Center for Technology in Government

1996 Annual Report

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July 1995 - June 1996

The Center for Technology in Government
pursues new ways
of applying computing and
communications technologies
to the practical problems of information management
and service delivery in the public sector.

The Center's program seeks to reduce the costs
and improve the quality of government services,
reduce the risks of innovation,
and share the results of its projects throughout
the public sector.

July 1996

Dear Colleague:

The past twelve months have been exciting ones for everyone associated with the Center for Technology in Government. As our program year opened in July 1995, we found ourselves at Harvard University presenting the CTG story to the Innovations in American Government National Selection Panel. To our great delight, CTG was named one of fifteen award winners honored for programs that represent exemplary solutions to important public problems. Since that time, we have responded to requests from around the world for information about CTG's approach to using information technology to improve the delivery of government services. We've assisted callers from as far away as Korea and Brazil and from as nearby as New York City and Oswego County, NY. We are proud of this prestigious award, but even more proud and grateful for the many people and organizations who helped design and build CTG.

Two major projects were completed this year. One, conducted in cooperation with the Office of Mental Health, focused on improving psychiatric assessments in emergency rooms. The other, initiated by the Department of Environmental Conservation, produced the award-winning New York State Spatial Data Clearinghouse. A third project, now nearing completion, involves ten state and local agencies in an exploration of the Internet as a means of delivering information and services. These Internet Testbeds are being conducted in cooperation with many corporate partners and the Governor's Task Force on Information Resource Management.

As always, our projects depend on the generosity and imagination of agency, corporate, and university partners. This year we welcomed Deloitte & Touche, EMI Communications, Eric Elgar Consulting, Inteligis Corporation, and MultiTech Systems to our corporate partner roster. Faculty, staff, and students from the University at Albany, the University at Buffalo, and Hudson Valley Community College all contributed to the research and evaluation phases of our projects. The officers, staff, and members of the New York State Forum for Information Resource Management continue to be a rich source of ideas, resources, and advice. We have truly had a banner year at CTG and invite you to join us in the exciting work that lies ahead.

Sincerely

Sharon S. Dawes
Director

Innovations in American Government Award

"This country is bursting with pride
in your accomplishments."
Vice President Gore
October 26, 1995

Vice President Al Gore honored the Center for Technology in
Government during a ceremony in Washington DC. President Clinton
met with the CTG delegation and other winners in the Rose Garden.

The Center for Technology in Government received a 1995
Innovations in American Government Award. Presented to
organizations that demonstrate "the best in American Government," the
prestigious award is administered by the Ford Foundation and the John F.
Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. The $100,000
grant that accompanies the honor is earmarked for replication and
information programs so that others may benefit from CTG's results. The
Innovations Award is a tribute to the vision and initiative of CTG's
government colleagues, the creative energy of the University community,
and the service and technology contributions of the private sector.

INNOVATIONS IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

An Awards Program of the Ford Foundation and Harvard University

Working Together for Good Government

Government

This year marked an important transition in the kinds of projects and range of government partners involved in work at the Center. While early projects focused on a critical service objective for a single agency, we are now engaged in work that crosses the boundaries of many government organizations. The recently completed GIS Cooperative Project involved more than 450 representatives of state, local, and federal governments in creating a government-wide information resource, the NYS Spatial Data Clearinghouse. The Internet Testbeds, now underway, directly involve ten state and local agencies and indirectly will assist all governments in New York through the creation and dissemination of practical guidelines for using the WWW to deliver services.

University

Tomorrow's leaders are today's university students. At CTG, students are often responsible for the creative ideas and technical expertise that go into project prototypes. Faculty contribute to the research and evaluation phase of every project and this year included faculty and staff from the University at Buffalo and Hudson Valley Community College as well as Albany. Students and faculty associated with Albany's interdisciplinary program in information science, have key roles as CTG graduate assistants and staff. They were joined this year by graduate students in computer science, geography, management science and information systems, public administration and political science.

Business

Business support for the Center is critical to our success. In-kind corporate contributions of the latest technologies allow us to tackle a range of projects that would not be possible under ordinary circumstances. This year our Government Technology Solutions Laboratory, equipped almost entirely from corporate contributions, has reached a high state of maturity. New projects can now take full advantage of the robust and flexible infrastructure that past contributions have made possible. At the same time, new equipment, software, and consulting services expand and refresh this state-of-the-art facility.

CTG staff members helped state and local governments develop World Wide Web site prototypes.

