Assignment 4

Information Technology for the Public and Nonprofit Sector
“IT and Web 2.0 Mini-conference” research

In this course, largely because of past student feedback, I am providing experience and skills in fundamental and “well-worn” IT used in the public sector (web/html, relational databases). But as you all know, there is a lot that has been changing because of the advancing of web and mobile technologies. The goal of the mini-conference is to allow you to focus in on an issue or IT phenomenon that is of interest to you, and would be an interest to others. What I want to do is harness the energy of the class to go over topics we are unable to cover in regular sessions. I provide a bunch of ideas below, but I am open to your own suggestions as well. There's a lot we can cover here. But overall, I’d like us to try to be a little forward looking. *If we could try and look ahead, what will the trends be in IT in government and nonprofits over the next decade? What are some of the managerial issues you might be facing down the road?*

One area I would like to explore in some depth is the so-called "Web 2.0" and/or "Gov 2.0" area or what I call the "Interactive Web" phenomena. I'd also like to make sure we focus on the implications of these emerging technologies in public or nonprofit settings. Here are some ideas for projects, but I'm sure you all could come up with more (or better) ideas! This is really totally open to creativity. My hope is that we can focus in on topics that are emerging now and try and think about the implications of them for public sector or nonprofit work.

The "deliverable" of your research project will differ depending on what you choose to do. The default expectation is a high-quality research or review paper. But in some instances, a student might like to explore some software or investigate some online tool. For example, if you decided to look at a social networking technology, you might try and learn how to use it effectively, but also do some research on it and understand its pros and cons, or how people are using it in a positive, useful way for doing government or nonprofit work. Your deliverable might be a paper on what you did to learn it and also what you learned in your research. You'd then have 15 minutes to present this in class and I'd post your paper to SPARK for others in the class to read. Each of you will be assigned to another student’s paper, and we’ll have a short presentation and a “discussant” response. The idea is that we’ll teach each other about things we learned in our research.

**YOUR INITIAL ASSIGNMENT:**

Consider the ideas below or others you may have on your own and choose two possible topics of interest. Please communicate to me these preferred topics (hand in a few lines describing your topic interest on paper in class) as soon as possible. My goal is to have everyone assigned to a topic by Feb 10.
Possible topics (but I am open to other suggestions):

1. **Read one or more important work(s) about Internet or Web 2.0 phenomenon.** For example, some of the books I think are important related to the idea of Internet-based collaboration are:

   * von Hippel, E. (2005) *Democratizing Innovation*

   Any of the recent books by Lawrence Lessig (see http://www.lessig.org/blog/)


   * Surowiecki, J. *The Wisdom of Crowds*


   Suggest others!

2. **Investigate or research a topic below (OR SUGGEST A NEW ONE)**

   **Possible general topics:**

   - Crowdsourcing
   - Collaborative Governance and IT
   - XML and Open Standards – what are they, why are they important? Case studies on how they are created
   - Cloud computing and the public sector (e.g., Google, Amazon)
   - Web-data services and the concept of data mashups (e.g., Apps for America)
   - Open source – pros/cons of procurement policy in US government settings
   - Open source adoption – status in international settings
   - Obama’s Open Government Initiative
   - E-Government: what is it, where are we, what is its future?
   - Social networking in the public sector – concepts and issues
   - Social networking in the nonprofit sector
   - Microblogging (e.g., Twitter) and the public or nonprofit sector
   - The American Disability Act and Web 2.0
   - Privacy issues, government, e-government and Web 2.0
   - Nonprofit technology assistance – a review
   - Open Content and government collaboration – pros and cons
   - M-Gov (mobile government)
   - Government or nonprofit use of Youtube
   - The use of virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life) in the public or nonprofit sector
- Wikis and wikipedia like efforts - e.g., Diplopedia, Intellipedia  
- Nonprofit fundraising strategies using the Internet 
- Investigation into specific applications for nonprofit management (e.g., donor management software; client management software)  
- Content Management Systems - Wordpress, Joomla, Drupal, etc. How are they different? 
- Security aspects of computing

3. Thought paper

The current state of “e-government”

For example, something I and a collaborator call the “Public Sector Web 2.0 Paradox.” Often information flow within and across government (agencies or levels) and between government and the public is highly restricted through regulations and bureaucratic constraints. Public sector officials are often averse to sharing information (sometimes for legitimate reasons or by law) and may fear a loss of control over their information. What are the implications of Interactive web on governments? Pros and cons?

Privacy and the Constitution. What is the relationship between government and citizens? How did it change in the Bush Administration's period (Patriot Act)?

Web 2.0 and transparancy and accountability in government (Obamma’s Open Government Initiative).

... lots of other possibilities! Suggest something!