

**London School of Economics
Department of Information Systems**

New Methods and Approaches to the Design of E-Government

**A One-Day Seminar held at the London School of Economics
Thursday 13 September 2001**

“Do we need a new systems development practice for electronic public services, and are there distinctive values that it needs to reflect?”

The seminar took the form of a neutral, open forum bringing together key practitioners in e-Government and related areas, where ideas, approaches and design philosophies were analysed and compared freely.

During the day there was open discussion about current and alternative methods for designing internet applications for e-Government. Experiences from public institutions at both local and central level were presented and discussed, and emerging methodologies compared with existing ones.

There were five presentations to the seminar

Why Bother?

Professor Claudio Ciborra, LSE

The Department of Information Systems at LSE has for many years cultivated research and education activities in the areas of systems design and systems development. Over the years, of course, the emphasis and focus of interest have evolved – from formal modelling and semantic tools, to socio-technical approaches and later to post-modern ideas. We believe that the range of discoveries and approaches can be fruitfully applied to discuss and reflect upon recent experiences in deploying ICTs in the context of public administration and government. It should not be forgotten also that there are on-going projects in such areas as ICT in developing countries, and privacy and security, which heavily deal with the public sphere.

In this seminar, however, the focus is on how to design systems for e-government. What are the current methodologies being utilised at local level?
How do they differ from previous methodologies?
Does the Internet make a difference?
How will (local) government be transformed?
Is there a style of systems development to be recommended to enhance and support democracy?
Is e-government equivalent to e-democracy or to a call centre?

BA Pilots: Groupware in Practice

Captain Steve Proffitt (formerly of British Airways)

Captain Steve Proffitt worked for British Airways as an Operating Pilot and Manager of Information Systems in Flight Operations at a time when the company was undergoing profound change (privatisation and its aftermath), and when IT was facilitating change in work practices. Steve Proffitt described how systems could be used to support the management of an itinerant, individualistic workforce, namely BA pilots, in the bidding process for flight allocation. A Groupware solution was used to enable more effective working between managers and crew. The rationale was to

- reduce the costs associated with the interactive bidding process
- provide a means of communicating and managing an itinerant workforce.

Key lessons to be learned as far as public sector 'buy-in' is concerned were identified as follows

- **Experimentation** was a key factor in the success of the implementation of groupware type systems
- The **entrepreneurial** talents of the community were harnessed to great effect – as a consequence acceptance was easier. A key factor in pilot satisfaction is work preferences and the ease with which this can be achieved. Trust
- **Formal methods** of systems development were kept to a minimum as it was not obvious how these could be used
- Lots of **constructive debate** was needed
- **Minimal development cost** – low priority internal project – talented entrepreneurs
- **Bottom up** approach – for people systems - **Top Down** approach for support systems and process systems

Business Object Reference Ontologies

Chris Partridge

Chris Partridge explained that Business Object Ontology is a tool used to ensure focus remains on the business when building/integrating complex computer systems. It can be used as a way of redressing the balance between 'business' and 'systems' needs.

Ontology is a 2,500 year old discipline which studies the nature and categories of 'being'. An ontology is therefore a list of the kinds of things that exist, for example, at the top level: entities, objects, attributes, states, events, relations. A business ontology is useful as it increases accuracy and encourages fruitful generalisation.

Life Event Process Modelling: risks & issues

Alan Davies Life Events Access Project (LEAP)

Alan Davies is programme manager of LEAP (Life Events Access Project), a £2million project to lead this transformation of public sector service provision, of which £1.2m is government money from the Invest to Save programme. The LEAP consortium will use new information and communication technologies to develop services to best meet the needs of customers and clients. The London Borough of Lewisham where Alan Davies is based is one of the six main partners in LEAP (along with Camden, Ealing, Lambeth, Lewisham and Newcastle City Councils).

Alan Davies gave an overview of the current status of the LEAP initiative which aims to provide the architecture for an information layer capable of supporting customer contact centres and direct web access. In order to do this, standards for sharing information, defining and naming processes, process mapping and interoperability are being addressed by the consortium members. He emphasised the importance of customer service and the culture change necessary at local authority level to aim to provide 24/7 access and the importance of e-forms to allow data and knowledge sharing across sectors and departmental boundaries.

The debate centred around the rationale and processes behind current initiatives whilst addressing some of issues to be faced in order to achieve the Government's ambition of having 100% of its services available by phone, internet or digital TV by 2005. To do this Government portals will be organised according to 'Life Events' (such as starting school, getting married, moving house). This will allow clusters of related transactions to be captured and then routed via public and private switching hubs to multiple legacy back office systems.

Remote Management

Mark Bateman Teamsolve Limited

Mark Bateman, managing director of Teamsolve, gave an overview of 'Remote Management' – a way of providing 'hands-on' IT support at a distance using a network. He explored the issues involved, an overriding concern being security, but highlighted the benefits as being distributed expertise and potential significant cost savings. Security is assured through the use of a combination of data protection mechanisms: firewalls configured in different ways, the use of both public and private keys, and pass phrases, as well as the standard user name and password levels. Mark Bateman went on to describe two case studies where remote management had proved an effective and beneficial solution.

Teamsolve had been instrumental in the success of a major project for Sociality Limited – a business which provides portal solutions for membership services –involving development and infrastructure support for the distributed project team.

Teamsolve provides remote installation, configuration and support, for Standard & Poor, a leading provider of mutual fund information and analysis for their www.funds-sp.com website.

Summary

The workshop convinced the participants of the various possibilities for partnerships and alliances between designers, researchers and practitioners to study and reflect upon the recent e-government projects. To set up a permanent dialogue though will require considerable effort, since the goals and timetables of the different parties tend to diverge. These seem to be the foci of interest which emerged, and considered worth exploring in broader seminars:

- What methodologies for e-government?
- What organisational model?
- Is democracy a value also in systems development?
- Does e-government need a top-down approach to systems design?
- How to learn effectively from the innovation and avoid old mistakes.

For further information

See these websites:

www.sociality.com

www.leap.gov.uk

www.BOROprogram.org

www.teamsolve.co.uk