

## **Interorganizational Information Integration and Social and Technical Interactions**

Birds of a Feather Session, dg.o2004

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Integrating and sharing information in multi-organizational government settings involves complex interactions within social and technological contexts. These integration processes often involve new technologies, work processes, and significant organizational change. They are also embedded in larger political and institutional environments which shape their goals and circumscribe their choices. This BoF session was organized to share experiences in examining these social and technical interactions and to establish an ongoing dialogue about future efforts.

Some participants attended this BoF to enhance their research on the process of information integration itself; others were there due to their focus on information integration as a means to achieve other ends, such as integrating data for public health and environmental policy development. Participants represented a variety of disciplines and interdisciplinary perspectives. The session focused first on sharing observations about integration and second on building a list of questions to fuel ongoing discussion. Excerpts from the lists are shared below in hopes that others, unable to attend the BoF, will join in the dialogue. The ongoing discussion will take place in an online forum at the National Science Foundation's Digital Government Program web site at <http://dgoserver.isi.edu/jive/index.jsp>.

### **Observations about information integration**

- The motivation for information integration is “We need to know what we know.”
- Social interactions are necessary before integration.
- Integration is counter to the culture in many agencies.
- We need to make the value of integration more transparent.
- Integrating data may not be possible – focusing on knowledge integration may be most appropriate.
- There is a lack of awareness of the strategic potential of information integration – about its potential for reducing harm and its role in effective policy development and program planning.

### **Questions about information integration**

- Do we need full integration? Is information integration different within different contexts? How?
- Is seamless integration possible?
- Can we handle what a successful information integration is or might be?
- How do we broker partnerships that allow for reducing duplicate effort?
- How can we increase the return on investment of the dollars being invested in integration initiatives in government agencies at all levels?
- How are things like the enterprise architectures, cross-boundary resource sharing and strategic planning processes influencing information integration initiatives?

### **Questions about building a information integration research community**

- How do we study knowledge integration vs. data integration vs. data sharing?
- What strategies for gaining access to integration initiatives are most effective, and why?
- What is the best strategy for developing interdisciplinary lenses for studying these initiatives?
- What mix of interdisciplinary lenses will provide us with the “best” new knowledge about information integration?
- Will people make their interesting concerns transparent to others?
- How can we most effectively work across a mix of disciplinary backgrounds?
- What disciplinary questions can be explored through interdisciplinary research efforts in this area?

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