Electronic Government in Utah

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Introduction  
The way the business of government is done is changing. Just as business has tapped into technology to change the way customers interact with them, government is also finding new ways to serve and interact with citizens. As the world increases its use and dependence on digital technology, electronic forms of government offer a possibility of a “new environment for public communication which is interactive, relatively cheap to enter, unconstrained by time or distance, and inclusive” (Coleman and Gøtze 2001, 1).

This paper is an overview of electronic government. It seeks to define the term, discuss why it is important, and how e-Government reaches maturity. Questions of the “digital divide” and concerns of policymakers are addressed. The focus then turns to Utah, where we examine the issues causing Utah to be at the forefront of e-Government, and how governments in Utah are using digital technology to advance and improve service to citizens.

Defining Electronic Government  
Defining “electronic government” (e-Government) is somewhat elusive, but in basic terms it concerns “the use of digital technology in the management and delivery of public services, predominantly through the Internet” (Edmiston 2003, 20). There are many other terms that are used in reference to e-Government, terms such as “e-Democracy,” “e-Governance,” and “online citizenship.” The differences between these are significant. For the purposes of this article, we will define e-Government as the provision of services, such as renewing a driver license online or accessing services and information in order to do business with government agencies. The other terms are more difficult to define and are best understood in context of the maturity models (discussed in the next section), but here are some basic definitions:

*E-Democracy* is a narrow term, describing purely political participation through voting and so on. This has also been referred to as “direct democracy.”

*E-Governance* implies more of a two-way communication with citizens than e-Government offers, allowing comment and contact with policymakers.

*Online citizenship* is a broader term encompassing all levels of interaction with government. However, it takes into account some citizen-related rights and can spill over into the general discussion of how technology can change the very essence of citizenship.
The Importance and Influence of Electronic Government

The way citizens interact with business is changing. The use of the Internet is increasing, and government is no exception. This is a trend that will continue and government must keep up. The Pew Center on Internet and American Life “Future of the Internet III” report asked respondents to assess predictions about technology and its roles in the year 2020. The key results are below.

- The mobile device will be the primary connection tool to the Internet for most people in the world in 2020.
- The transparency of people and organizations will increase, but that will not necessarily yield more personal integrity, social tolerance, or forgiveness.
- Voice recognition and touch user-interfaces with the Internet will be more prevalent and accepted by 2020.
- Those working to enforce intellectual property law and copyright protection will remain in a continuing arms race with hackers who will find ways to copy and share content without payment.
- The divisions between personal time and work time and between physical and virtual reality will be further erased for everyone who is connected, and the results will be mixed in their impact on basic social relations.
- Next-generation engineering of the network to improve the current Internet architecture is more likely than an effort to rebuild the architecture from scratch (Pew Center on Internet and American Life, 2008).

It is clear that as citizens become increasingly reliant upon the Internet to obtain information, provide feedback, and access services online, government must follow suit. As Coleman and Gøtze (2001, 1) state,

“Most developed democracies have established e-Government agendas, which are mainly concerned to deliver government services online. E-Government policies hold out the prospect of greater cost efficiencies as well as broader public convenience, but there is no intrinsic link between successful e-Government and strengthened democracy. Some of the world leaders in e-Government service delivery are far from being democracies. The challenge is to create a link between e-Government and e-democracy - to transcend the one-way model of service delivery and exploit for democratic purposes the feedback paths that are inherent to digital media. So, instead of citizens simply being able to pay their taxes online (hardly a joy for most people), they would be able to enter into a public debate about how their taxes are spent.”

E-Government Maturity Models

E-Government maturity models describe the stages of development for e-Government. There are many different models but they basically all present the same idea; that e-Government progresses through various stages on its way to maturity. The stages are information, basic service delivery, integrated service delivery, and interactive democracy. One well-known model is Darrell West’s four-stage model (West 2005, 8).

Stage 1 is the “billboard stage.” This stage uses static mechanisms which display information; basically an online brochure. Citizens have no opportunity for interaction or two-way
communication with government. They can only access information but cannot search for exactly what they want, or ask questions.

