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Reinvention Web Sites: Tools, Documents, and Services

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Hello. It's a pleasure to be here. I come not only to share information with you, but also to find out what you and your depository library customers would like to see from government Web sites. In fact, I would like for us to explore ways we can continue this discussion after this session ends.

I value your mission of providing free public access to Federal documents and your effort to use the rapidly evolving Web technologies that are expanding the definition of "publish" and "publication."

Free people need free access to what government says and does. The Web is helping government provide not only information and services, but it is also helping us reinvent government.

"Information technology," Vice President Gore said, "was and is the great enabler for reinvention. It allows us to rethink, in fundamental ways, how people work and how we serve our customers."

Today's Topics

This morning I will talk briefly about:

- Government-wide reinvention,
- How we are using the Web and Information Technology (IT) to get the job done, and
- Enlisting you—depository librarians—as our partners in changing government forever.

Reinvention and Trust in Government

I think we all know that 30 or 35 years ago, people in this country mostly trusted

government to do the right thing most of the time. Polls in the early 60s showed more than 70 percent of the people believed that way.

Much of that trust eroded as the years passed. Our government got so full of rules, so full of procedures, that it was hard for one person, or one small group of people to make any difference at all. Red tape didn't just strangle the American people, it hindered those of us on the inside just as much.

By the early 90s, only about 20 percent of the American people believed that they could trust their government to do the right thing, according to a Pew Foundation study completed late in 1997. It revealed a slight upward trend in recent years in the number of Americans who trust their government. Thirty-nine percent of the public basically trusts the Federal Government to do the right thing, an 18-point gain since an all-time low of 21 percent in 1994. The figures have dipped just slightly since those figures were released in early 1998, but the general trend is very encouraging. We believe reinvention had something to do with this trend.

In March of 1993, President Clinton asked the Vice President to lead what was then called the National Performance Review, or NPR. We changed our name last year to the National Partnership for Reinventing Government, but kept the acronym NPR. Sometimes we call ourselves the OTHER NPR when people confuse us with National Public Radio.

Vice President Gore believed Federal employees were good people trapped in a bad system. He went to them first. He asked Federal workers how things could be better and they told him. Then he asked them to fix things—to reinvent. And that's what many Federal workers, with their partners in state and local government and the private sector, have been doing for the last 6 years.

Our vision today is America @ OurBest and our mission is to create a government that works better, costs less, and delivers results the American people care about.

Accomplishments

Reinventing Government is the longest-running and most successful government reform effort in U.S. history. Here are the major accomplishments:

- Savings total \$137 billion.
- Federal agencies have published more than 4,000 customer service standards for more than 570 organizations and programs. When we started, most Federal agencies didn't think government had "customers." Now it isn't unusual to hear bureaucrats planning to "excite" or "thrill" their customers.
- Agencies have eliminated more than 16,000 pages of regulations.
- Federal employees are now writing rules and other public documents in plain language.

- Regulatory agencies like the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) now partner with business around mutual goals.
- Reinvention has resulted in the smallest civilian workforce since JFK's administration, with a reduction of 351,000 positions. Reductions occurred in 13 of 14 departments. (Justice increased crime fighting.)
- More than 1,200 Hammer Awards have been presented to teams of Federal workers and their partners in industry and state and local governments. This is the Vice President's award to teams for using reinvention principles to create a government that works better.
- About 340 reinvention labs are reengineering government processes and using technology to unleash innovations that excite customers and employees alike with more flexible internal systems and improved services to the public.
- The Congress has passed and President Clinton has signed more than 80 laws so far enacting NPR recommendations.

Of course, the American public doesn't much distinguish where one level of government drops off and another kicks in. Since December, we have been working with state and local governments in Kansas City, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Seattle to create hassle free communities. Now hassle-free communities are starting in the state of Minnesota (Partnership Minnesota is starting Hassle-Free Minnesota), in the Borough of Manhattan with the New York Federal Executive Board, and in Chattanooga, TN.

In this tax season, in rural communities of Kansas and Missouri, where few if any Federal Government offices exist, the Internal Revenue Service is using a bus to deliver hassle-free services to taxpayers. The bus has made its rounds every other week since mid January. IRS also created a partnership with both states so that state income tax services are included.

