Preface

Goals of this Book

Citizen 2.0: Public and Governmental Interaction through Web 2.0 Technologies is intended to foster a better understanding of how technology can create opportunities for citizen engagement in the public policy process. The aim is to further define the role of Web 2.0 technologies in government as it relates to engaging citizens. The book begins with chapters that define Web 2.0 technologies and how they are relevant tools for public sector organizations. Providing hands-on illustrations and working examples, empirical research via large-scale projects, and case studies highlight strategies and concerns for implementation. It concludes with an analysis of how technology can provide new ways for supporting interaction and redefining how government can engage citizens. This book is relevant for working practitioners in search of new mechanisms to engage the public, as well as students of public administration and affairs, public policy, communications, and related disciplines, with instruction that focuses on emerging trends in the public sector and promoting strategies to advance how government relates with the public.

Why Examine Citizen Interaction with Government?

Determining how citizens should be engaged in the public policy process is an area of great interest for public administration theorists, scholars, and practitioners. Citizen engagement, for example, is considered a vital component of democratic governance that results in informed management decisions (Callahan, 2007; Berman, 2005), openness and fairness (Lukensmeyer & Tores, 2006), capacity to problem solve (Cuthill & Fein, 2005), and trust in government (Keele, 2007). Regardless of these virtues, the challenges of including citizens in the public policy process are well documented. Research, for example, illustrates how public administrators can be insulated from the very citizens they serve (Callahan, 2007), how bureaucratic processes are rigid and create disincentives for citizen engagement (Timney, 1998), and how elected officials and public administrators often rely on traditional engagement mechanisms, such as public meetings, as the primary means to engage the public (Adams, 2004). These encounters often fall far short of the ideals of citizen engagement, as they are sparsely attended gatherings that conflict with citizens’ work schedules, child-care needs, or fear of public speaking (Adams, 2004; King, Feltey, & O’Neil, 1998; Berner, 2001). Despite these shortcomings, the overwhelming demands for public sector transparency and results in the policy context of economic crisis, large-scale public policy reforms, and fiscal constraints are considerable, leaving many public administrators in search of new techniques to capture the interest of citizens and include them more meaningfully in deliberative activities.
Technology holds the promise of providing innovative ways to engage the public – most notably, the World Wide Web. There has been some considerable progress with building a Web-based government presence through agency websites that provide information (e.g., downloadable reports or minutes) and transactions (e.g., supporting payments for fees). These are worthy accomplishments, yet the question of how this Web-based technology can stimulate transformation in the field of public administration and serve as a catalyzing agent for engaging citizens in the policy process remains unanswered (Garson 2006). Transformation, in this sense, refers to the ability of public administrators and policy decision makers to align policy actions with citizen expectations and preferences.

The potential for achieving transformation seems very likely with the advent of Web 2.0 technologies that support real-time or other innovative and web-based social interactions. Web 2.0 technologies such as wikis and blogs, or communication using Twitter, Facebook, and other venues for expression, such as YouTube, are ever more popular in leisure and business activities, and are increasingly present in government efforts. Trends indicate that Web 2.0 technologies are highlighted in key legislation and administrative reforms as a means to create a more transparent and accountable system of governance (Mullen 2005). How Web 2.0 technologies can be utilized by the public sector and which applications are appropriate for engaging citizens are some of the concerns raised in professional conferences and magazines such as The Public Manager and PA Times.

This book is crafted to answer the questions:

- What is Web 2.0, and how can government utilize these technologies to engage the public?
- How are governments using Web 2.0 technologies to engage citizens in the policy process? What should public administrators know about Web 2.0 technologies as they adopt and implement them?
- In what ways can Web 2.0 technologies transform government as they are used to engage citizens?

This book defines transformation as the extent to which citizen engagement via Web 2.0 technologies impacts management decision making and government performance. The editors use the term Citizen 2.0 in the title of the book, because the main thrust of the discussion focuses on how this technology is used for engaging and building relationships with citizens.