Stage 2 is the “partial service-delivery stage.” E-Government at this stage allows citizens to access, sort and search information, but does not allow two-way dialogue. Citizens are still recipients and not participators, but searchable websites are useful to citizens because they can find specific information rather than just what governments want them to see. This puts more power in the hands of the user.

Stage 3 is the “portal stage.” This stage gives citizens access to full integrated service delivery, effectively creating “one-stop shops.” Utah.gov is an example of integration at the portal stage. One Stop Business Registration, a service that allows citizens to register a brand new business with the Tax Commission, Department of Commerce, Workforce Services, federal government, and their local municipality is an example of this. For example www.utah.gov has one place where citizens can obtain many state government services. While this stage does give more control to citizens, it is “characterized by a more service-delivery mentality than by a vision of transforming democracy” (West 2005, 10), because citizens don’t get to participate in any kind of decision-making.

Stage 4 is “interactive democracy.” This stage embraces public outreach and accountability measures, where citizens are asked for opinions and ideas. This is the stage that moves toward e-Governance. Utah is slowly moving into this realm. The first step is to provide typically unavailable information to citizens. An example is transparency.utah.gov where all financial transactions at the state level will be searchable online. Utah government is also Twittering to send daily and specific information out to those who are interested. Many agencies are using YouTube which is open for public comment, and the Senate has been blogging and allowing public comment for some time now.

Most citizens are not experiencing stage 4 of e-Government. However, Utah has at least partially progressed through the maturity models to include some aspects of it, and is beginning to think about what comes next. There are a lot of areas where advancements in technology are creating opportunities for government to give citizens control over future outcomes.

“As a recognized leader in digital government strategies and tactics, the State of Utah will work to identify and implement innovative and effective ways of fulfilling the expectations of its citizens and their elected officials” (2009-2011 Utah Strategic eGov plan).

**Benefits of E-Government**
There are several real or perceived benefits to e-Government. These include improved access to government services, increased efficiency, enhanced democracy, improved customer service, and accuracy of data.

**Improved Access to Government Services**
Many citizens who reside in urban and suburban areas enjoy a level and variety of government services that is not always available or feasible in rural areas. This is mainly because of the lack of demand in a small area, meaning that the cost outweighs the benefits. Use of digital
technology has potential to change that, and if citizens are able to access government services online, there could be a greater variety available to them because they can exploit economies of scale by tapping into the urban services.

The use of new technology-based services is particularly useful in the areas of health and education (Edmiston 2003, 21). For example, in cases of trauma such as stroke care, rapid diagnosis and treatment can make a huge difference. In Utah the introduction of Telestroke is one way that this is being used. Similarly, in education, the use of Internet technology has greatly increased the use of distance education, making it more accessible to rural areas and to “non-traditional” students.

**Increased Efficiency**

There are various efficiencies that can be made from electronic government. The real benefit comes from being able to do things cheaper and better. This efficiency is about reducing the cost to citizens of using public services (Edmiston 2003, 22). So, for example, if it costs $20 to renew a driver’s license online, that is the total cost. To renew this in person there are additional costs of time to visit the agency in person, such as gas or other transportation costs, which are higher in most rural communities due to the distances involved.

An example of how Utah has seen increased efficiency through e-Government is from the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT). In 2007, UDOT implemented an online licensing service. Once the online process became the only process accepted by the department, the agency was able to reassign six data entry personnel from the task of data entry to a much-needed function of inspecting port of entries. This has resulted in safety improvements and reduced processing times, so the net result has actually been much more than just an improved process for receiving incoming license applications (State of Utah E-Gov Plan). In addition, the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) completes 30% of vehicle registration renewals online. It is estimated that this online service does the work of two large DMV offices.

**Enhanced Democracy**

Communication between citizens and government officials can be much enhanced by electronic communication, because of the ease and speed of contact. However, marketing of e-Government to constituents and public administrators can be difficult. Utah’s usage rates for e-Government, however, have been high, with over 1 million unique users by January 2008, and more expected in the coming months and years (2009-2011 Utah Strategic eGov plan).

The job of public administrators is not only to build useful websites and other information portals but also to get the citizenry to use it because cost savings and efficiencies can only be made when this happens.