Recently Completed Projects

Sharing the Costs, Sharing the Benefits: The NYS Geographic Information Systems Cooperative Project

Government Partners
NYS Department of Environmental
  Conservation
NYS Forum for Information Resource
  Management
Erie County Water Authority
NYS Division of the Budget
State Archives and Records
  Administration

Corporate Partners
Applied GIS, Inc.
Blue Moon Training Systems
Digital Equipment Corporation
Documentation Strategies, Inc.
Full Circle Communications
Harlan Wallach Graphic Arts
Inteligis Corporation
Sun Microsystems
Unified Technologies
Xyplex

Academic Partners
University at Albany
National Center for Geographic
  Information & Analysis, University
  at Buffalo

Understanding spatial relationships is essential for strategic planning and effective delivery of government services. Governments rely on geographic information systems (GIS) for a vast array of purposes, from land use management to emergency services.

The value of GIS and spatial data can be seen most dramatically in applications that promote economic development, public health and safety, and environmental quality. Often organizations with similar needs can share information and achieve considerable efficiencies and other benefits. CTG and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation were joined by the New York State Temporary GIS Council and many others in designing a framework for GIS coordination and developing the NYS Spatial Data Clearinghouse.

The project demonstrated the depth and variety of existing human, technical, and data resources in New York State. It showed the extent to which spatial data needs overlap among key policy and application areas and examined how data sharing strategies can reduce the cost and increase the value of GIS at every level of government and in the private sector. The project identified existing federal, local, and regional coordination efforts, and it developed specific recommendations for overcoming barriers to data sharing and coordination.

The Center played a leading role in designing and creating the NYS Spatial Data Clearinghouse, an Internet-based repository of metadata describing the spatial data holdings of federal, state, local, and private organizations. It is an ideal sharing mechanism that helps GIS developers find and use data that someone else has already developed. The Clearinghouse can be found on the World Wide Web at http://www.ctg.albany.edu/gisny.html

The Clearinghouse won a 1996 NASIRE recognition award for outstanding achievement in information technology. It was honored as the best intergovernmental application among the 50 states.

Office of Mental Health Project:
Supporting Psychiatric Assessments in Emergency Rooms

An inappropriate decision to admit or discharge a psychiatric patient from an emergency room is often the starting point for a series of undesirable results. The individual inappropriately admitted is deprived of liberty and involved in a disruptive, stigmatizing event. Since each admission to inpatient psychiatric care costs the mental health system about $10,000, these admissions are also a costly misuse of scarce health care dollars. A patient who needs help and is not admitted, however, goes without care and may cause harm to self or others. Over 135,000 emergency psychiatric assessments are conducted in New York's hospitals each year, and research shows wide variability in the resulting admission and discharge decisions.

The New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Center for Technology in Government, and the Center for Policy Research worked together to address this issue through the development of a computer-assisted decision model to support psychiatric assessments in emergency rooms. An expert panel representing both psychiatric health professionals and consumers of mental health services helped design the model. The decision support model and resulting software system are not meant to replace the physician or the physician's own expert judgment. Instead, they support the practitioner in gathering and considering all information relevant to an admissions decision.

The project enhanced understanding of the emergency room process, including how it differs from setting to setting. Also important to OMH, the project demonstrated that physicians can benefit from using computer software. This knowledge has important value as a guide for further efforts to improve emergency psychiatry, which may include the use of information technology. The field test at the Psychiatric Institute of Westchester Medical Center suggested that the software might have special value as a training tool for mental health and human service professionals and resulted in a number of other recommendations for refinement and further development.

Government Partners
Office of Mental Health

Corporate Partners
Microsoft Corporation
Borland International
Digital Equipment Corporation
IBM Corporation

Academic and Non Profit Partners
Center for Policy Research, UAlbany
Westchester Medical Center
        Psychiatric Institute

Photo by Current Rutledge

Decision support software supports psychiatric assessments in emergency rooms.

Increasing Access, Safeguarding Information: Works in Progress

Participants at the June 1996 Internet Testbed Project demonstration viewed the World Wide Web sites NYS agencies developed with CTG assistance.

Internet Testbeds

Customers can access Internet-based government services 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Agency staff can use the Internet to link remote offices to central agency databases and link agencies with suppliers and contractors, as well as exchange information with other governments. CTG has been working with ten state and local organizations and the Governor's Task Force on Information Resource Management to investigate the technologies, processess, costs and benefits of relying on the Internet to deliver information and services. Through a series of workshops, seven agency Web teams learned how to plan for networked service delivery and how to design, develop, and evaluate their World Wide Web sites. These teams include: Empire State Development, Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, Hamilton County, Division of Housing and Community Renewal, Division of Military and Naval Affairs, Office of Real Property Services, and Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services.