Our shared success in reinventing government at every level matters very, very much. We must press on to the ultimate goal for reinvention -- to restore the trust of the American people in their government at every level.

A major culture change is underway in government, even though we still have a long way to go. Our aim is nothing less than to do things today that will change government forever.

Reinvention Sites

Let's look now at some of our reinvention Web sites.

If we substitute "Web site" for "government" in NPR's mission, we've got a basic premise for government Web sites:

Create a Web site that works better, costs less, and delivers results the American people

care about.

Today, government agencies, like businesses, realize that a Web site is a strategic resource. It can save an agency money by reducing calls and postage, replacing hardcopy printing, and in conducting the agency's business.

This is certainly true for NPR. For example, NPR's site is for reinventors and their partners, but we reach students, researchers, and the general public. We post all official reinvention documents, long or short, and much reinvention news, including agency activities. NPR is a task force, not a government agency. We are frugal. Our 40 or 50 staff members represent Federal agencies, usually on loan for 3 months, 6 months, a year. We have not published a hardcopy annual report since 1997. We update our Web site frequently so that it's almost a "daily report" of what's happening.

We overhauled our site last summer, asking a focus group of Federal workers what they wanted and needed. They wanted news on the home page. They wanted as many topics on the home page as possible and wanted to see as many topics as possible without having to scroll. They told us to reduce the size of our logo and other graphics. They said they didn't want to hunt for information. We went from a menu of 10 topics on our previous home page to 41 in the new design.

NPR-sponsored Web sites have been a major reinvention tool since 1993 and some have been spun off. As examples:

- **FinanceNet** <www.financenet.gov/> is the Internet's home for public financial management worldwide. It has many features. For example, you can go to this site to find out what government -- Federal, state, local or international -- has for sale or auction. It's a lot--all manner of public assets and surplus from real property and loans to planes, boats, cars, jewelry. FinanceNet is operated by the National Science Foundation.
- **Acquisition Reform Net** <www.arnet.gov/> supplied information across agency lines and provided an electronic forum so a network of procurement professionals could discuss issues. This electronic tool played a big role in procurement reform.
- **Reinvention Lab/Waiver Clearinghouse** Federal employees in Reinvention Labs sometimes need waivers to deviate from internal agency policies and procedures so they can improve internal operations. This online database, hosted by the Alliance for Redesigning Government, lets reinventors share information and tools.
- **Plain Language** is another Gore government-wide initiative that is being implemented with the help of a one-stop site <www.plainlanguage.gov>. It includes the President's Executive Order, samples, tools, tips, and other aids for Federal workers who are writing and re-writing government regulations and other documents so people can understand them.

Access America: Delivering Services Electronically

Many Federal Web sites are virtual storefronts of government services. It's where customers interact with government. As more and more American households go online, more and more government sites don't just sit there--they do something. They deliver services.

Delivering services electronically and using IT to improve government productivity is the vision of the Vice President's 1997 report, "Access America: Reengineering Through Information Technology."

This vision includes working across agency lines to identify customers and collect information, forms, and services suitable for customer groups on one-stop sites. Many agencies together can achieve what no one agency can achieve alone.

- **The Business Advisor** <www.business.gov> was NPR's first interagency Web site targeted toward a specific customer group. NPR developed it in 1995 with partners from government and the private sector. The site will soon be sponsored by the Small Business Administration. We are redesigning the site to make major improvements and updates.
- NPR worked with 17 agencies, including Housing and Urban Development, to open the **US State and Local Gateway** <www.statelocal.gov> in January 1998. This site provides Federal information that state and local government employees over the country need to do their jobs.
- Over the last several months, NPR worked with Social Security and many agencies to create a one-stop site for **seniors** <www.seniors.gov>, announced in February.
 - In January, NPR, the Department of Education and other agencies announced a demo in partnership with several colleges for a one-stop site for **students** <www.students.gov> to open soon.

That same month, NPR worked with the United States Information Agency to convene the Vice President's Global Conference on Reinventing Government. Its attendant Web site <www.21stcentury.gov> shares reinvention documents and tools from that conference and from governments around the world.

The Access America initiative also includes a Center of Excellence in Information Technology site <<http://centerofexcellence.gov>> that is being developed.