There can also be issues with a percentage of public administrators who are reluctant to make the switch to electronic services, sometimes holding on to the past. This can happen especially when paper-based systems are changed for electronic ones in important areas such as the provision of justice or in accounting practices where record-keeping is essential.
**Improved Customer Service**

E-Government can improve customer service because the Internet can handle all routine transactions and information, leaving agency specialists available to help with the more complex situations. In addition, citizens find it more convenient because, for example, they no longer have to take a day off work to visit the DMV office, wait "on hold" to find out simple information, or do complex calculations when submitting taxes.

**Increased Data Accuracy**

E-Government can increase data accuracy because filings done online are much more accurate than paper filings, and searches done online are much more likely to pull up the correct record.

**Concerns of Policymakers**

There are many concerns that policymakers have about e-Government, particularly if it goes as far as opening up the policy-making process to greater public involvement. Coleman and Gøtze (2001, 8) summarize the concerns:

“…might citizens expect politicians to become creatures of their will? Is there a danger that online engagement will give rise to a form of ‘technopopulism’, whereby the loudest, best resourced, most confident or most prejudiced voices of the public come to dominate the debate? Might online engagement encourage a form of government by focus group, with crass impressions and half-formed opinions serving as a substitute for rational deliberation? If the public is to enter the democratic policy-making process, is there an acknowledged point of entry and trusted space for debate, or is there a danger of the process fragmenting into countless discourses in which self-interested groups speak to themselves?”

These questions are not related just to e-Governance; however, they are questions about democracy that have been debated for many years. Coleman and Gøtze argue that engaging citizens in policy-making actually strengthens the representative relationship by providing new opportunities for citizens to connect with their representatives, making the system of government less remote. They also argue that “The alternative to engaging the public will not be an unengaged public, but a public with its own agenda and an understandable hostility to decision-making processes which appear to ignore them. By bringing citizens into the loop of governance, opportunities for mutual learning occur: representatives can tap into the experiences and expertise of the public and citizens can come to understand the complexities and dilemmas of policy-making.”

There has always been a dichotomy between policy-makers and the public. Coleman and Gøtze argue that the public has “considerable expertise” and that the trick for government is to tap into this to assist in policy-making (Coleman and Gøtze 2001).

West (2005) takes a different tack and discusses some specific concerns of policy-makers; these are listed below.
Selection and Representation
Most people who engage in online participation are self-selected. They are those who are generally well-informed, well-educated, and engaged already. This may not be representative of the population at large. There are also concerns over how the selections are made and whether they might just represent the interests of the selectors. The main objective of online deliberation is to inform elected representatives, not necessarily to be representative of the collective voice. The information is just that – to inform.

Managing Expectations
When people are asked for their opinion, there is a general expectation that this will be listened to. Many policymakers fear that if they consult, the public may then expect too much. Unmet expectations can lead to frustration; something that most policymakers want to avoid.

Apathy
When voting turnout is so low, policymakers have a hard time believing that the public is interested in becoming involved in policy deliberation. According to Darrell West (2005), most people are not interested in most policy issues, but some are interested in some – and “the object of deliberative exercises is to generate civic discussion around those issues where citizens do have real concerns, knowledge and relevant life experiences.”

Lack of Public Information
Research shows that most members of the public are not informed about aspects of civic and political knowledge, yet the public is often willing to comment on things it knows nothing about. However, if there is interest, things can be learned.

The Digital Divide
For those who cannot access the Internet, this may disconnect them even further from policy-making decisions, but there is a lot of evidence to suggest that the Internet simply creates new opportunities to connect citizens, and there are a range of ways to increase access. There is a fuller discussion on the digital divide in the next section of this paper.

The Problem of Scale
Is the Internet’s capacity for many-to-many discussion better than deliberation by face-to-face discussion? Authors argue that the asynchronous nature of online engagement makes it a good outlet for learning and listening – that messages are responded to after time has gone by for consideration.

When we consider these issues, it is clear that while on the surface e-Government may seem the “perfect solution” to policy issues, there are significant and important ideas that can act as barriers or challenges. Some of these are more easily addressed than others.

