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Smart Money: Denver agencies learn true cost of technology
Backlog Buster: Miami-Dade puts foreclosure auctions online
Locked Down: Virginia tightens IT security

Public libraries retain their relevance in an era of commodity information

Thinking Outside the Book

PLUS: L.A. County’s DNA tracking database
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AN AWARD-WINNING PUBLICATION

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE ...

Doers, Dreamers and Drivers
Each year, Government Technology salutes 25 individuals for using technology to reshape government operations for the better. Who’s on this year’s list? We’ll tell you in March.
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Keeping Library Doors Open

As you might imagine, the recession hasn’t been kind to public libraries. A glance at the American Library Association’s online news page offers a grim chronicle of events.

The public library in Pacific Grove, Calif. — a facility built in 1908 and frequented by author John Steinbeck in the 1930s — was fighting for survival after the November failure of a local parcel tax measure to fund library operations.

The Naperville, Ill., Public Library put library hours and programs on the chopping block in October as officials there struggled to cope with more than $1 million in budget cuts for 2010.

That same month, the board of trustees for the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh approved a plan to reduce library hours, close and merge locations, cut staff, and hire fines and fees. Officials were still trying to scrape up $1.2 million in state and local fines for scarce operating dollars.

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But that scenario will likely be repeated as local officials struggle to balance the need for library services, public safety, health, parks and other programs. More than 80 percent of library funds come from local tax receipts, according to the Online Computer Library Center, an Ohio-based nonprofit that promotes information access. With localities facing another grim budget year, library officials can count on even more competition for scarce operating dollars.

Yes, the Internet has turned information into a commodity, and books can be purchased online with the click of a mouse. But libraries remain an important part of the fabric of a community — let’s hope that local leaders continue to find ways to keep their doors open.

But it’s not the technology alone that’s important. Libraries, one of the last noncommercialized spaces in many communities, offer a unique setting for technology users — especially kids. Gamers typically spend hours alone in front of a screen; libraries turn gaming into a social experience. Kids talk about strategy and engage in group problem-solving. Some even say they’ve developed a bigger interest in good, old-fashioned reading.

Luckily there’s evidence that citizens understand the value of public libraries. For instance, Philadelphia residents united last fall to save 11 branches of the public library system from closing due to the city’s financial crisis.

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Lots of Tweets; Little Transformation

Government’s use of Web 2.0 tools and strategies appears to be a mile wide and an inch deep. Interest and use is pervasive, but social media hasn’t transformed the public sector yet. The expectation is that Web 2.0 will provide platforms for collaboration between citizens and government, resulting in communities of interest that tackle complex problems. But there’s still not enough two-way communication. Federal and local government agencies have shown strong interest in Web 2.0 tools, while state governments appear to be more cautious. www.govtech.com/730008

500,000
The total number of views of the California Department of Motor Vehicles' YouTube channel.

Web Comment of the Month

“Unless the individual is in an effective position, I don’t understand why it’s necessary for the people to know the names associated with a particular salary in order to understand the government process. In a prior job, my name and salary were released as part of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. Next thing I knew, my name was in the posting New York state employees’ salaries. By Anonymous on Dec. 15, 2009, to our story about the site www.SeeThroughNY.net.”

EMBRACE OPENNESS

Federal CTO Vivek Kundra and Federal CTO Aneesh Chopra unveiled the long-awaited Open Government Directive during a live video chat on Whitehouse.gov in December. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directive orders federal agencies to publish “high-value” data sets; launch Web sites for open government and write agencywide plans that will hardware transparency into the public process. Chopra said the OMB “highly encourages” state and local governments to follow suit with similar transparency directives. www.govtech.com/734482

Real ID Act Delayed ... Again

With most states missing the Dec. 31, 2009 deadline for issuing enhanced drivers’ licenses, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) pushed the Real ID Act deadline to May 10, 2011. Forty-six of the 56 states and territories told the DHS that they couldn’t meet the 2009 deadline. This is the second time that the deadline has been extended. Real ID was originally scheduled to take effect in May 2008. www.govtech.com/735510

SAN JOSE PILOTS 311 iPHONE APP:
By downloading the 311 iPhone application, residents can help the city clean up by reporting in real time those pesky problems — graffiti, potholes, broken streetlights, garbage — that city officials have a hard time finding. The user-friendly Web 2.0 application, called Mobile City Hall, was launched on Dec. 15 and can be downloaded for free at the Apple iTunes store. Currently the application is only available for use with iPhones, but it’s slated for release on BlackBerry, Android, Palm and Windows Mobile. www.govtech.com/734894

$4,500
The total cost for San Jose, Calif., to develop its 311 iPhone app.

Hot List
Here are the 10 most popular stories from Dec. 8, 2009 to Jan. 7, 2010.

1. Site Reveals Salaries of Louisville, Ky., Metro Government Employees
Louisville Metro Government salary site is updated weekly and tracks overtime. www.govtech.com/739174

2. First Broadband Stimulus Awards Announced
Awards include $118 million for broadband projects in 17 states. www.govtech.com/734888

3. Kundra and Chopra Want States and Locals to Embrace New Openness Directive
OMB directive orders federal agencies to hardwire transparency into the public process. www.govtech.com/734898

4. Portland, Ore.'s Citywide ERP Shows They Don't Come Easy
City ERP deployment shows complexity of replacing decades old systems. www.govtech.com/735027

Forty-six of the 56 states and territories said they couldn’t meet the deadline. www.govtech.com/735010

6. Social Networking Use Increases But Doesn’t Transform Government
Government’s use of Web 2.0 tools appears to be a mile wide and an inch deep. But doesn’t transform government. www.govtech.com/735502

7. Site Reveals Salaries of New York State Employees
Conservative think tank launches Web site with comprehensive state financial data. www.govtech.com/383701

8. Noble CEO Craig Mitnick Talks About His Twitter Alternative
Free Web-based system is being adopted by public safety agencies. www.govtech.com/735062

Five technology trends drew more attention in 2009 than cloud computing. www.govtech.com/734824

10. Enterprise Architecture Demystified
What is enterprise architecture and who is it intended to benefit? www.govtech.com/418008
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POWER PILLS

To bolster the economy, one of the strategies employed by New York state's economic development agency, known as Empire State Development, is to direct funds to facilities and universities researching cutting-edge technology. In this image, researchers at the New York State Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics and Life Sciences, which received $1 billion in funds, use 3-D computation to better understand the fundamental nature of pharmaceuticals in development. One aim is to gain insight into how drugs interact with the body and speed safe and effective drugs to market.
What’s the story behind the recent launch of Alabama’s new transparency Web portal?

Open.alabama.gov officially launched on Oct. 1, 2009. It features a lot of openness that we haven’t had in Alabama before. Gov. Bob Riley, mandated that we do this; he wanted the state’s checkbook online. It has every transaction where an individual or a company has been paid money [by the state].

All of the state’s leases are shown on the site on a map; lease data can be sorted by county, city or geography. It shows the value of the leased property, when the lease is up and who the [lessee], is.

The portal also has what I’d say is the most open information about a governor’s office in the nation. Gov. Riley’s every expense is listed, all the way down to office supplies. [Citizens] can also see the governor’s flight logs — where he went, why he went there and who went with him.

What else does the site offer citizens?

One can look up our prior spending through consolidated annual fiscal reports; and our planned spending as well through planning documents from our executive planning office. You get a complete picture: What we have spent, what we’re spending and what we’re planning to spend.

The governor says he’d like all 4.7 million citizens of Alabama to audit the books.

What were the challenges involved in making the state transparent so quickly?

We were fortunate in that a lot of the parts to this were already available in some fashion, because the governor has wanted openness in government. We had all the components to do it, we just never had them all available in a single portal.

Does this improve efficiency because citizens can find information on the Web rather than calling to ask?

Absolutely. And there’s another component: the Open Meeting. If there’s a meeting you’re interested in, as a citizen or businessperson, and you’d like to know when it’s going to be, Alabama law requires that those meetings are posted and available [online].
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www.TCPN.org
The fight for comprehensive IT security seems never-ending. The enemy storms government territories every day with as many types of malware as there are pebbles on a beach — too many to deal with easily.