Overview

As with any new technology or management technique, there are many considerations to address before adoption and meaningful implementation. Without paying careful attention to the alignment between agency goals, democratic values, and organizational characteristics, for example, public administrators and staff run the risk of engaging in hollow exercises, window dressing, or symbolic gestures. In many cases, good intentions can simply run amok and fade like other passing management fads. To avoid these challenges, it is imperative to clearly define the role of Web 2.0 technology in the public sector and increase an understanding of how it can be successfully applied to engage citizens.

Addressing the leading questions highlighted above, authors contributing to this volume provide chapters that define Web 2.0 technologies and its potential applications in the public sector. Chapters include suggestions for adoption and implementation based on the lessons learned by scholars and practitioners in the field. Contributions address the potential for transformation providing chapters that examine how engaging the public with Web 2.0 technologies can impact the way public administrators make decisions.
The book is organized into three sections.

- Section 1: Defining Web 2.0 Technologies and Their Relevance to the Public Sector
- Section 2: Applying Web 2.0 in the Public Sector
- Section 3: Web 2.0 and the Potential for Transformation

Section 1: Defining Web 2.0 Technologies and Their Relevance to the Public Sector, describes the different applications and tools available to public administrators and policy decision makers. In chapter 1, The Role of Social Media in the Public Sector: Opportunities and Challenges, Anteneh Ayanso and Darryl Moyers discuss the meaning and attributes of Web 2.0, and examine recent developments and emerging platforms and how they might be used by various public sector organizations. How Web 2.0 applications can be employed as a means of improving the policy making process, specifically public comments, is further examined by Peter Muhlberger, Jennifer Stromer-Galley, and Nick Webb in chapter 2, An Experiment in E-Rulemaking with Natural Language Processing and Democratic Deliberation. Discussing the new terrain of employing Web 2.0 in practical terms, Staci M. Zavattaro, in chapter 3, Records Management, Privacy and Social Media: An Overview, examines the practical challenges associated with managing records, retaining employees, and privacy when working in an era of open and digital government. Finally, Julianne G. Mahler in chapter 4, Managing Virtual Public Organizations, uses primary and secondary case materials and published research to address questions about the use of information and communication technologies, coordination, and leadership in public organizations that are now relying on online work settings.

Section 2, Applying Web 2.0 in the Public Sector, presents large scale and case study research results that examine how jurisdictions are employing Web 2.0 and the extent to which they are using them to engage citizens in the policy process. In chapter 5, M-Government: An Opportunity for Addressing the Digital Divide, Aroon P. Manoharan, Lamar Vernon Bennett, and Tony J. Carrizales examine the concept of the digital divide within the context of e-government worldwide and suggest how the use of mobile phones can potentially increase governments’ ability to access and engage citizens. Barbara Maclellan and Susan Bergeron bring this discussion to the local level in chapter 6, 3D Digital City Platforms as Collaborative and Decision-Making Tools for Small Municipalities and Rural Areas, as they provide insight on how Web 2.0 can contribute to management decision making by allowing stakeholders in areas with limited resources to collaborate on equal footing. In chapter 7, E-Government in Local Government in the Era of Web 2.0: Experiences of Alabama Municipalities, Hua Xu and Hugo Asencio examine the extent to which municipal governments in Alabama utilize existing Web 2.0 technologies to engage citizens and how it impacts citizen attitudes towards government. Michael Brown and Mohamad Alkadry, in chapter 8, Predictors of Social Networking and Individual Performance, take into consideration the perceptions of public administrators and suggest a social networking participation model to facilitate Web 2.0 innovation in public organizations. Guang-Xu Wang in chapter 9, E-Democratic Administration and Bureaucratic Responsiveness: A Primary Study of Bureaucrats’ Perceptions of the Civil Service E-mail Box in Taiwan, illustrates the importance of leadership and training for using technology to engage citizens and how these factors can influence the level of sophistication in agency engagement strategies. And finally, in chapter 10, Social Media and New Military Public Affairs Policies, Kenneth Hacker provides an analysis of how military agencies have responded to the availability of Web 2.0 technologies when reporting on agency activities and generating citizen interest in agency efforts.
Section 3, Web 2.0 and the Potential for Transformation, offers a more in-depth examination of how Web 2.0 can impact the relationship between government and its citizens. Colleen Casey and Jianling Li, in chapter 11, Web 2.0 Technologies and Authentic Public Participation: Engaging Citizens in Decision Making Processes, identify participation barriers faced by administrators in the implementation of Web 2.0 technologies and articulate some universal lessons for public administrators. Elizabeth Tait critically assesses the role of Web 2.0 tools for facilitating democratic participation, and evaluates the development of Web 2.0 tools and whether they can be used to facilitate meaningful political participation in chapter 12, Web 2.0 for eParticipation: Transformational Tweeting or Devaluation of Democracy? Tammy Esteves, Deniz Zeynep Leuenberger, and Danielle Newton examine how information is made available for public consumption and offer key goals for public organizations to promote an agenda of increased citizen information and engagement in chapter 13, Reaching Citizen 2.0: How Government Uses Social Media to Send Public Messages during Times of Calm and Times of Crisis. Exploring how Web 2.0 is realized for political purposes, Albert May and F. Christopher Arterton, in chapter 14, Congress 2.0: Incumbent Messaging in Social Media, investigate how the utilization of three major social media platforms—YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook—contribute to connecting Congress to the American people. In chapter 15, i-Government: Interactive Government Enabling Civic Engagement and a New Volunteerism, Linda-Marie Sundstrom examines the concept of i-government and illustrates how the relationship between citizens and government agencies transforms as they collaborate, as well as how agencies need to address managerial processes to accommodate these changing dynamics.