The Digital Divide
As previously mentioned, there is a lot of concern among policymakers about whether the Internet and e-Government actually isolates groups of the population due to access. The so-called “digital divide” is a perceived gap in computer or Internet access across economic, demographic, or social lines (Edmiston 2003, 1). This has the potential to leave large portions of citizens out of
e-Government, leading them to lose touch while others are becoming more involved. However, some research points to the fact that there may be more inequality offline than online. As Jensen states: “There is greater equality in socioeconomic status for those participating online than offline” (Jensen 2008, 7).

Utah’s adoption rates for Internet use are high. In Utah’s urban areas, 68.8% of households have some type of Internet access at home (dial-up or broadband). This is slightly higher for rural areas where 72.6% of households have Internet access at home. Figures for households who have Internet access anywhere (this includes work or mobile devices) are 82.2% in urban areas and 81.1% in rural areas. This is an exceptionally high adoption rate compared with other states. The state with the lowest rates have adoption rates of as low as 60.3% in West Virginia’s urban areas (56.5% in rural areas) and 55% in Tennessee’s rural areas (70.9% in urban areas).4

In Utah there is not much of a digital divide in terms of rural versus urban users. There could be more of a divide by socioeconomic status and age, but currently there are only rough estimates available for this.5 However, recent research by Harris Interactive (2008) shows that the demographic profile of the online population increasingly looks more like the whole population:

“In the early days of the Internet revolution, most of those online were young and well-educated. As the online population has grown it has come to look more and more like the population of the country. Internet penetration is still somewhat lower among people over 65, people who never went to college and people with household incomes of less than $25,000, but large majorities of all of these demographic groups are now online”6 (Harris Interactive 2008).

Utah has taken steps to encourage its population to participate in the benefits that result from online interaction with government. The state has developed sub-portals that focus on the needs of specific population groups such as Seniors.Utah.gov, Justforyouth.Utah.gov, Kids.Utah.gov, and Rural.utah.gov that help these communities navigate through extensive collections of information and services. These portals also help each group understand that there are compelling reasons for them to continue to access the online channel. The state has reached out to groups through other means such as community events and targeted advertising.

Policy options for decreasing the digital divide are to ensure that Internet kiosks and email outlets are made available for those who don’t have Internet access at home. This can be done in libraries, social service centers, or other state and local government offices.

Yet even with concerns over the digital divide, two bills passed in the 2009 Utah State Legislature General Session show that lawmakers are moving toward using more technology to serve citizens. H.B. 188, the Healthcare Reform Insurance Market Act, is based on users being able to access the Internet portal to buy health insurance, and S.B. 208, Utah Public Notice

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5 http://www.quantcast.com/utah.gov#demographics
6 These figures are for the U.S. as a whole, but can be generalized to Utah.
Website Amendments, amends public meeting law to require that notice of public meetings is placed on the Utah Public Notice Website and is no longer required to be placed in newspapers in the areas in which the association operates.

**History of e-Government in Utah**

Utah has always been at the forefront of technology in government and the state continues to win awards for use of the web in government. In 2008, the Center for Digital Government (the national research and advisory institute on information technology policies and best practices in state and local government) awarded the State of Utah the position of #1 in the “Top Tech-Savvy States in Nation” (Center for Digital Government 2008).

Utah's state portal was first recognized in 1996 when it was awarded second place by the Center for Digital Government in its inaugural Best of the Web competition. The then-named eUtah.org added 100 services between 1999 and 2005. Now, as Utah.gov, our state’s website offers over 1150 government services. From job searches, to art grants, vehicle registration, butter maker license renewal, swimming pool cryptosporidium treatment calculator, and Supreme Court oral arguments live and on demand, the State of Utah’s website offers 24 hour service 7 days a week. In January 2008, the number of unique visitors to Utah.gov exceeded one million (2009-2011 Utah Strategic eGov Plan).

There are many reasons that could explain why Utah is in this position as an e-Government leader. First, in 1969, The University of Utah became the 4th node on the ARPAnet, the parent of the Internet. Second, Novell Networking Software, a groundbreaking software and networking company was based in Utah, and The University of Utah and the State of Utah were both heavy Novell Software users. In 1996, recognizing that the Internet was beginning to revolutionize the traditional network market, interim CEO John Young initiated a program to make the company's products Internet ready (Novell Corporate History). Third, Utah has an abundance of knowledge workers due to several high-tech startups that launched here.