Yesterday, the “man-in-the-middle” attack on the county network stole credentials to the treasury funds. This afternoon, the Trojan deleted files from the governor’s desktop. And tomorrow, some exotic new code no one’s heard of will pop up somewhere unexpected. In these battles, CIOs and their staffs must operate like a machine. Teamwork should exist between the standards and policy writers, data center operators, network administrators, programmers, the help desk staff and others — seamless coordination.

That’s probably what Virginia’s technology executives were aiming for when they implemented the Interlocking Spheres of Collaborative Protection project, a complicated endeavor with one simple goal: to unify the policies, infrastructure and culture across state IT that are responsible for keeping data secure. These spheres represent the technology groups that need a common strategy in the unending security war.

By Hilton Collins Staff Writer | Illustration by Tom McKeith
John Green, the state’s chief information security officer, noted that the end result is rather impressive. “It highlights the amazing things that can be achieved when you get a group of dedicated people together,” he said. “I’m talking about all of the employees and information security officers — when you get a group of dedicated people together focused on the same goal and mission.”

**Bandaging Together**

The Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) led the charge with cooperation from state leadership, the agencies it serves and Northrop Grumman, which manages Virginia’s government IT infrastructure and services. They focused on five areas and separated them into spheres.

The **top-down sphere** represents the state’s movers and shakers, including the governor, state CIO George Coulter, Green, the Legislature and agency leaders — many of whom were instrumental in creating compliance standards and urging groups to meet them. The Information Technology Investment Board, which oversees Virginia’s IT reform, can withhold project funds from agencies that don’t keep pace.

In the **peer-to-peer sphere**, employees join groups to train, share information and network in the name of better security.

In the **IT security program sphere**, agencies are required to develop risk assessment and management programs for systems with sensitive information.

The **infrastructure sphere** covers most hardware and software changes, including the opening of a new data center, and the **external sphere** involves educating citizens about their personal IT security.

The **five spheres** represent a staggering amount of work for Virginia. And there’s always more to do. “Eventually who knows? It may change,” said Michael Watson, VITA’s director of security incident management. “We may have to add additional input as time goes on. Technology’s never a static thing. It evolved into this as we went along with the process.”

And the struggle for strong security is everlasting. “Take anything else, security is a journey. We don’t expect to accomplish it all at once,” Watson said. “We’ve grown and introduced the security culture into the different agencies and the rest of the government, and helped propagate the idea that it’s a priority within the state. And as time has gone on, we’ve developed it.”

**Fixes From the Ground Up**

Before the interlocking spheres project began in 2006, Virginia’s IT landscape looked much different. The state had more than 90 disparate IT departments within individual agencies, and 60 percent of the state’s equipment was between 8 and 10 years old. Even Virginia’s primary data center was a security risk. The state’s auditor of public accounts reported that 17 percent of 104 agencies lacked an information security program and 63 percent had an inadequately documented program.

Virginia’s leadership decided change was due. “The Legislature, the governor and various governing officials took a look across the commonwealth,” Green said. “We noticed that the infrastructure was certainly aging. There were some issues with older systems as a result of technology being out of date.” Green also suspects some of the security controls in place to safeguard those legacy systems also were antiquated.

Fortunately lawmakers and the executive branch understood the importance of security and passed legislation that became the foundation for the information security program. Among those were policies that empowered the state CIO to develop standards and procedures for security across Virginia. In 2007, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation requiring the CIO to direct the development of these policies and procedures and gave the Information Technology Investment Board the power to withhold funds if necessary.

Thanks to these efforts, agencies had a mandate to perform risk assessments and use the policies and tools to make that
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Incident Report
State employees use this online reporting form to alert technology officials to security incidents. Virginia executive branch agencies must report security issues to the state CIO within 24 hours of when they were discovered.

"Security is really a continuous life cycle. It's never complete." — Matt Slaight, manager, computer systems security, Northrop Grumman

Security is really a continuous life cycle. It's never complete.

The threat is always evolving.
” — Matt Slaight, manager, computer systems security, Northrop Grumman

Security is really a continuous life cycle. It’s never complete. The threat is always evolving.” — Matt Slaight, manager, computer systems security, Northrop Grumman

happen — activities that fall into the IT security program sphere.

Those who spoke to Government Technology about the security project said it wasn’t terribly problematic getting the work done, although John Willinger, information security officer for the state Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, hinted at reluctance some agencies had with the changes.

“It’s just a matter of getting those agencies that have been used to doing business in a certain way to step up and say, ‘OK, we do need a change,’” he said. “I think that’s probably the biggest issue — just agencies being reluctant to take the step.”

The state government invested $270 million upfront to transform the robust infrastructure sphere. Those changes were spurred by coordination among Virginia’s Leadership, VITA and other state agencies, with substantial help from Northrop Grumman, their private-sector partner.

“Northrop Grumman was integral in the infrastructure sphere,” said Matt Slaight, manager of computer systems security for the company. Northrop Grumman helped with the technology consolidation, the new data center and backup facilities for support.

The primary data center, the 192,000-square-foot Commonwealth Enterprise Solutions Center, opened in July 2007 in Chester, Va., at Tier 3 capability with power from two separate substations and an alternate water supply. According to the TIA-942 standards established by the Telecommunications Industry Association, a Tier 3 data center can have maximum annual downtime of 1.6 hours and must have multiple power and cooling distribution paths. The facility houses more than 600 Northrop Grumman and VITA employees.

Soon after the data center opened, an additional remote recovery site was completed in Lebanon, Va. This facility is 101,000 square feet, with a help desk and backup capabilities staffed in part by employees from nearby counties and cities.

“By the December [2007] time frame, we were completed with southwest Lebanon’s security offi cials. The group was originally meant to infl uence government IT projects to everything. It’s a huge undertaking just for our agency alone,” Willinger said. “When you look at the entire commonwealth, it can be overwhelming.”

Team Efforts
Technology alone doesn’t enhance security. People also do, which is where the peer-to-peer sphere comes in. This area is all about sharing the wealth — knowledge, training and experiences — through three groups: the Commonwealth Information Security Council, the Information Security Officers Advisory Group and the Information Security Orientation program. They’re go-to zones for personnel looking to gain some security IQ.

The Information Security Officers Advisory Group is a monthly meet-up for top security officials. The group was originally meant to infl uence government IT projects
and policy, but membership grew too large, with 100 to 150 people chiming in. Today state information security officers use the group to share information about emerging security trends, technologies and occurrences that could affect local IT.

The Information Security Council is much smaller, with roughly 12 representatives from universities and every branch of state government, including local governments, who meet monthly. This group zeroes in on policy and strategic directions that affect security.

Participants in the Information Security Orientation program learn security strategies that will make their agencies compliant with state standards.

The sphere also includes orientation and training for new information security officers. This training is open to other personnel who want to learn about compliance.

**Spreading the Word**

The changes brought forth by the interlocking spheres project aren’t only evident in the back-end data center and networks. Changes also are apparent on the VITA Web site.

The information security incident reporting form allows state personnel to inform VITA about anything from site defacements and viruses to inappropriate use of technology and hacks. This reporting structure complies with a crucial requirement: Executives must report these issues to the CIO within 24 hours of when they were discovered.

“Through a few different methods we use for our agencies to communicate to us that an incident has occurred,” Green said, “and the mission of that form is to activate our incident response team.”

VITA also helps government workers and citizens practice good computer hygiene by offering tips and resources via the online Information Security Awareness Toolkit, a site with information and software code for visitors to take if they wish. There’s a video, posters, brochures, a calendar, crossword puzzles and more — all designed to plant the seeds of secure computing in the minds of those willing to be educated. The site’s advice and links connect employees and the public to outside security resources, which is defined as part of the external sphere of interlocking security.

The toolkit was developed before the interlocking spheres project began, so these educational offerings will be fine-tuned, according to Nakita Albritton, who serves as VITA’s manager of information security and continuity of operations coordinator.

“There’s going to be a section [geared] toward executive information security awareness,” she said. “I’ll include security articles that basically give them a snapshot of some of their responsibilities and standards. I’ll have presentations in there, and as we find other ways of distributing information to them, we’ll add those things.”

