Models of Government Blogging: Design trade-offs in civic engagement

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Abstract
Emerging technologies have some potential for improving citizen-to-citizen and citizen-to-government interaction. For example, podcasting, RSS, and blogs provide opportunities for citizens to obtain detailed information from each other or from government sources, to engage in online discussion, and to offer feedback to government on issues of concern. This kind of exchange is especially effective at the local level where online communication and information can complement face-to-face interactions among citizens and between citizens and government. In this paper, we present findings from a review of local government blogging in the US and from a case study of local government blogging in the mature community computer network of Blacksburg, Virginia. We propose three models of local government blogging based on design trade-offs that affect citizen interaction. We argue that the model suggested by our case study optimizes citizen interaction while relieving government of direct responsibility for public commentary.