White paper: Some comments

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What are the most important impacts of information technologies on the structure and processes of government organizations? Which impacts are already discernible? Which are likely to emerge during the next decade?

My specialty is Computer Science; I have not studied these issues, and so cannot say.

Reversing the causal arrow, how are public managers and policymakers using information technologies to craft new organizational forms or to make important modifications to present forms? What decision making and problem-solving processes are emerging as the principal means of mutual adjustment?

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What is the impact of increasing use of information-based, networked forms of organization on the institutional structures? For example, oversight, budgeting, accountability systems -- that regulate governance?

As with other areas, I think increased use of IT (information technology) is a two-edged sword. On the one hand it makes information more accessible, more malleable, and more easily changed. On the other, it can overwhelm unskilled users.

What perspectives, theories, conceptual frameworks, and methods seem particularly useful for the study of the developmental processes and organization of digital government?

As a scientist, my preference is for small, targeted, and practical experiments instead of large studies. The goal is to get DG working, after all.

I do not have much faith in large computer systems either; I believe small, useful tools (for example, one or two additional buttons on a web browser or on an emailer) are more
effective in changing the processes, once the basic informational infrastructure is in place.

What forms and processes of collaboration between social, policy, and information scientists might further a research agenda for digital government? How might an organization like the National Science Foundation Digital Government Program provide direction, guidance, and incentives for the advancement of high-quality multidisciplinary research?

In my experience the barrier to adoption of new processes, particularly IT processes that may seem job-threatening to bureaucrats, is extremely high. Countless examples and anecdotes exist; all with the common theme that unless you can ‘slip in the new technology more or less on the side’ you have little hope of getting it accepted. I would welcome studies that identify tasks/jobs/positions in which there is a real need for IT, and that identify the informational interdependencies between those jobs and the ones that consume their informational products (including time dependencies and deadlines, feedback and rejection procedures, etc.). This will put IT workers in a better position to design useful tools.