The toolkit’s YouTube video, *The Duhs of Security*, is a quirky 13-minute production that covers basic security steps that everyone should know. Actor Garet Chester’s humorous narration features a bevy of celebrity impressions — no doubt intended to save viewers from boredom — as they’re educated about the benefits of deleting mysterious e-mails and changing passwords. The video may need some updating. Some of Chester’s characterizations, like one based on Peter Falk’s portrayal of Lt. Columbo from decades past, may not register with modern audiences.

Yet the toolkit will be mercurial regardless. “We’re looking to develop it a lot more, and it will be dynamic,” Albritton said.

And because developing robust security takes time and stamina, officials involved in the interlocking spheres project say it will need to evolve dynamically, too.

“Security is really a continuous life cycle,” Slaight said. “It’s never complete. The threat is always evolving. There are always new tools coming out — new exploits, new vulnerabilities — and it takes constantly staying up to date and on top of the threat, and adjusting the defensive posture of the infrastructure.”

Willinger feels much better about Virginia’s security now that the spheres are in place. “We’re a lot better off now than we were three years ago, most definitely,” he said. “When you feel a little more confident in your poker hand, you feel better off about what you have.”

---

*When you feel a little more confident in your poker hand, you feel better off about what you have.*

— John Willinger, information security officer, Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services
If Garrett Olsen takes his eyes off the computer screen for one second, he could die.

It wouldn’t be the first time. In fact, if you ask Garrett, who’s 11, how many times he’s died already, he’ll give a casual response: “In this game? About a million.”

It’s Saturday afternoon, the middle of the fall, warm enough to play outside. But Garrett and his friend Chandler would rather be at the Folsom, Calif., Public Library, absorbed in a world of medieval knights, castles and keys — the name of the game is RuneScape. Right now, they’re talking to each other, trying to find the secret door that will take them to the next level. But they move with caution. If they open the wrong door, they’ll have to start over. Again.

By thinking beyond books, public libraries take information literacy to the next stage.

LIBRARIES LEVEL UP

By Russell Nichols Staff Writer

GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY
Solutions for State and Local Government in the Information Age
An American Library Association Youth and Library Use Study of 1,260 kids ages 8 to 18 conducted in June 2007 found that 78% of youths have library cards.

The boys go to the library often to play this free online game, but Nov. 14 was special because they were counted among the 31,300 people who flocked to libraries across the country for National Gaming Day. Only in its second year, the annual event sponsored by the American Library Association more than doubled its numbers from 2008. More than 1,360 libraries registered to participate, including libraries in Canada and Japan. Morocco expressed interest for next year.

The numbers don’t lie: People love playing games at libraries. But this is more than just a once-a-year phenomenon. In the past decade, technology has taken the age-old library model to the next level. By adopting interactive, gaming trends, modern-day libraries help open doors to the world of virtual, hands-on learning in ways never seen before.

The event was designed to promote awareness that you can actually play at the library and that it’s OK,” said Jenny Levine, strategy guide for the American Library Association. “There’s this stereotype that you have to be quiet, people will shush you and you have to sit by yourself at a table. That’s not true anymore.”

“‘The Last Noncommercialized Space’

Since the beginning, libraries have been archives for the sacred texts and published records of the world — from papyri scrolls in ancient Egypt and clay tablets at the Royal Library of Ashurbanipal — to the endless rows of fiction and non-fiction books. These structures provided storage to literary works and reference materials, but also acted as a community anchor, where citizens from all walks of life could find common ground in the pursuit of knowledge.

As the digital age swept the country, it was a question as to whether libraries could survive the new millennium. In modern societies, where the Internet puts information at your fingertips, and you can download books with the click of a mouse, would public libraries still be relevant?

The answer — a resounding yes — resonates from the streets of Philadelphia, where the community united last fall to save 11 branches of the public library system from closing due to the city’s financial crisis. After residents flooded courtrooms and wrote letters to elected officials, the state Legislature acted on a budget request that kept all 54 branches of the Free Library of Philadelphia open.

Such an outpouring of support reflects the significance of the library system in American cities. “It’s the last noncommercialized space left in the community,” Levine said.

Adapting and Adopting

Community support underscores its value, but the longevity of the public library system also can be attributed to its consistent effort to think outside of the books. Last decade, libraries expanded their collections to include other media resources, such as
GOVERNING’s 12th annual Managing Technology Conference is an executive event focused on practical, realistic solutions, best practices and cutting edge developments in effective management of technology across the full spectrum of state and local functions. Learn about challenges and successes from colleagues in other communities, and walk away with new ideas and strategies to address your most critical issues:

- Streamlined Government: Making IT Consolidation Real
- Protecting Security, Providing Access
- The Fiscal Impact of IT Choices: Save Money or Create Jobs?
- Cross-Border Collaboration: Sharing Systems and Services
- Modernizing Critical Systems: UI and MMIS
- Taking It Back:Undoing Outsourcing
- New Workforce, New Workplace — Government 2010

RESULTS-DRIVEN COLLABORATION IN A HIGHLY COMPLEX, STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

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as CDs and DVDs. In the past 10 years, libraries have kept up with technology trends by bringing in video games that help improve information literacy and collaborative learning.

Now you might walk into a library and see kids playing Guitar Hero to learn about and play popular rock ’n’ roll records; or RuneScape, where players roam a medieval fantasy realm with customizable avatars, searching for treasure; or SimCity that teaches the ins and outs of urban development. Proponents agree that such games not only force students to use critical thinking skills and solve complex problems, but also provide interactive, visual stimulation that they can’t get with a math game.

In addition, the social component that comes with libraries enhances the gaming experience in ways kids may not find in any other public place. They’re not as restricted to time limits as they would be in a class. Video games encourage students to socialize and interact with others rather than isolating themselves.

“They want to play it as a multiplayer game and get on the Web, talk about it and figure out statistics,” said James Paul Gee, the Mary Lou Fulton presidential professor of literacy studies at Arizona State University. “Games have turned out to be an inherently social experience.”

Garrett’s mother, Kathryn, has seen the effects firsthand. From playing video games at the library, she said, Garrett has met new people and has become more interested in reading.

It also unites players in a unique way. For instance, Levine said, kids are more willing to resolve disputes on their own rather than getting kicked out the library for fighting.

In reality, the convergence of the library system and the gaming world isn’t that outlandish; they have a lot in common. Both are vast worlds ready to be explored. And consider this: When gamers get stuck on a level, many seek help by reading a walkthrough guide online or plugging in a cheat code.

At libraries, when browsers get lost, they also get help from someone who knows where to go and how to get there: a librarian, or as Levine says, “the human cheat code.”

Literacy On Board

But the gaming movement goes beyond computers and video game consoles. Many libraries keep assorted board games available for use. Last October, Folsom Public Library launched a six-week chess club for students. In New York, the School Library System of the Genesee Valley Board of Cooperative Educational Services developed a board game library to provide support for 22 rural districts. Funded by the state, coordinators have amassed a collection of nearly 100 titles — all tied to state curriculum standards in math, English and social studies.

“We weren’t sure how to get it into the schools,” said Christopher Harris, coordinator of the School Library System. “The schools are a little funny sometimes about games. I like to joke that we’ve taken away recess from kindergarten and replaced it with algebra.”

Traditional American board games require minimal engagement. Players roll the dice, move their game pieces, wait for
their next turn, and so forth, said Brian Mayer, a library technology specialist for the School Library System.

With this program, the library system made sure to buy games that tie into the curriculum and keep kids actively involved. One particular game re-creates the 1960 U.S. presidential election. Players have cards that look like the front pages of newspapers with historical facts about John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon.

"They look like Pokémon or Yu-Gi-Oh cards except they’re all about the election," Harris said. “Someone keeps track of electoral votes, media relations, issues for debates. Now the students are really engaged in the experience of running and being a part of an election.”

**Gaming Requirements**

No matter the type of game, the same strategies that promote reading literacy should be used to enhance media literacy — specifically mentorship, said Gee, author of numerous books including *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*, which offers 36 reasons why good video games produce better learning conditions than many of today’s schools.

Research, he said, shows that poor kids use computer games as much as middle-class kids, but get less out of it. Therefore, libraries can add that missing piece by working with schools or providing the additional support needed for comprehension.

“If you're reading a book and not really thinking or talking about it, it's not really good for learning,” he said. “The same is true for a computer game.”