Electronic Stories about Electronic Government

Last summer when we were redesigning the NPR site, I was also working with a wonderful interagency team sponsored by the Government Information Technology Services Board—GITSB — <<http://gits.gov>> to develop a new

site focused on IT, Access America Online Magazine. Co-sponsors are NPR, the CIO Council <www.cio.gov>, and the Federal Communicators Network <www.fcn.gov>.

The magazine is the brainchild of Greg Woods and Jim Flyzik. Greg is Chair of the GITS Board and a former Deputy Director of NPR. He is now the director of the first performance-based organization in government, the Office of Financial Assistance at the Department of Education. Jim is Vice Chair of the GITS Board and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Information Systems and Chief Information Officer at Treasury.

GITS Board members champion the 18 recommendations in Vice President's Access America report. Until last summer, champions wrote periodic online reports on the status of each recommendation, such as using IT to improve the government's access to services and to establish the Intergovernmental Wireless Public Safety Network. The reports were fairly standard government reports, that—how shall I say it?—made less than compelling reading. That is, if anybody even knew about the reports.

Greg and Jim thought the American people needed to know about these electronic services--not from reports, but from easy-to-read, illustrated stories on the Web.

I am thrilled to be editor of Access America Online Magazine. Our interagency team opened it as a prototype last October and the Vice President announced it by press release on March 9. We've organized the magazine site around the 18 topics in the Access America report. We publish a new issue every Monday and we have more than 100 stories about electronic government at the Federal, state, and local level. These stories tell Americans how they can go online to:

- Find a lost pension.
- Identify workplace hazards.
- Compare nursing homes nationwide.
- Apply for student aid.
- Start and build a woman-owned business.
- Find out about and apply for government jobs.
- Change an address with the U.S. Postal Service.
- Manage industrial size waste disposal.
- Apply for Peace Corps.
- Download and print hundreds of forms—including tax forms, something many Americans will probably have to do tonight.

We also have stories about the environment, geography, space technology, international trade, public safety, criminal justice, passports, business services, medicine, health care, and more.

For example, one story describes the National Library of Medicine's

partnership with 39 public library organizations with more than 200 locations in nine states (Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia) and the District of Columbia. These libraries are taking part in a pilot project to let people learn how to get health information on the Internet. The project features an easy-to-understand Web site called *MEDLINEplus*.

Let's Partner

I invite you to support reinventing government and to help the public know about reinvention and the services that agencies are making available online.

I can give you examples right now. Last week, the hassle-free community team in Dallas-Fort Worth talked with Housing and Urban Development (HUD) about expanding their new kiosks to libraries in that area. HUD's new electronic kiosks -- located in Federal buildings, shopping malls, libraries, transportation centers, city halls, grocery stores and other public places around the country--allow citizens access to basic HUD information, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, much the way they would use an ATM at the bank.

Dallas-Fort Worth is also ready to ask their local libraries to let their customers know about an adoption Web site. I understand they also have adoption kiosks they would like to have in libraries. The hassle-free coordinator told me they would love to get the support of the Depository Library Association—or all library organizations. I can put you in touch with these reinventors.

We also need reinvention partners who can host satellite downlink sites or can access a cybercast. Last January, Vice President Al Gore moderated a televised satellite summit with national business, labor, education, government and local community leaders on "21st Century Skills for 21st Century Jobs." We had some libraries participating and we would like to get more involved in future broadcasts and community meetings on this and other topics.

For example, the 8th Annual Family Reunion Satellite Conference moderated by Vice President and Mrs. Gore will be June 21 and 22. This annual event features discussions around the country on issues affecting families and communities. Conference planners invite sponsors for downlink sites. For more information, visit <www.familyreunion.org>.

Also, the Department of Labor invites libraries to play a role in its "Career Kit" and "virtual one stops" with career counseling, job referral and placement through the Web. I can get you a contact, or you can start with the DOL site at <www.dol.gov>.

Likewise, I need story ideas or stories about using information technology to reinvent government at any level. And, if you have Web sites, I urge you to

link to Access America Online Magazine.

I invite your comments, suggestions, questions, and involvement today and in the future.

Thank you for having me here today.

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www.npr.gov

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