All of these are great reasons why Utah is at the forefront of technology, which is really just one reason why Utah is an e-Government leader. Governor Leavitt's Electronic Highway speech along with his challenge for all state agencies to put everything they do online, is an important reason why Utah is a leader in e-Government. Next, our legislature has been quick to see the potential of information online. They have passed innovative legislation that has paved the way for innovative online services (for example, the State Construction Registry, ValIDate, and Public Meeting Notices). Third, Utah has been willing to pioneer online services. This is in part due to a public-private relationship that the state has with an e-Government company who is willing to take on the risk that state government cannot. This relationship has created many "firsts" in online services, such as:

- Impound Vehicle System - the first true cross-agency application
- One Stop Business Registration - the first service to cross federal, state, and local

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7 [http://www.utah.gov/governorleavitt/speech/speech_110893.htm](http://www.utah.gov/governorleavitt/speech/speech_110893.htm)
government and to offer one place for creating a new business
- The first to offer live help 24/7
- On the Spot - the first to utilize a private third party for vehicle registration over the Internet,
- State Construction Registry
- VallDate
- Public Meeting Notices

Finally, technical leadership at the state has been visionary. The vision of Stephen Fletcher in consolidating previously disbursed technical services groups into a centralized Department of Technology Services is an important foundation, and the state Chief Technology Officer, Dave Fletcher, not only brings extensive background and knowledge to e-Government in Utah, but an unrivaled level of enthusiasm and personal commitment. All of these factors combine to make for a foundation of technological vision and expertise that makes Utah a breeding ground for such development, and government is a significant part of this.

Use of Technology in Different Branches of Utah State Government

The different branches of government have very different purposes, and therefore different needs and uses for technology. The executive and judicial branches of government, by their very nature, mainly exist to execute law and provide services and therefore are well suited to e-Government in the “services” sense. The legislative branch, however, is much more engaged with public policy debate and therefore has much more interest in obtaining input and feedback from the citizenry. In Utah, the Department of Technology Services, although part of the executive branch, supports all three branches of government in the technical arena, and this helps to maintain the relationship and forward-thinking approach.

Executive Branch

Utah’s executive branch primarily functions at a state level through the portal Utah.gov. Utah.gov is primarily a service-based portal. The primary service system is based on forms and databases, and the primary communication channels are forms and email.

The State of Utah offers some services at a charge and many of these services are available for purchase online via a credit card as opposed to the old way of physically going to a State office to make the purchase. For example, citizens can now order Utah Heritage Birth Certificates online via credit card purchase, which saves time and travel costs to drive somewhere to buy them. The following lists a few of the current services available via technology at Utah.gov:

- **Applications and registrations** - Renewal Express vehicle registration renewal (the most heavily used online service at over 600,000 per year).
- **Filing** - professional license filing, tax filing, annual business renewal filing.
- **Information Lookup** - using the Utah Economic Data Viewer, one can see population, births, deaths, migration, and other information based on county and year. Also, jobs.utah.gov allows users to search for jobs. This is the most visited site on Utah.gov.
- **GIS tools** - during excavation for a new subdivision, contractors need to determine which utility owners may be impacted by the excavation so they can mark their
existing underground pipes and cables at the site within the required 48 hour period.

- **Calculators** - Utah.gov offers a calculator for estimating child support amounts.
- **Calendars** - for example, legislative calendars, event calendars, and court calendars.
- **Recorded audio and video** - Utah Department of Agriculture and Food offers a video about the presence of the Africanized Honey Bee in Washington and Kane Counties of Southern Utah.
- **Online photos** - the Utah Department of Community and Culture offers over 25,000 images related to state history.
- **Maps** - Utah.gov uses maps to help locate Utah State Courts.
- **Purchase** - Hunting and fishing licenses (approximately 25,000 per year).