Although much of the opposition has died down, Gee said, many of the objections to educational video games came from baby boomers who couldn’t grasp the concept of learning how to lose in order to win.

“For baby boomers, it's tough because you have to learn by trial,” he said. “We think failure is a bad thing, but in games failure is a good thing. If you’re going to be an engineer, you better learn to fail before you build a bridge. Good science requires exploration and risk-taking.”

Not convinced? Just ask Garrett Olsen how many times he’s died in RuneScape.
Social networking technologies are creating potential challenges for government transparency. As more agency employees use Twitter, Facebook and similar external sites, some state and local IT officials are asking if those communications should be archived for public viewing. The problem is that agencies don’t know how to archive communications made on third-party social networks. For now, CIOs are delaying this puzzler because the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has no mandates related to them. But Melinda Catapano, city records manager for Grand Junction, Colo., who also is a lawyer, predicts that courts will eventually force agencies to provide this data.

Examining the potential risks of this issue could help CIOs discern the appropriate priority level for solving it.

The Problem Approaches

Catapano follows legal trends closely and thinks a mandate from the courts could be imminent. “There are so many ways a court could say this is connected to official agency work, ergo you better be able to produce that record,” she said. As citizens become accustomed to accessing more types of communication archives, social network archives will be a logical expectation, said Elayne Starkey, chief security officer of Delaware and FOIA coordinator for the state’s Department of Technology and Information.

Catapano pointed to a judgment from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit that the U.S. Supreme Court recently agreed to review. In City of Ontario v. Quon, the court held that the Ontario, Calif., Police Department violated an officer’s privacy rights by examining an archive of text messages on his city-issued cell phone. If the U.S. Supreme Court reverses the circuit court’s decision and says producing an archive of employee text messages is legitimate, that could have implications on other electronic communications, in Catapano’s view.

“To the courts, it may well be a series of short leaps from text messaging via pagers to electronic communications in general to electronic communications via external sources,” Catapano said.

Twitter and Facebook could easily be among those “external sources,” according to Catapano.

One difference is that state and local governments currently have no mechanism for archiving external social networking posts. By contrast, a mechanism does exist for retrieving text message archives if that becomes required.

Catapano admitted that she, like many other CIOs, didn’t have a clue as to how to archive external social networking posts. “It would probably be a good master’s thesis because everybody needs those answers and everybody seems to be avoiding the problem,” Catapano remarked.

Michele Hovet, IT director of Arvada, Colo., agreed that the challenge of archiving social networking posts was on the horizon.
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“Right now, we’re drawing a line by policy. If it’s hosted on an external entity that we don’t have control over, we will not include it in an open records request. We will not have to archive it,” Hovet said. “In the future will that change as these tools are used more and more? I think it will.”

Riding E-Mail’s Coattails

Since technology already exists for archiving e-mails, Peter Larson, senior manager of IT operations for Douglas County, Colo., suggested that e-mail might be the mechanism IT departments use for storing social network postings. For example, he said an agency could easily attach a program to its e-mail system letting employees post to social networking sites through their government-issued e-mail accounts. Larson theorized that the user experience wouldn’t be all that awkward. After all, agency workers already have their e-mail accounts handy anyway. Why couldn’t they track communications on Twitter, and then quickly click their Outlook tabs and send necessary tweets via e-mail?

Services performing such an e-mail-to-social networking site function exist on the Web for free, but Larson said an agency would need to build its own to ensure reliability. “If you were going to be on the hook for producing that archive, you would have to implement some sort of system you could have confidence in,” Larson said.
How Local Government Uses Web 2.0

- Microblogs: 63% (Cities) 30% (Counties)
- Search Engine Utility: 81% (Cities) 76% (Counties)
- Social Networks: 64% (Cities) 35% (Counties)
- Online Surveys: 72% (Cities) 55% (Counties)
- Video Sharing: 54% (Cities) 30% (Counties)
- Photo Sharing: 32% (Cities) 15% (Counties)

Internet Map Utility:
- Stand-alone: 60% (Cities) 45% (Counties)
- Integrated with county GIS: 77% (Cities) 67% (Counties)

SOURCE: 2009 Digital Cities and Digital Counties Surveys Conducted by the Center for Digital Government
Georgia Database Shines

Web-based child welfare information system improves data sharing and produces real-time case records.

Suffering from investigation delays and faulty lines of communication, Georgia’s child welfare system for years was in need of critical support.

Each of the state’s 159 counties had its own separate database system, creating problems for case managers who struggled to keep track of when a child moved. Then, in the early 2000s, two foster children died. Although not solely responsible for the deaths, “the system definitely could have helped in identifying the issues with those children much earlier,” said Venkat Krishnan, CIO of the state’s Department of Human Services (DHS).

In the wake of those incidents, the key players realized that a system overhaul couldn’t wait.

“The death of a child has often been an instigator for reform,” said Sean Toole, senior executive for Accenture, an international consulting and technology services company.

In 2005, Georgia officials released an RFP for a contractor to develop a $40 million statewide automated child welfare information system. Called Georgia Shines and built by Accenture, the Web-based system allows the DHS and the Division of Family and Children Services to better monitor children in the system, improve data sharing across county lines and have access to real-time data that tracks progress.

By eliminating what Krishnan called the geographic and functional silos of the old system, state officials, social workers and case managers now have better insight on each child’s history, and those records won’t fall between the cracks.

“With the new system, the majority of information about the child and family is recorded as part of the case management system,” he said. “When a child goes from one county to another, it’s just a county transfer with the click of a button.”

Up and Running

The push for statewide automated child welfare information systems (SACWIS) started in 1993 after a law gave states the opportunity to receive 75 percent enhanced funding through the Title IV-E program of the Social Security Act, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Most states are in the process of developing a SACWIS, with the current total of project costs exceeding $2.3 billion. Georgia tried to implement a statewide system twice before, but those projects failed when delays caused funding and support to dry up.

The hardest part was merging and transferring the counties’ data into one central database, Krishnan said.

“We wanted to do this on time and on budget,” Krishnan said. “The way we overcame the challenge was to have a robust public-private partnership.”

It took almost two years to implement the system, and Toole said they kept the momentum going by familiarizing workers with the technology through formal readiness assessments. Also instead of using Atlanta as the testing grounds, project directors launched the pilot production site in Douglas County. There, project and county staff collaborated in a moderately sized area with a diverse population — a “more authentic environment,” Krishnan said.

Analyzing Outcomes

With Georgia’s old county database system, Krishnan said, there were 700 or more overdue investigations every month, which created backlogs and delays.

With the new system, each investigation should be done in 45 days. Now, Toole said, essentially zero investigations are behind schedule. The system also aims to boost effectiveness with built-in alerts that notify case managers when a new intake has been received by a family, a foster home has been approved, or they’re overdue on an investigation task.

The idea is that translating and compiling data into comprehensive information will increase accountability and transparency for all stakeholders. For example, the new system provides reports that show managers the steps in each case’s process instead of just a success or failure grade. These outcomes will be used to identify problem areas or trends. Then the case manager can make a more informed decision about the type of assessment needed.

“No, decision-making is based on outcomes as opposed to just principles,” Krishnan said. “It’s a sea change on how child welfare is practiced. The overall system of operation has improved. It keeps everyone on the same sheet of music.”

BY RUSSELL NICHOLS
STAFF WRITER
Colorado Releases Cloud Plan
State’s Internet Portal Authority will partner with private providers to deliver cloud services.

In January, Colorado became the latest state to unveil a strategy for bringing cloud computing services to state and local government agencies. Under the plan, Colorado’s Statewide Internet Portal Authority (SIPA) will contract with private-sector companies to provide cloud computing services to state and local governments.

Colorado officials say using SIPA, a quasi-governmental agency that oversees Colorado.gov, is a novel approach for delivering cloud-based services. “We’re going to the private sector and utilizing their cloud, rather than creating our own homegrown cloud,” said John D. Conley, SIPA’s executive director. “It will give us the best e-mail, security and office applications, but through a quasi-government entity, you’ll be able to have single sign-on.”

Clouds Save Money
Citing a 2009 Forrester Report, Conley said the average monthly cost for on-premises e-mail is $16 to $25 per account. That means a government agency with 2,500 e-mail accounts will pay between $40,000 and $62,500 per month. With SaaS, he said, those costs come down. “Not only will I deliver you e-mail, but also instant messaging and office productivity,” he said. “All this for two-thirds less than what you’re paying on-premises.”