In addition, CTG, the NYS Departments of Health and Transportation, the State University System Administration, and several corporate partners are examining security issues and the technical feasibility of adopting the Web as a universal interface to government information and services.

Electronic Records

Most government information specialists in New York and elsewhere see doing business electronically as a way to overcome declining resources and meet rising public expectations for service. Technological changes, though, have a substantial impact on an agency's ability to create, manage and use electronic records to support legal responsibilities and business needs.
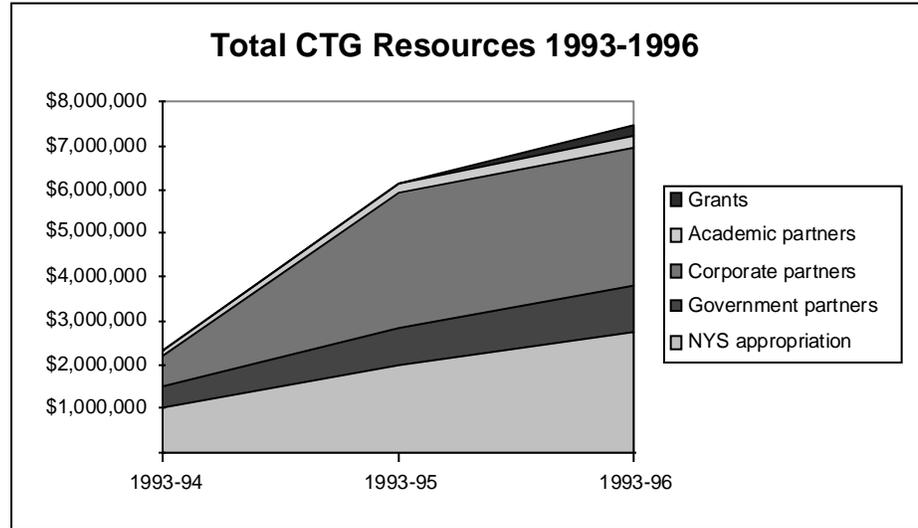
CTG is now working with the State Archives and Records Administration, the Adirondack Park Agency, and University at Albany faculty members to develop and promote practical models that will handle electronic records management and archival requirements in computing and communications applications. This two year project is funded in part by a $140,000 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

A Partnership for the Common Good

The Center's program is made possible by resources from public, private, and academic contributors. While state funds ($744,000 this year) remain the core of our operating budget, the value of total resources was nearly double that figure ($1.3 million). In-kind corporate, agency, and university contributions represented $340,000. Grants from the Ford Foundation and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission added $240,000. During the last three years, total resources equalled $7.4 million (graph). Over that period, our technical infrastructure has become one of our greatest assets, representing more than $2.5 million in hardware, software, and telecommunications including major loans and donations from Microsoft, Sun Microsystems, AT&T, Digital, Hewlett-Packard, Novell, and Bay Networks. The GIS and Psychiatric Assessment Projects, and the Internet Testbeds all relied on this excellent, versatile infrastructure. This year, 13 companies contributed new assistance worth nearly $100,000 (table), mostly in the form of education and consulting services that augment the value of our state-of-the-art facilities.

Total CTG Resources 1993-1996

Legend: Grants; Academic partners; Corporate partners; Government partners; NYS appropriation

(Graph x-axis: 1993-94, 1993-95, 1993-96; y-axis: $1,000,000 to $8,000,000)

More than 50 government professionals, academic experts, and non profit service providers gave generously of their time and expertise. The value of government ($205,000), and academic ($38,000) services totaled nearly a quarter million dollars this year—without considering the hundreds of people who participated in the research seminars associated with the GIS Project or the planning seminar that defined the Internet Testbeds.

The University at Albany continues to provide strong support for CTG's program. Graduate assistantships funded by the Office for Research and the Information Science Doctoral Program help us attract some of the best doctoral and masters students on campus. Faculty continue to contribute their time as consultants and student supervisors, and our President and Vice Presidents strongly support and encourage our applied research objectives.