Although the primary function of e-Government in the executive branch is the provision of services, there are some ways that the executive branch is using technology to interact with citizens. For example, “in advance of beginning major road projects, UDOT is able to reach through online surveys of very specific communities that would be impacted and then it is able to help make decisions about how UDOT manages these projects” (2009-2011 Utah Strategic eGov Plan). Utah.gov is using Twitter to send out Utah government related information. In addition, the Department of Public Safety is using Twitter to send out incident related information to the press.

In addition, Governor Huntsman recently set up the Governor’s Commission on Strengthening Utah’s Democracy. The vision of the commission is to “create a stronger democracy, with greater participation by the people of Utah.” The website allows citizens to post opinions and ideas, view commission meeting minutes, and sign up for email updates.

**Judicial Branch**

Utah State Courts have been working hard to use technology to improve efficiency and the public’s access to justice. Many traditional court services are now offered over the Internet, with the ultimate goal of one day being able to accept all court filings, documents, fees and fine payments online. Creating an electronic courthouse that is open to the public 24 hours a day creates additional access to the courts and increases the court’s efficiency in doing business. Some of the ways that technology is being used by the judicial branch are:

- Some courts offer electronic filing for all civil and criminal filings. There are plans to expand this to all district courts.
- The court’s website provides the option of paying fines and fees online, which lessens the number of visits to the courthouse.
- The court website has been redesigned to allow for additional electronic services and

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to support an increasing number of users, and has a search function to support website navigation.

- The court website offers live and on-demand audio of appellate court arguments, information on frequently used court processes, and court calendars.
- Citizens contacted for jury service can now qualify for jury service online.
- Utah’s Online Court Assistance Program provides individuals with step-by-step instructions on how to prepare court documents for divorce, child custody and support, protective orders, stalking orders, guardianship actions, and landlord tenant cases.

**Legislative Branch**

The legislative branch is different because it is here that the citizenry can and should engage in discussion and have an influence on policy more than in the executive or judicial branches. This is the arena where policy can be most influenced by the public.

The Utah State Legislature is very active online. Their website is one of the top legislative websites in the country and has been recognized as a leading legislative website by the National Council for State Legislatures. The services offered include:

- Online live audio of committee meetings and floor debates during the general session. These are also archived online.
- Live video during the session, where users can watch all floor debates.
- Links from the home page to the day’s activities, including links to meeting agendas and committee information.
- A calendar, with links to important information.
- Real time bill tracking.
- A searchable database of bills – past, present and future.
- Voting records of legislators.
- Legislative histories.
- Legislative publications such as appropriations reports, and legislative audit reports.
- A citizen’s guide which explains the process.

The Utah Senate Majority is particularly active in their use of technology to engage with citizens. They are using Web 2.0 technologies to experiment. Some of the things they are trying are:

- The Senate Site - a blog.
- Senate Radio – podcasts.
- SenateMobile – updates sent by text message to cell phones.
- The Senate Channel – A collection of short videos on YouTube.
- SenateCam – a user-controlled webcam situated in the president’s office.
- SenateTube – live-streaming video for press conferences and events.
- Twitter site – tweets from the Senate.
- Facebook page.
- Legislative Town Meeting using Web 2.0 technology.
- Senate floor debate – historic archive of discussion on the Senate floor.
• Committee Meeting Podcast – visit any committee information page to subscribe to the RSS feed.

Several of the Utah state legislators also have personal blogs. Speaker David Clark of the Utah House of Representatives is one example. His blog allows comments and there are several “polls” available, where users can vote on questions such as “should legislators be allowed to accept gifts of nominal value?”

Representative Craig Frank has a blog that also allows comments from readers, and a group of legislators have developed a blog called “Utah Waste Buster.” The purpose of this blog is to allow citizens to speak out against unnecessary use of tax money. The blog site allows users to “report” wasteful practices and others to vote in agreement or disagreement. Steve Urquhart’s Politicopia wiki is another example of this. The site functions as a tool for collaboratively accumulating and presenting information. It aims to promote better politics by politically empowering individuals, encouraging better dialogue, and producing better ideas. These are not official state sites, but are examples of how some legislators are using technology to increase citizen involvement.