In the Colorado model, Conley said, a user would only need to enter a name and password to log on to the services from any computer at any time. Not only that, but connecting with the private sector rather than creating a government cloud means the state doesn’t have to pay to build a data center.

Healthy Competition
In reality, government entities can access private-sector clouds on their own. But doing so can create problems. First, Conley said, the funding pipeline isn’t equipped to handle thousands of different procurement requests. In addition, while large cities might benefit, small towns often are overlooked.

Created to provide shared IT services across all jurisdictional levels, SIPA would serve as a bridge between the chosen companies and the state’s 270 municipalities in a model where no town gets left behind.

Ideally SIPA wants to collaborate with a company that can meet all 90-plus requirements, including Web-based e-mail, instant messaging and video conferencing, among others. But, Conley said, companies may need to form partnerships to meet the criteria. “I think this is a unique opportunity for Colorado,” he said. “If adoption is there, I think we’ll see other government entities follow in leveraging the private sector rather than trying to create it in-house.”

An RFP issued by SIPA on Jan. 20 seeks a software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution for Web-based e-mail and office productivity applications. State officials say giving government agencies on-demand access to such cloud-based services will deliver big savings over traditional on-premises applications. The initiative is known as the COPE (Collaboration, Office Productivity and E-mail) project.

This is important because, as the state’s former deputy CIO, Conley said he has watched funding streams for technology dry up in the past. Ultimately he doesn’t believe a government-operated cloud would be sustainable in the long term. “If we can’t invest the dollars today,” he said, “I don’t know that sending them to the cloud would change the culture overnight.”
As 911 call centers begin adding new technologies like IP radio and next-generation 911 (NG911) services — the ability to receive multimedia input like text and video from citizens — they are being forced to consider new solutions to record and store calls and information they receive.

Earlier this year, the San Jose, Calif., Police Department upgraded its call center technology to improve redundancy and simplify retrieval of recordings, which can provide critical evidence in criminal cases. While the department has yet to deploy NG911 in its call center, these capabilities will be added in the future. So the current information management upgrade also prepares the department to capture and preserve multimedia content.

The call center handles approximately 1 million calls annually, including 911, 311, and seven-digit emergency and nonemergency calls. All calls are recorded.

The San Jose Police moved to new information storage and retrieval technology because the existing system was aging and beginning to fail, according to Cameron Smith, manager of the department’s Communications Division.

Previously calls were recorded to a local hard drive and a DVD. The system also recorded to a network-attached storage device — not for redundancy, but because storage space on the local drive was limited.

Now, in addition to two analog recordings, calls are digitized and recorded on a storage server, a network-attached storage device and long-term tape backups.

“To pull a recording before, you needed client software that was licensed and loaded on a local PC,” Smith said. “The new system is a Web-based solution and provides more flexibility and redundancy.”

The department purchased NiceLog and NICE Inform software, from NICE Systems, to record and retrieve voice recordings and call data. Now those who need to access call recordings or data after the fact, such as supervisors or tape custodians — who provide the information to the public and attorneys or detectives involved in a case — can easily retrieve it.

“To pull a recording before, you needed client software that was licensed and loaded on a local PC,” Smith said. “The new system is a Web-based solution and provides more flexibility and redundancy.”

The system allows users to search for calls and data in a number of ways, according to Patrick Kiernan, director of marketing for NICE’s security division. “It has very strong search capabilities.”

The incident number is the most common method of searching, he said, but the system being able to produce that key critical confession that was received by a 911 call taker can mean the difference between conviction or exoneration.

The San Jose call center handles approximately 1 million calls annually.

A New 911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TODAY’S 911</th>
<th>FUTURE 911</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Primary voice calls via telephones</td>
<td>✓ Voice, text or video from many types of communications devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Minimal data</td>
<td>✓ Advanced data capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Local access, transfer and backup</td>
<td>✓ Long distance access, transfer and backup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: NEXT GENERATION 911 SYSTEM INITIATIVE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
also accommodates searches based on call time or the channel on which the communication with the officer took place.

**Careful Planning**

Before deploying the new system, the department carefully laid groundwork to ensure a smooth transition. Before choosing the NICE products, the department contacted at least five users for each system under consideration, said Smith. “We were looking to ensure we had a good cross-section of users — large, small, etc.”

Once the new software was deployed, the department ran both systems until it was convinced that the new solution was up to the task. “We kept the old system running for 90 days to ensure there were no lost recordings should the NICE system fail,” Smith said.

While no failures occurred, he said the department had a full-time technician for the first two weeks who could tweak the system as needed.

According to Smith, training call center staff was simple. NICE trained key personnel, who then trained supervisory staff. “Most were able to grasp the basics within a half hour,” Smith said.

**Looking to the Future**

Although numerous hurdles must be cleared before the city can begin deploying NG911, Smith said the department will be prepared to store and retrieve multimedia data when the shift happens. A module of Inform called Organizer will let the users pull together related materials, such as voice files, texts and video.

“Anything that’s stored on the network can be captured, frankly, the same way you would with Microsoft,” Kiernan said. “You know in Outlook, if you do an attachment, it just goes out and you find the file and you attach it.”

This means the department can store other related multimedia files — in addition to files submitted by citizens — in the same folder.

“Our department is in the midst of a pilot project to test [high-definition] video recorders on the officers,” Smith said. “While their video will be stored offsite at a vendor storage area, again, we can use Organizer to put these files as a part of the entire package we would send to the District Attorney’s [DA’s] Office as a part of the overall criminal complaint. This will reduce the time and effort to file complaints with the DA’s Office.”

Smith said the system cost about $600,000 and was paid for mostly by a state tariff.
The rash of foreclosures in 2009 created a desperate situation for county clerks required to process the resulting foreclosed home auctions. Miami-Dade County, Fla., is an example. In years past, the county typically processed 5,000 to 6,000 foreclosures annually. During 2009, by comparison, the county handled nearly 20 times that amount, said Harvey Ruvin, clerk of the Circuit and County Court of Miami-Dade County. In December 2009, the county tackled the workload by deploying Miamidade.realforeclose.com, a Web site powered by Realauction.com, on which citizens could purchase foreclosed homes online instead of visiting the courthouse. The Web tool also automated several administrative steps in the foreclosure auction process.

With the new system, Ruvin expects to triple the number of auctions he can process per week, finally clearing the backlog that has plagued his office. Here’s how Miami-Dade executed this strategy.

Clearing Out of the Courthouse

These days, the county gets roughly 7,000 foreclosures to auction every month. In the past, bottlenecks resulted from conducting physical auctions at the courthouse. Before deploying the online system, the clerk could only manage to auction foreclosed homes three days a week. That expanded to five days a week with the online auction. The first online auction was held in January.

“We were doing around 750 per week,” Ruvin said in December. “That ought to be at least doubled, and maybe tripled, once we get going with our five-day-a-week auctions online.”

Holding auctions online also eliminates much of the buyer chicanery that Ruvin battled with onsite auctions. For example, experienced foreclosure buyers frequently prey upon newcomers, confusing them about the process so they don’t place competing bids. Fights often erupted, which required Ruvin to pay for extra security staff and run surveillance cameras to maintain order.

Ruvin said the online auction would eliminate 23,000 hours of labor annually, translating to roughly $250,000 in savings each year. He said the online system came in the nick of time because county staff resources are scarce. In late 2009, the clerk was forced to implement an 18 percent budget cut, resulting in 150 layoffs.

“It’s coming at a time when our workload is spiking and there is a real demand...
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to get these cases moving,” Ruvin said. “A lot of these homes are abandoned in neighborhoods where they become centers of crime and other things that blight those communities.”

No longer holding auctions at the courthouse lets those employees be redeployed to other projects, according to Shabazz. In addition to security and surveillance staff, the county paid an auctioneer, two cashiers and a few other employees to keep auctions running smoothly. Now those employees can do other tasks.

“They may be redirected to other areas of the foreclosure sales process. They could be helping with the notices of sales. They could help with the titles we process,” Shabazz said.

