Panel: Open Government Initiatives in North America

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ABSTRACT
The Obama Administration has initiated an open government policy for the United States to increase transparency, citizen participation and collaboration; the Mexican and Canadian governments have been pursuing similar efforts of their own. This panel will review the status of these initiatives with representatives from government agencies in the US and Mexico, as well as academic researchers who have been studying their progress and strategies. The panelists will discuss their experiences and insights into the process of making government more open and participatory, not only through conventional broadcast style website information, but also through increased citizen interaction through social media and Web 2.0 technologies, including twitter, Facebook, YouTube, tagging, and social bookmarking. Research on crowd sourcing, young voters and citizen-generated content will provide scholarly perspective on these initiatives.

Categories and Subject Descriptors
H.4. [Information System Applications]: Information browsers; User-centered design; social media.

General Terms
Design, Theory, Human Factors

Keywords
Open government, transparency, participation, collaboration, Web 2.0, Social Networking, Social Media, North America

1. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE
This panel focuses on open government initiatives in North America, including transparency, citizen participation and collaboration themes, as articulated by the Obama administration. Speakers from academia and government will address these themes and the use of social media by citizens and government agencies. Mexico is represented by Irak Lopez, the Director General of Government Innovation for Mexico City. The Obama Administration hosted a series of dialogues online with US citizens to solicit ideas and feedback about how to create a more transparent and open government. It has issued an Open Government Directive laying out its plan. Federal agencies have since been developing and implementing a variety of programs and applications to allow US citizens greater access to information in the public domain (e.g., the roster of visitors to the White House). For example, the General Services Administration (GSA) has developed not only a data website with relevant information for citizens, but a Spanish version (GobiernoUSA) of the site to make information more accessible to the Hispanic population.

This panel is oriented around presentations and subsequent discussion with the audience.

Participants:
1. Urs Gasser (invited)  
   Professor, Harvard University  
   Berkman Center for Internet & Society  
   Will speak about his and John Palfrey’s research on interoperability.

2. Miriam Nesbit (invited)  
   Director  
   US Office of Government Information Services (OGIS)  
   Will speak about OGIS efforts to provide mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and administrative agencies.

3. Leilani Martinez  
   Manager  
   GobiernoUSA.gov  
   US General Services Administration  
   Will speak about the Spanish speaking side of data.gov, General Services Administration

4. Irak Lopez  
   Director General  
   Government Innovation  
   Mexico City  
   Will speak about the open government activities and experiences of Mexico City and of Mexico more broadly.

Moderator: Andrea Kavanaugh