County and Local Governments
County and local governments typically have less of an online presence in terms of e-Government. This is mostly due to the lack of resources. However, some Utah cities have embraced the e-Government idea. Utah’s capital, Salt Lake Cit, has launched a new transparency initiative which will eventually include online forums which would allow citizens who could not attend a public hearing to post their comments. The transparency initiative also includes online access to budget documents and televised public meetings, and proactive access to policy documents. Other cities’ websites range from having a range of e-services available, such as paying bills or building inspection status search, to simple provision of information.

Web 2.0 Technology
In 2004, Tim O'Reilly coined the term "Web 2.0" as a way to represent some of the new kinds of applications that were beginning to appear on the Internet. These applications were overall more interactive, integrated and collaborative than what had previously been seen. The so-called Web 2.0 revolution creates opportunities for citizens to interact with government in new ways, and this has potential to make government decision making more participatory. Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, Blogs, Wikis, and Google Docs are included in this.

All of these connect officials and citizens, each in their own way. Some are more interactive than others but they are all designed to increase outreach, responsiveness, and communications and by doing so they increase public involvement in and mastery over their environment, which can improve leadership responsiveness to the average citizen.

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In addition, social media tools have also provided a mechanism for government innovators to interact with each other. This interaction has helped engender a nascent community of government 2.0 thinkers that communicate on a daily basis about the best ideas for using technology to improve government. This community actively uses the tools of web 2.0 to grow and share knowledge and progress associated with their daily work.

**The Future for Utah: State eGov Plan 2009-2011**

The majority of goals in the 2007-2008 State eGov plan have been achieved and surpassed. There are many benefits to this: the cost for citizens to do business with the state has decreased, state agencies have become more responsive and efficient, increased adoption rates for online services reduce cost, support the reallocation of resources, and improve service delivery.

Some of the goals of the 2009-2011 Utah Strategic eGov plan are:

- Increase the use of Utah.gov to an average of 1.2 million unique visitors in 2009 and 1.3 million unique visitors in 2010
- Improve the citizen experience as measured by user surveys
- Ensure over 80% compliance with Utah.gov web standards
- Make the business of government more efficient by reducing need for print forms, sharing data to reduce effort and duplication, and allowing businesses to interface with government without manual intervention
- Increase the effectiveness of web based interaction between government and citizens such as online 24/7 chat and social networking

Some of the future technology uses include:

- More video and multimedia with an emphasis on channel development with Internet video broadcast services such as YouTube and UStream
- Digital mashups combining data from various sources into a single integrated tool
- Social networking tools such as Twitter and Instant Messaging
- Wikis for collaborative development of content for tech support, communities and the Utah.gov website
- Software as a Service (SAAS) for creating collaborative work environments to share discussions and documents
- Advanced integrated search for searching across various digital environments
- Data sharing tools like Swivel, a portal for uploading and downloading research data sets.

**Remaining a Leader**

With a committed team of eGov experts and the demographics and expertise here in Utah, it is likely that the state will remain a leader in this field. However, there are some models that Utah can aspire to:

1. Create a YouTube presence that rivals Stanford University
2. Provide reusable data as well as Washington, D.C.
3. Use streaming media as well as Governor Schwarzenegger
4. Use widgets as well as the State of Virginia
5. Annual Reports that rival the 4th Informe de Veracruz

Employees in the Utah Department of Technology Services are working on developing some of these options to keep Utah as a leader in this area.

Conclusion

E-Government, if done effectively, can be a very efficient way for citizens to transact with government. It can save money, increase participation, and improve transparency through sharing information. Utah is an active participant in this experiment in creating new patterns of government interaction with citizens. It has developed web standards that are fluid and adjust as new tools and methods become available. The state is a leader of states in this field, and through the work of each branch of government, citizens are seeing improvements and ease of access.

The new Obama administration will ensure that states continue this pattern. Recently, it distributed guidelines to the states on setting up transparent, open websites for how funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will be spent and distributed. The goal is to create a government that is increasingly open and responsive to its citizens.

While there are valid concerns over many issues related to e-Government, there are also many positive aspects and benefits. This is something that is not going away. Interacting with citizens through the Internet is the way of the future, and Utah is a leader.
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