In-kind Corporate Contributions for 1995-96	
Deloitte & Touche	$ 4,000
Digital Equipment Corporation	5,200
Documentation Strategies	2,300
EMI Communications	2,400
Eric Elgar Consulting	2,000
Full Circle Communications	1,200
Inteligis Corporation	525
Microsoft Corporation	4,929
MultiTech Systems	13,896
Novell	19,070
Sun Microsystems	36,500
Unified Technologies	4,000
Xyplex	1,000
Total for 95-96	$ 97,020

CTG Information Products

Center for Technology in Government
An Innovations in American Government Award Winner

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Projects | Solutions Lab
Partners | Events
People at CTG | Resources

Improving government through partnerships and technology . . .

http://www.ctg.albany.edu

CTG on the Web

World Wide Web sites have become a popular way to communicate with government constituents and among units of government. CTG has been on the Web since early 1994 providing information about our organization, partners, projects, and connections to other government sites. In April 1996, the Center launched a new version of the Web site which is now deeper and richer in its information coverage. Between April and June, the site hosted more than 5,600 user sessions averaging 84 per day. The CTG Web site is organized into eight interlinked categories of information.

About CTG contains our mission statement, operating policies and other descriptive information.

Projects takes center stage in the site. Each project has its own menu, and each major document has a table of contents. Users can drill down to the information needed by clicking on the menu items. Long documents can be downloaded directly to the user's computer.

Partners lists corporate, academic, and government partners and links to their Web sites.

People at CTG introduces our staff and fellows.

Solutions Lab describes the place where project prototypes are built.

What's New presents news and highlights updated features in any of the other categories.

Events announces and provides a means to register for seminars and other happenings.

Resources is an extensive library of linked or downloadable resources such as project reports, bibliographies, other Web sites, and news items.

Newsletter

Last fall CTG developed a quarterly newsletter to keep our colleagues informed. As a new communications tool, Innovations reports on projects in process and presents results from seminars and events. Web site recommendations, "hot" information technology trends, and other resources are covered in each issue as well. CTG has already had requests to reprint sections of Innovations, and we continue to receive inquiries generated by newsletter stories.

Photo by Current Rutledge

University faculty lend their expertise to CTG staff on research projects, seminar presentations, and reports.

Video

Thanks to funding from the Ford Foundation, CTG has produced an eight-minute video that shows how the Center works. Improving Government through Partnerships and Technology features projects involving the Adirondack Park Agency, the Office of Mental Health, and the Internet Testbeds. It shows the roles played by partners and the interplay among policy, management, and technology issues that is at the heart of each project. The video is available for loan and is used often at conferences and educational programs.

Publications

The following reports describing the results of CTG projects were issued during the year. All reports are available in print and digital formats. They can be downloaded from the Center's Web site, or ordered by phone or fax.

Geographic Information System Cooperative Project
♦ Sharing the Costs, Sharing the Benefits: The NYS GIS Cooperative Project
♦ The New York State Spatial Data Clearinghouse Technical Report
♦ Compelling Reasons for GIS Coordination in NYS
♦ A Framework for Evaluating Public Sector Geographic Information Systems

Adirondack Park Agency Project
♦ Balancing Environmental Quality & Economic Vitality in the Adirondack Park
♦ Evaluating the APA Prototype: Prospects for Providing Cheaper, Faster, and Better Services to APA's Customers
♦ Using Technology to Change Work: Technical Results from the APA Prototype

Office of Mental Health Project
♦ Supporting Psychiatric Assessments in Emergency Rooms
♦ Report of the Field Test to Evaluate a Decision Support Tool for Psychiatric Assessments in Emergency Rooms

Looking Back on a Banner Year

1996 has indeed been a banner year at CTG. We completed two major projects and launched two new ones, conducted four public demonstrations of project prototypes, issued three project reports and associated working papers, launched an updated version of our Web site, and answered hundreds of queries from around the world.

During the past year, the Center and its projects have been featured in the New York Times, the Washington Post, Governing, Government Technology, Public Innovator, the Albany Times Union, the Troy Record, the Schenectady Daily Gazette, Empire State Report, Capital District Business Review, Government Computer News, NASIRE Exchange, and GIS World.

Staff gave presentations to an array of audiences including: Capital Area Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Technology Center, the State of Maryland's Information Technology Support Center, the Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences, the NYS Local Government Information Technology Directors Association, the Adirondack Park Commission, and the Brookings Institution, just to name a few.

In the past year the number of entries in our contact database has nearly doubled to more than 3,000. We receive an average of eight requests a week for general information packets or project reports and continue to receive requests for general and project specific information from around the world including more than 80 visits a day to our Web site.