**Examining the Potential of Technology to Engage the Public**

This compilation of chapters from authors in the disciplines of public administration, public affairs, public policy, and communications shift the current focus of citizen engagement dialogue from implementation challenges and traditional engagement mechanisms, to exploring Web-based technologies and more innovative ways to connect with citizens and transform government. As a result, it strengthens the connective tissue between citizen engagement and technology as it explores the theory and practice of Web 2.0 technologies in government. These two areas are often treated as mutually exclusive from each other. Texts, for example, in the area of citizen engagement often focus on the traditional mechanisms for participation (e.g., public meetings). Texts in the area of Web 2.0 are largely written by and for private sector managers. Much of the emphasis is on technical aspects of Web 2.0 technologies with discussions of available products and their capabilities. In many instances the success of applying these technologies is measured by the number of visitors to a website, or the number of downloads, or length of time spent on a given site or page. Little analysis focuses on their utilization and their potential impact on management in the public sector and the relationship between citizens and government. Through this collective effort, chapters present a thorough overview of Web 2.0 technologies, their relevance to the public sector, and how they can be used to transform government so that its actions align with citizen preferences and expectations.
Potential Uses and Intended Audience

Fiscal constraints, a lagging economy, large-scale policy reforms, government cuts and spending, government reforms, and citizen demands for transparency and results are just a few of the compelling factors pushing government into a new era of citizen engagement. This new era is largely influenced and defined by the capabilities of Web-based technology, or Web 2.0 technologies. These pressures and technological advancements are leading public administrators to reconsider how they should engage citizens in the public policy process. This book works to build a theoretical understanding of Web 2.0 in the public sector as it relates to engaging citizens. Linking theory to practice, chapters highlight implementation considerations as demonstrated via case studies and other empirical works. Most importantly, it focuses on how the use of Web 2.0 technologies to engage citizens and impact management decision making, which aligns government actions with citizen expectations and preferences. Strategies for what works, challenges, and other considerations of adoption, modification, and implementation of Web 2.0 technologies presented in this book will be of interest to current public administrators at all levels of government and students of public administration and related disciplines.

The book can readily enhance graduate courses with students who are advancing in the field of public administration, public policy, public affairs, and communications. It is an attractive book for graduate public administration courses such as introduction to public administration, public management, civic engagement, e-government, technology and public administration, and citizen-driven performance improvement. It can be required for graduate public policy courses such as introduction to public policy, policy analysis and evaluation, public management and organizational behavior, citizen-oriented governance, and globalization. It is also relevant for graduate courses in communications such as communication in a digital age, changing relationships through communication, strategic communication and program management, using social and digital media, and grassroots political communication.

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REFERENCES


