

Statipedia: a platform for collaboration across statistical agencies

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... and very much advice from others.

This research does not represent the
Bureau itself, only the named authors.

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Government collaboration platforms

After 9/11, the U.S. intelligence agencies reviewed their communication tools and processes.

- Added web tools and work spaces to their network
 - an interagency wiki: “Intellipedia”
 - blogs, tagging, search, instant messaging, videos
 - improved ability to search, copy, and collaborate across 16 agencies
- Other recent models include:
 - EPA, DOD’s Techipedia
 - GSA’s apps.gov, OECD’s WikiProgress.org

Imagine a Statipedia platform for methodology

- A set of tools and workspaces for statistical staff
 - With joint source material
 - For collaboration among analysts
 - Not for the general public
- With a set of Web 2.0 tools
 - Wikis and blogs
 - Version control system for source code
 - Search engine
 - Tagging, video content
 - Statistical programming

Wiki uses

- Repository for definitions and manuals
- Topical exposition and discussion
 - ▶ Seasonal adjustment methods
 - ▶ Occupation and industry classification
 - Translation and harmonization
 - “Green jobs,” “high tech jobs”
 - ▶ Thinking through “systemic risk”
 - How to measure such risks?
 - Reduce future risks

Search capability

- Users must be able to search many sites
 - ➔ You find specialists by their contributions!
 - ▶ Their comments, blogs, articles, links
 - ▶ Content they provide on wiki pages
- Communities of users then emerge
 - ▶ Intellipedia platform changed communication
 - From point-to-point, stovepiped **channels**
 - To searchable, accessible, unfiltered **platforms**

Source code control

- Stores source code of computer programs
 - ▶ in any language – SAS, Stata, R, MATLAB, Gauss, PHP, Python, C, Fortran, . . .
- Tracks relationships among files
- Supports study and fixing of bugs
- Allows joint development over distances and across computer platforms
- GSA plans to offer this.

Other tools for analysts

- Blogs for projects and persons
- Discussion forum / Q&A site
- Statistical computing languages
- Geographic information systems
- Videos for training, special presentations
- Repository of documents, tagging of visited web sites, instant messaging

Guidelines and Recommendations

- Official agreement; who participates?
 - ▶ Open to non-government organizations?
Consultants, contractors, academics?
- Enable users, don't force participation
 - ▶ Can offer incentives; e.g. DoD's Techipedia contests
 - ▶ "What's new" page may add energy
- Users may need control over their own writings
 - ▶ Allow comment on authored content
 - ▶ Other pages are in the commons, editable by all
- Our paper has other recommendations

Norms to encourage

- Anchor discussions to sources, evidence, theory
 - ▶ Hyperlinks, equations, footnotes, source code
 - ▶ Enable delving in and drilling down
 - ▶ Encourage searching source materials
- Make wikis and blogs topic oriented
 - ▶ Not organization-specific
 - ▶ Support cross-talk and communities of practice
 - ▶ Example: “green jobs” both labor and environmental

Long run effects

- Better knowledge management
 - ▶ Enable finding specialists and experts
 - ▶ Prepare better for retirements and turnover
 - ▶ Encourage reproducibility of scientific results
 - ▶ Reduce overwhelming flows of email
 - Less “dissemination”; more “discoverability”
- Continued redesign by interested people

Help make it happen! Contact Information

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