**Back-Office Bottleneck Gone**

Converting foreclosure auctions to the online system eliminated a back-office hassle that nearly debilitated foreclosure processing. Hundreds of foreclosure judgments are made at the court each day. Before the foreclosed home can be auctioned, a notice of sale must be generated by the clerk’s office. These were stored in hard copy form at a building near the courthouse, which potential buyers had to visit to peruse the upcoming purchasing opportunities. Now anyone can view this information on the Web. Before the online system, it took three to five days for the clerk’s office to generate one day’s worth of foreclosure judgments. Now it takes roughly two hours, according to Ester Jones, project manager for the clerk’s office.

In the past, creating a notice of sale required manually typing legal language from the hard copy version of the foreclosure judgment, as well as language from other documents. Three employees in the clerk’s office did this and could only process roughly 250 notices of sale per day.

“Having automated this on our site, we’re able to pull up the form via the online auction site,” Jones said. “It actually snaps an image of the legal language from the judgment, which means there is no error rate. No one is hand-typing that into the form.”

Having all of the necessary documentation online removed an additional problem that often ensued after the sale of a foreclosed home. Sometimes citizens would take documents that were necessary for post-sale paperwork out of the publicly available file-viewing facility. This would delay sale completions, bogging down clerk employees further. Now if citizens take documents, sales can finish on time regardless because electronic versions of those documents exist.

**Bigger World of Bidders**

Putting the auctions on the Web also opens them up to more bidders, which could raise the prices, Ruvin added.

“Now anybody in the world can bid, and they can do it on their own time and in their own place,” he said. “You can even do it over a BlackBerry or iPhone.”

Implementing online foreclosure auctions will eliminate 23,000 hours of government labor annually, which translates to roughly $250,000 in annual savings for Miami-Dade County.
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Planning Power

Basic planning and a few upgrades can go a long way toward decreasing energy consumption.

Like their federal counterparts, managers of state, county, and municipally-owned buildings are focused on increasing energy efficiency. Catalysts for this heightened focus include growing cultural awareness of sustainability, rising electricity costs and tighter budgets. However, it’s critically important for all facility managers to distinguish between energy efficiency—a desired end result, and energy management—a strategic plan designed and implemented with the building life cycle in mind. Energy management involves a continuous process to actively monitor, manage, improve and sustain savings. A carefully constructed energy management plan will better position state, county and municipal facility managers to achieve energy efficiency goals in the short term.

At the federal level, legislation is a key driver for facility managers to set energy efficiency goals. The 2007 Energy Independence and Security Act, for example, requires federal government facilities to reduce energy consumption by 3 percent annually from fiscal 2006 through 2015 for a total 30 percent reduction. Also recognizing that you can’t manage what you can’t measure, the Energy Policy Act of 2005 requires facility managers to install advanced electric meters on every building by Oct. 1, 2012. Finally, Executive Order 13514—Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy and Economic Performance, which was enacted Oct. 5, 2009—requires facilities to set targets and measure and report on greenhouse gas emissions.

The strategies that federal facility managers deploy to comply with mandates can, and should, be replicated at the state, county and municipal level. It makes sense for the environment and the bottom line. From 2004 to 2008, the average per-kilowatt-hour cost of electricity rose from 7.6 cents to 9.8 cents, according to the U.S. Department of Energy’s Energy Information Administration (EIA), a 28.8 percent increase. The EIA expects that amount to increase to 10.7 cents in 2010. Unless conservation measures are implemented, states, counties and municipalities may be forced to make cuts in other areas to pay their utility bills. Conservation is even more critical as government entities struggle to meet fiscal obligations.

Life Cycle Education

In addition to creating and implementing a strategic energy management program, a facility manager also must educate stakeholders on how to maximize savings generated by active energy efficiency measures. For example, no matter how stringently adjusted a building system is upon initial occupancy, facility usage changes over time—the lighting control system is overridden, the set points on the HVAC system are changed and equipment begins to age. These factors translate to energy consumption and cost-savings erosion.

A facility manager can avoid this by emphasizing a life cycle approach focused on maintaining those savings. This sets the stage for more effective long-term energy management and a greater opportunity for success.

Four Steps to Energy Management

There are many ways to instantly improve a facility’s energy efficiency, but the overall goal should be continuous improvement. A strategic energy management plan should incorporate four basic steps:

1. Measure. Collect data from energy consumers within a facility and analyze individuals’ impact on total consumption. Measuring energy use via a metering system identifies potential savings opportunities and creates a baseline to gauge improvement.

2. Fix the basics. This consists of efforts like installing low-energy-consumption devices, such as LED lighting, and addressing power quality issues. However, while they can translate to substantial savings, such measures are typically one-time improvements and a passive approach to energy management.

3. Automate. Measures like schedule-based lighting control and occupancy sensors automatically turn lights on only when needed, while HVAC control regulates heating and cooling at optimal levels. More importantly, automation mechanisms facilitate an active approach to energy management because they can be adjusted based on fluctuating demands.

4. Monitor and improve. Unplanned, unmanaged equipment and process shutdowns, substandard automation and regulation, poor maintenance or discontinuity can cut previously gained efficiencies and savings. Nearly 8 percent savings per year is lost without a monitoring and maintenance program. Power meter installations, management systems, regular maintenance and retro commissioning (improving control systems and equipment interoperability) can help achieve a long-term, positive return on investment.
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Your Road Map to the Virtual Data Center

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Reforming Rogue Purchasers

The city and county of Denver educates agencies on the true cost of owning technology.

Does the following scenario sound familiar? An IT vendor quotes a low price to an agency official for a technology solution. The official buys the product and then gets around to informing the IT staff, expecting that they will be delighted to deploy it. Later, this non-technical official is stunned to learn that the vendor’s price quote didn’t reflect the actual cost of owning and operating what was purchased. Consequently the IT staff lacks the time, funds and workers for such an implementation. The IT department instantly is seen as hindering progress, while the official whose purchase caused the problem is seen as a victim.

Denver’s consolidated city and county government struggled for years with this kind of problem until its Technology Services (TS) department created a process for helping agencies and the executives who oversee them understand the true cost and usefulness of technology purchases before they pull out their government-issued credit cards. TS assigns “account managers” to develop relationships with agencies so that the two entities understand each other’s needs. TS and the city and county’s joint budget office then coach agencies on purchase requests, which are presented to the IT Investment Council (ITIC) before the purchase can occur.

Molly Rauzi, CIO of Denver, said mutual understanding between IT and nontechnology officials flourished after this arrangement was established in 2007. Rogue purchases are in decline, and the blame game is far less common. Here’s how Denver’s process functions.

Sucking Them Out of Their Vacuum

A primary cause of rogue IT purchasing is ignorance of how those purchases affect the IT support that’s consequently available to other departments, according to Rauzi. TS illuminated this reality by forming the ITIC, an IT decision-making body with representatives from each agency. In the past, Rauzi was stuck prioritizing projects herself, resulting in most agencies feeling disfavored. Once agency representatives took seats on the ITIC, they saw firsthand how well their requests aligned with Denver’s overarching goals and technology infrastructure. This helped when the council rejected a purchase request for which an agency had already secured its own grant money.

“People would come through and say, ‘I already have money, why do I have to go through a justification process?’” Rauzi said. “The answer was we wanted to make sure we were doing things that met the city’s strategy, not just things we had money to do.”

By allowing agencies to drive decisions with consequences for that dominant strategy, Rauzi said officials make stronger efforts to solve their problems without additional purchases.

“While they’re in that council, they’re hearing the struggles of other agencies and it gives them more empathy across the board,” she said. “They feel more part of a team, and sometimes they have ideas to help another agency with a solution, which has been great.”

The council’s members also show more willingness to sacrifice, according to Edward Scholz, Denver’s budget and management director, who also sits on the ITIC. “We had the human resources director actually pull one of his requests out, because he recognized that other things were more important,” he said.

Before a project reaches the ITIC, it must be endorsed by an executive-level official in the agency requesting it. Oftentimes, an executive will do the dirty work of rejection for the ITIC. “Some of them still aren’t happy,” Scholz added, “but at least they know that we have an objective process.”

