## September

We joined federal government representatives at the Interagency Resources Management Conference in Williamsburg, VA. We participated in a panel on "Horizontal Government: Changing to Inter/Intra-Governmental Information Management."

We participated in the Government Technology East Conference in Albany, NY. Our recent work was highlighted under the theme "Using Information in Government" at a booth in the Government Solutions Center.

We discussed the *Homeless Information Management System* (HIMS) project with the "Introduction to Data Warehouse" class at the University of Albany's Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy. The HIMS project involved bringing data from disparate sources into a fully integrated data repository.

# Kudos

Our talented staff is an integral part of CTG's success. So it's with pride that we wish two of our own well in their latest ventures.

CTG Director of Program Development  
**Peter Bloniarz** is



the new interim director of the University at Albany's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). His goal is to help CETL fulfill its mission of improving the quality of teaching and learning on campus, and to help faculty work with technologies that support the learning process. Peter will continue his association with CTG through work on two National Science Foundation grants, as well as his duties as director of the University's Information Science Ph.D. Program.

Graduate Assistant  
**David Connelly** left



CTG in August to become an assistant professor in the Political Science Department of Western Illinois University in Macomb, IL. David was an integral member of the project and research teams during his five years at CTG. His new position allows him to fulfill his goal of teaching public administration and political science at the collegiate level. He recently finished doctoral course work in public administration at the University at Albany, and is working on his dissertation.

# Exploring New Frontiers

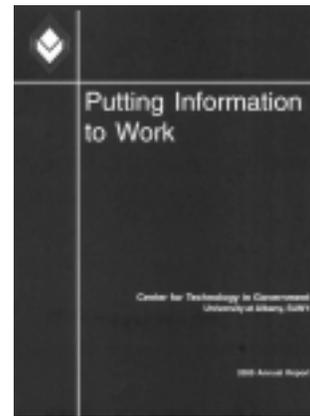
Our latest annual report—which covers July 1, 1999 through June 30, 2000—is now available. “Putting Information to Work” highlights the projects, programs, and other work we conducted during the past year.

Last year was full of accomplishments for CTG. We like to call it our “year of firsts.” In 1999-2000 we had our:

- First project with a local government – the New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications on managing information decisions
- First project with a federal agency – the US Department of Justice on building business cases for integrating justice information systems

- First engagement with a global organization – the United Nations on managing electronic records
- First grant for international research – *Multinational Investigation of New Models of Collaboration for Government Services to Citizens and Businesses* project with Quebec-based Le Centre Francophone d’Informatisation des Organisations
- First 7-figure research grant – \$1 million from the National Science Foundation for the *Knowledge Networking in the Public Sector* project

The annual report also showcases our continuing projects – including the two-year *Using Information in Government Program* and the *Kids Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse*. Our corporate, government, and academic partners are also highlighted.



To receive a hard copy of the annual report, call (518) 442-3892 or send an e-mail to [info@ctg.albany.edu](mailto:info@ctg.albany.edu). Or you can download a copy from the CTG Web site at [www.ctg.albany.edu/resources/news/ar2000.pdf](http://www.ctg.albany.edu/resources/news/ar2000.pdf)



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University at Albany, SUNY  
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Albany, NY 12203

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