July 1995

The CTG program was presented to the Innovations in American Government National Selection Panel at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Photo by Current Rutledge

Corporate partners provide consultation to CTG technical staff as they participate in the Center's projects.

Public demonstration of the Office of Mental Health Prototype, Making Psychiatric Assessments in Emergency Rooms, was held at the UAlbany Executive Development Center. Representatives from a legislative commission, private hospitals, local government health care organizations, and several state agencies attended the program.

Reengineering business processes can be as important as hardware and software solutions.

August 1995

Three half-day research seminars, conducted by the NYS GIS Cooperative Project, were held in Albany, Buffalo, and New York City to collect perspectives on issues related to statewide GIS coordination. More than 400 people representing the private, public, academic and not-for-profit sectors participated in these meetings.

September 1995

CTG hosted an information and demonstration booth at the Government Technology Conference held in Albany. Prototype demos, reports and information packets were provided to visitors who attended the annual three day event.

CTG released the Supporting Psychiatric Assessments in Emergency Rooms Project Report. Nearly 800 copies of the paper report were distributed and a digital version was made available on our Web site for downloading.

October 1995

The New York on the Internet Workshop, held at the Empire State Plaza, was attended by more than 150 state and local agency representatives. Participants defined the goals of the Internet Testbeds and identified security on the Internet as the topic of greatest interest which led to our April, 1996 Security Day.

Sharing the Costs, Sharing the Benefits: NYS GIS Cooperative Project Demonstration, held at the UAlbany Performing Arts Center, was attended by 153 people. The attendees represented 30 state agencies, 13 corporate partners, three legislative commissions and staff from the Assembly, Senate, and US Geological Survey. Speakers included representatives from the Federal Geographic Data Committee, National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (University at Buffalo), Department of Environmental Conservation, and Applied GIS, Inc.

CTG staff went to Washington for the Innovations in American Government Award presentation and paid an unexpected visit to the White House.

November 1995

First Government Technology Solutions Laboratory Open House was held. This informal program has become a monthly event.

December 1995

First edition of Innovations Newsletter was mailed to 3,000 people across the country.

Released Sharing the Costs, Sharing the Benefits: The NYS GIS Cooperative Project and Balancing Economic Vitality and Environmental Quality in the Adirdonack Park project reports on our Web site. More than 1,600 paper copies of these reports have been mailed to interested parties.

January 1996

Staff support was provided to the NYS Temporary GIS Council throughout the fall and winter culminating in a two day event in January. CTG staff helped draft portions of the Council report, "Geographic Information Systems: Key to Competitiveness" which was forwarded to the Legislature and Governor in March, 1996.

The Kickoff for the Internet Services Testbed Project was held. Seven state and local government agency teams participated in six workshops held over the following five months. The workshops consisted of presentations, exercises, hands-on tutorials focusing on the technology, and management and policy discussions associated with designing, developing, and managing Web-based services in their agencies. Corporate, academic, and agency partners provided speakers and other resources for the workshops.

February 1996

CTG staff and fellows served as consultants in Lebanon, helping to plan the country's information infrastructure. The U.S. Agency for International Development Lebanon Project was conducted through UAlbany's Center for Legislative Development.

Photo by Current Rutledge

University at Albany graduate students in computer science, information science, and public administration learn while working on CTG research projects.

March 1996

CTG received a two-year research grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission entitled "Models for Action: Developing Practical Approaches to Electronic Records Management and Preservation."

April 1996

Security on the Internet was held at Hudson Valley Community College. The day-long program was attended by more than 150 people, representing 42 NYS agencies, seven local governments, three academic institutions, and nine representatives from the private sector. Presentations were made by CTG's public sector and corporate partners including the NYS Health Department, Digital Equipment Corporation, Microsoft Corporation, Sun Microsystems, and Unified Technologies.

June 1996

Developing Internet-Based Services: Management, Policy and Technology Issues in the Public Sector was held at the UAlbany Performing Arts Center. The half-day program was attended by more than 170 people, representing 44 NYS agencies, seven local governments, three academic institutions and five private organizations. Presentation focused on the technical, policy and management lessons for using this new and versatile technology to achieve service objectives. Six agency Web sites were demonstrated.

Next year we look forward to completing the Internet Testbeds and the Electronic Records Project, and to launching new work that will help government managers design high quality, responsive, and cost-effective public services.

Center for Technology in Government

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