Exposing Hidden Costs Upfront

Making nontechnical agency officials less vulnerable to misleading sales pitches required a process for establishing the true cost of technology proposals. TS began by dispatching employees to help agencies with assessment spreadsheets for the general cost of products they wanted to buy.
“It was basically an Excel spreadsheet that served as a checklist for any project,” Rauzi said. “Do you have a project manager? Do you have business analysis that needs to take place? Do you need training for your business staff? Do you need training for the IT staff to support it?”

Rauzi is especially eager for agencies to create this spreadsheet when they seek grants for a new project. This way they know a realistic amount to request on their grant applications. “It could be attached to the grant application,” she said.

After that, the agencies meet with a three-person team Scholz hired to help them flesh out their proposals before submitting them to the ITIC. This team coaches agencies on formulating a business case. Together they examine whether the problem the technology is intended to fix could be solved with existing resources.

Pre-emptive Customer Service

The proposal counseling drastically reduces the number of ill-fated ideas the ITIC must consider. However, TS also has a strategy for avoiding some of the unnecessary counseling that happens for suggestions that are destined to fail. TS assigned account managers to develop relationships with agencies so they will understand each other better. Each account manager from TS meets with his or her assigned agency at least once a month — and often more frequently than that, according to Ethan Wain, director of network and telecommunications for Denver. “The more we work with them, the more they include us earlier in the process,” said Wain, who is also the account manager for Denver’s Police, Fire and Sheriff’s departments.

The TS account manager is available to give informal advice on ideas being considered in agencies before they reach the formal counseling process. If an idea is stopped before it gets off the ground, that’s time the counseling staff can spend coaching more promising projects.

The relationship also helps the agencies become savvier about each other’s needs, according to Rauzi. “For example, finance has their end-of-year closeout time where they need heightened support,” she said. “Somebody else might have a big call season when every summer they have an influx of work with Parks and Recreation. This enables us to understand their business and help them put together these cases. They then understand us better as we’re learning more about them.”

Wain said these new relationships reduced instances of agencies buying technology and running it without the knowledge of TS officials. Government IT departments often become frustrated when outside agencies buy technology without permission, deploy and use it in secret, and then expect the IT departments to provide technical support when it malfunctions. “We used to have that problem quite a bit,” Wain said. “Now it rarely happens.”

Without cooperation from agencies in this area, TS would be stuck supporting hundreds of different applications, each catered to individual agencies. Now when agencies request special applications, ITIC tries to find a standard solution that might also serve other agencies.

“Pre-emptive customer service is the more we work with them, the more they include us earlier in the process.”

Ethan Wain, director, network and telecommunications, Denver

TS originally planned to hire a special team of account managers, but the plan fell through because of 2009’s economic problems. For now, six director-level officials hold account managing duties in addition to their regular workload.

Rauzi said one of the ITIC’s primary benefits was putting tradeoff decisions into the laps of the business end-users, rather than IT officials. The process has been illuminating for end-users sitting on the ITIC who must choose between extra spending on agencies’ wish-list proposals or saying “no” for the sake of having more staff to prevent outages.

“The pain, in the end, of an outage is suffered by the business,” Rauzi said. “It has just created a better partnership across the board.”

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John Floyd Thomas — the so-called Westside Rapist in California’s Claremont area — was charged in April 2009 with murdering two women in the 1970s, and later was linked to five more murders. Nearly 40 years after the women’s deaths, Thomas will stand trial, thanks to DNA evidence obtained by the Los Angeles Police Department’s Cold Case Homicide Unit.

Another L.A. case was solved in November when a DNA sample from the murder scene of Hazel Hughes matched Victor Alvarez, according to the Los Angeles Times. The 27-year-old mystery was solved and another cold case was laid to rest.

DNA evidence is heating up cold cases because of a 2004 initiative passed by California voters. Proposition 69 — the DNA Fingerprint, Unsolved Crime and Innocence Protection Act — authorized DNA collection from all felons, including those with previous felony convictions and individuals arrested for or charged with a felony offense, beginning in 2009.

According to Wired.com, the new law is expected to add the genetic material of more than 1 million people to California’s DNA and Forensic Identification Database and Data Bank within five years, making it the nation’s largest state-run databank.

To provide its 47 law enforcement agencies with the tools to comply with the law, the L.A. County Information Systems Advisory Board (ISAB) created a Web-based DNA Offender Tracking System (DOTS) that identifies arrestees who must provide a DNA sample.

“In [2009], it was important to have DOTS in place because all felony arrests require that a DNA swab be taken at the time of arrest,” said Richard Barrastes, Court Services Division chief for the L.A. County Sheriff’s Office. “For us to facilitate that, we knew we had to have a system in place. Years ago, we started working on DOTS so that once we make an arrest, we can check, using technology, to see if a DNA sample has already been taken for that arrestee or if one is required based on the current charge.”

Turning Up the Heat

In July 2006, the ISAB began developing DOTS — which uses Global 360’s case management solution, Case360, as its application platform — to improve the DNA collection tracking progress. According to Ali Farahani,
director of integration services for ISAB, approximately 1,200 arrests are made daily in L.A. County, so police officers must check each record to determine if a DNA sample must be collected.

“The No. 1 driver was to improve efficiency by creating a centralized system to track the collection of DNA,” Farahani said. “And the second driver was to make sure law enforcement officers had accurate information as to whom they should collect DNA from.”

The first phase rolled out in October 2007, providing all county law enforcement agencies with a Web-based system that supplies an offender’s Record of Arrest and Prosecution (RAP) sheet, which usually includes arrest dates and charges, and the arresting agency.

DOTS automates the DNA collection process and lets officers know if an offender’s DNA is already in the system.

“Prior to [2009], DNA was required on all arrests that had qualifying charges like murder and rape. Those kinds of things required DNA be automatically taken,” he said. “So regardless of whether or not it was on file, we would take the DNA sample, and if their sample had already been taken, the new sample wouldn’t be needed anymore.”

After a DNA sample was collected, officers completed an accompanying paper card, which took 30 minutes and might have inconsistent or illegible information. The sample was then sent to the state, where it sometimes took a month to process and update the criminal history system.

The lack of a centralized system led to duplicated work by officers and multiple DNA samples from suspects. Although officers make the same number of arrests, they’re finding they take fewer samples because of DOTS.

As the DNA databank is being populated, crime scene evidence is being connected to samples in the system. “We’re starting to clear some cold cases — old cases that had DNA samples that were taken at crime scenes but there was nothing to check them with,” Barrantes said. “Now as the database is being created, matches are being made on old cases at a higher rate.”

According to Farahani, DOTS cost $700,000 and was funded by a county grant.

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— Richard Barrantes, chief, Court Services Division, Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Office

Real-Time DNA Info

DOTS was integrated into more than just the criminal history system. By connecting it to multiple reporting functions, checking for DNA sample eligibility will be further streamlined.

The project’s second phase connected it to the system that tracks an offender’s movements in and out of jail systems. This helps authorities determine if inmates arrested before the law took effect are eligible to have a sample taken. Once someone is brought into a county jail, DOTS checks the person’s criminal history and determines if officers should take his or her DNA sample. An electronic queue tracks inmates who should provide a DNA sample. The system is being deployed in three phases:

- Automate the DNA collection process and let officers know if an offender’s DNA is already in the system.
- Integrate with LiveScan that tracks an offender’s movements in and out of jail facilities.
- Integrate with LiveScan — the county’s electronic fingerprint booking system. DOTS will run in the background and notify the officer if a DNA sample is needed.

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Implementing New Technology

There are always obstacles to overcome when adding new technology. In DOTS’ case, Farahani said the county’s daily volume of transactions posed a challenge. ISAB wanted to ensure DOTS could handle those thousands of transactions, and testing the transaction variations was difficult.

To help the learning curve for officers, a focus was placed on training. “We trained the trainers and, for some locations, sent technicians to train people onsite,” Farahani said. “I believe that no project can be successful without good training. You can have the best system in the world, but if you don’t train people the right way and make sure that they can use the system, you won’t be successful.”

Regional classes were held for hands-on training, and ISAB ensured that representatives from every agency were involved. A training manual was also developed, but Farahani said in-person training and contact is more helpful in educating end-users.

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He also cited the inclusion of law enforcement agencies in DOTS’ development and implementation as one of the project’s most important milestones. A steering committee was created at the start of project that was headed by Barrantes and included the L.A. Police Department, L.A. County Sheriff’s Office, Long Beach Police Department and a number of smaller agencies. Farahani said Scott Pickwith, chief of the La Verne Police Department, also acted as a business sponsor for the project. Like Barrantes, they helped coordinate interaction with all of the police agencies.

“Our steering committee was a key factor in making sure we were able to resolve issues,” Farahani said, “When there are so many different law enforcement agencies, you want to have people at the top to support the initiative.”

DOTS’ Destiny

When DOTS is integrated with Live-Scan, the project will be complete and ISAB will for maintain the system. Although it will be fully integrated with L.A. County’s law enforcement systems, Barrantes sees the future as moving toward mobile devices. He said some agencies can process fingerprints if officers in the field use PDAs outfitted with a fingerprint scanner.

“I think someday we’ll also have the capability to do a DNA sample via a swab remotely using some kind of wireless technology,” he said, “which will make it even more effective than what we have today.”

The estimated cost of the Los Angeles County DNA Offender Tracking System.

$700,000

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1 U.S. Government Accountability Office, July 2009

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CIOs SAY

In a global survey of 2,500 public- and private-sector CIOs conducted by IBM, 83 percent identified business intelligence and analytics as a top priority. Also of increasing concern are data reliability and security, with 71 percent of CIOs planning to make additional investments in risk management and compliance.

Send spectrum ideas to managing editor Karen Stewartson kstewartson@govtech.com

**Security Trends for 2010**

Security professionals are constantly combating Trojans and malware — working hard to ensure network security — and 2010 will be no different. According to Kaspersky Lab, an Internet threat management solution developer, the top six security predictions of 2010 are:

1. A rise in attacks originating from file sharing networks.
2. An increase in mass malware epidemics via peer-to-peer networks.
3. Continuous competition for traffic from cyber-criminals.
4. A decline in fake anti-virus programs.
5. An interest in attacking Google Wave.
6. An increase in attacks on iPhone and Android mobile platforms.

**States of Efficiency**

Many factors, including the recession, force governments to be energy efficient. Here’s a list of 2009’s top 10 most energy-efficient states, according to a 50-state scorecard on energy-efficiency policies, programs and practices from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy.

- California
- Massachusetts
- Connecticut
- Oregon
- New York
- Vermont
- Washington
- Minnesota
- Rhode Island
- Maine

**Grappling With Issues**

As 2010 begins, there are many tough issues on state legislatures’ and public-sector CIOs’ plates. While legislatures are dealing with policy issues, local, state and federal CIOs are battling external forces that will affect their IT organization. Below is a comparison of what legislatures and CIOs have identified as their toughest issues.

**State Legislatures**

- Balancing state budgets and creating revenue
- Managing health costs and coverage
- Lowering unemployment rates
- Affording higher education
- Analyzing sentencing and corrections costs
- Maintaining transportation and infrastructure
- Balancing and managing state government
- Developing clean energy alternatives
- Examining sex offender registration
- Expanding broadband access

**Public CIOs**

- Security
- Budgets
- Changes in business model
- Internal customers
- Regulatory concerns
- Technological factors
- People skills
- Globalization

**SOURCES:** NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES AND IBM’S THE NEW VOICE OF THE CIO

**Social Media TV**

Can’t keep up with Twitter and Flickr? Stupeflix.tv, a Web-based TV service, scours the Web for content you want and combines it into your own live TV channel. The site could serve as a resource for governments to learn what constituents are thinking.

**Social Networking Sites**

- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Flickr
- YouTube

**Cable TV**

- CNN
- MSNBC
- Fox News
- PBS

**Radio**

- NPR
- National Public Radio
- Public Broadcasting System

**Telephone and Fax**

- Call your member of Congress directly
- Use the fax system

**Constitutional Amendments**

- Proposition 13
- Proposition 98
- Proposition 8

**25% of cell phone users say they multitask by making phone calls while commuting or waiting, according to the Pew Internet & American Life Project.**
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   The Gateway One ZA6810-01 all-in-one desktop PC with multitouch display includes a wireless keyboard and mouse, integrated high-definition webcam and microphone, and integrated HD stereo speaker system. The PC has an Intel Core 2 Quad processor (2.33 GHz, 4 MB L2 cache, 1333 MHz FSB) and ATI HD4670 graphics, as well as a 23-inch full HD widescreen Ultrabright LCD with 1920x1080 resolution. Gateway includes a 1 TB hard drive and 64 GB solid-state drive (SSD), so users can save data on the standard drive, and the operating system and applications on the SSD, significantly improving overall performance. [WWW.GATEWAY.COM](http://WWW.GATEWAY.COM)

2. **THE ALLURE OF E-LITERATURE**

   The Aluratek Libre LCD e-book reader has enough battery life for up to 24 hours of continuous use, auto-off and page advance features, and MP3 and photo support. Its crisp black-and-white 5-inch screen is meant to give the same appearance and readability of printed paper. The Libre supports Adobe’s Digital Edition software, allowing digital rights management support for ePUB and PDF formats. This lets users buy new book releases from various e-book content providers. The included 2GB SD card comes loaded with 100 free e-books. [WWW.ALURATEK.COM](http://WWW.ALURATEK.COM)

3. **MINI VIDEO CAM**

   The Memorex MyVideo HD pocket camcorder features one-touch recording, editing software, and easy uploading and sharing to social media Web sites like Facebook and YouTube. The camcorder has a 2-inch color LCD, 3x zoom and 4 GB of onboard memory (records up to two hours of VGA and up to one hour of HD video). The MyVideo has a 5 megapixel still camera, and the battery operates for 2.5 hours. It offers playback straight to TV without uploading to a PC. [WWW.MEMOREX.COM](http://WWW.MEMOREX.COM)

**SEND PRODUCT IDEAS**

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More Signal, Less Noise

This column debuted eight years ago. I recall flipping to the back page of the January 2002 issue and savoring the moment. Ink on paper can be a heady thing. I wasn’t thinking about the length of the run. I was worrying about what I’d do for the second column. This month’s entry is the 97th consecutive column.

The column’s name — signal:noise — set a high bar for these essays. It sought to differentiate the quality information from the irrelevant or incorrect information.

It’s been a great romp through myriad developments at the intersection of government and technology — both of which have had to count time in Internet years (the idea that three months on the Internet equals a full human year, but that could be as much noise as signal).

One quote has had a strong signal, and I’ve cited it more than once. I first heard it from the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse’s Beth Givens in the late 1990s when I was deputy state CIO in Washington. She said, simply, “The Internet will show us what happens when the public record is actually public.”

That formulation held up well as governments launched home pages and portals, freed documents from file cabinets to online repositories, and debated whether an online record was official and authoritative (or if it needed a disclaimer that referred users back to the paper record if they were going to rely on it for decision-making). Making the public record public went to the heart of developing policies and practices around privacy and security. And now, in an era of transparency and live government data feeds that power Web sites, mobile apps and augmented reality, we’re beginning to see what else it means — warts and all — when the public record is actually public.

You’ve been an integral part of this project’s longevity. Your responses to columns — positive, negative and indifferent — have been vital barometer of their relevance in other ways. It’s humbling to know that the year-end prognostications about the five things that will still matter five years hence are used in strategic planning sessions in several jurisdictions. Longtime readers will recognize these as my annual ode to Father Guido Sarducci’s Five Minute University on Saturday Night Live.

I’m still pleasantly surprised to be greeted on what’s been a 42-state circuit by people who volunteer that they always read the column — some even saying they start on the back page on purpose!

Some of you noted an appreciation for humor reflected here, including one anonymous reader who returned the favor by turning me against a habit of imbedding song lyrics in columns. “Stop quoting all that hippie music,” the reader said, “you’re giving me flashbacks.”

To everything there is a season, man. Speaking of which, we’re in a season of change with the addition of Governing magazine to the publishing portfolio that began with Government Technology years ago. I’ve taken on a new role working with the editorial, research and conference staff in our expanded embrace of the “what” of government (public policy) and the “how” (technology).

I hope you’ll let me know your thoughts at pwtaylor@erepublic.com as we progress. I invite you to add Governing to your reading habits — you never know who might turn up in its pages. Also, this column will become biannual — the Guido-inspired year-end predictions and a midyear assessment of the campaign for digital government.

Final words that are eight years overdue and heartfelt: Thank you.
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