



InterPARES 2 Project

International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems

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Survey of Government Web Site Interactivity

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Scope

The Government Focus, comprised of working groups 1.3, 2.3, and 3.3 of the InterPARES 2 Project, spent a considerable amount of debate trying to determine what government systems might be considered interactive, dynamic, or experiential. Much of the debate inevitably focussed on Web-based service delivery because many of the governments represented in the Project looked to Web technology as a means of achieving e-government goals.

As a result of these discussions, particularly those at the September 2002 InterPARES 2 plenary workshop in Los Angeles, it was concluded that a general survey of government services offered via the Web would be useful to advance the discussion by providing an indication of how commonly the proposed "interactivity thresholds" were crossed. This would provide some rough indication of the degree to which governments are relying on interactive, dynamic and experiential records. It was also thought that it might lead to the identification of additional case studies.

Participation in the survey by members of the Government Focus was voluntary. The work was undertaken or directed by members of the Canadian, European and American research teams.

Method

With only the general purpose of assessing the degree of interactivity within current government Web sites, and with the aim of harvesting the results in time to inform further discussion, it was decided that a strict methodology was not necessary. It was generally agreed to use the four categories outlined in the National Archives of Australia's "Guidelines for keeping records of Web-based activity in the Commonwealth Government:"

- Static Web sites and Web resources
- Static Web sites and Web resources with form-based interactivity
- Websites and Web resources based on dynamic data access
- Dynamically generated Web sites and Web resources¹

Surveyors defined their jurisdiction in terms of governing body and whether the sites existed on the internet (i.e., publicly accessible sites) or the intranet (restricted sites). Some researchers surveyed all sites, others only a sampling. The sites were then visited and assessed. Findings were reported on two forms (see Appendices A and B) and compiled for presentation to the Government focus meeting in February 2003.²

Six of the surveys were completed by two research assistants from the University of British Columbia, three by archival staff working within the jurisdictions they surveyed, and one by research assistants at the State University of New York at Albany.

Intranet sites in Ontario and at two universities in British Columbia were also surveyed to determine if a higher level of interactivity existed in that environment.

¹ Available at http://www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/er/web_records/intro.html, checked 6 November 2003. Formerly "Archiving Web Resources: Guidelines for Keeping Records of Web-based Activity in the Commonwealth Government."

² The surveys in Ireland and the United States were not completed by the February 2003 InterPARES 2 plenary workshop. Survey results from these two jurisdictions were presented at the September 2003 InterPARES 2 plenary workshop, but have been included in the compiled results here.

Limitations of the Method

The following methodological limitations are summarized from comments provided by the surveyors.

- It was difficult to determine what category in which to place some of the Web sites because they were examined only from the “front” end, i.e., the way they are presented to the public. There were no common criteria established, beyond what is indicated on the response forms (e.g., an “email button” equated to a “static with form” categorization).
- There were many surveyors, and even those collaborating on surveying the Web sites of the same jurisdiction discovered inconsistencies in how each of them, based on their own experience and understanding of the technology, categorized and named Web sites.
- Consistent reporting was also undermined by a lack of consistency in the creation of the Web sites themselves, both within and between jurisdictions.

Results and Observations

In all, a total of 321 Web sites from twenty jurisdictions were surveyed (see Table 1). The results are summarized in the chart below.

A total of 271 sites (41%) were classified as Static; 226 sites (34%) as Static with forms; 123 sites (19%) as Dynamic data access; and 40 (6%) as Dynamically generated sites. Note that one Web site might fall into several categories, e.g., it might have static pages as well as static pages with online forms. In such cases Web sites would be counted in both categories.

The Intranet sites surveyed resulted in roughly comparable figures: 37% were classified as Static, 37% as Static with forms, 16% as Dynamic data access, and 10% as Dynamically generated sites.

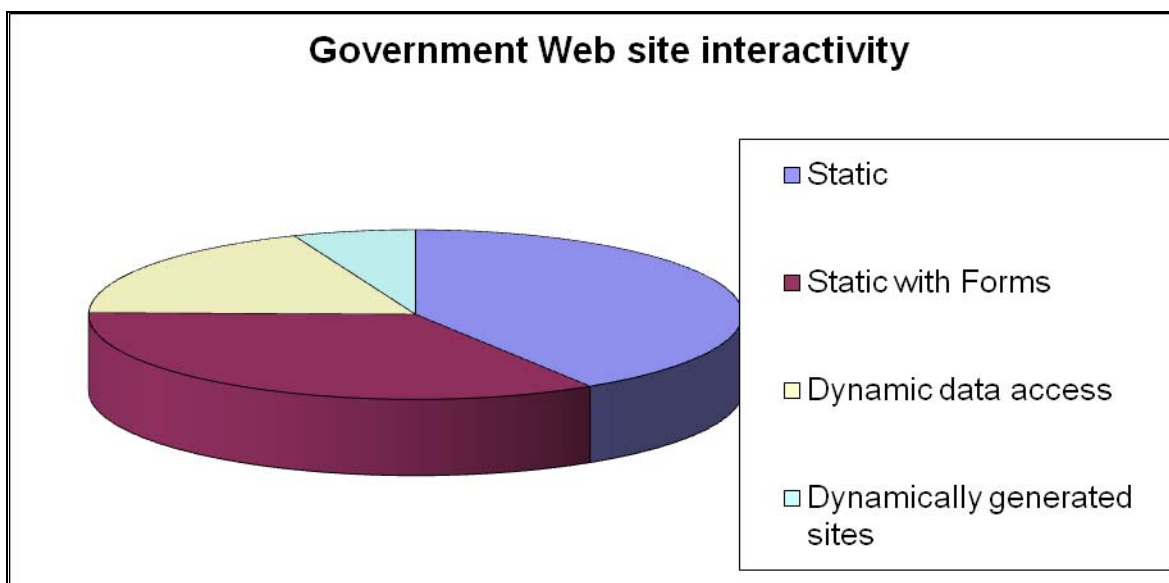


Table 1. Distribution of Web Sites Surveyed by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Total sites surveyed
Australia	10
British Columbia	77
Canada	10
India	10
Ireland	48
Ontario (Internet)	63
Ontario (Intranet)	31
SFU Intranet	5
Singapore	10
UBC Intranet	2
United States ³	55

³ These sites were not of the United States federal government, but rather selected sites from Arizona, California, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Nevada, Washington and Wyoming.

Appendix A: Sample Survey Reporting Form - A

InterPARES 2: Government Focus, Government Web Site survey

Jurisdiction

Website name (Creating agency)	Static	Form-based (including e-mail 'button')	Dynamic data access	Dynamically generated (including sign in or log in sites)
X site	!	!		
Y site	!	!	!	
Z site	!			!

Compiled by:

Appendix B: Sample Survey Reporting Form - B

Compiled By:

Date:

Jurisdiction:

Website Name (Creating Agency):

URL:

OVERVIEW

 Static Dynamic Data Access Form Based Dynamically Generated

Synopsis of Site Content (Screen shots optional):

Observations (Potential as a Case Study Candidate):

Static – Documents sitting in folders on a server and tied together with hyperlinks and share a common address. Interactivity is in the links (move from one document to another).

Comments / Notes:

Form Based (including e-mail buttons)

Comments / Notes:

Dynamic Data Access – A front end for accessing an organization’s database. (May have own unique identifier, usually reflected in URL – can be bookmarked)

Comments / Notes:

Dynamically Generated (including sign in or log in sites) – Generated “on the fly”, thus requiring a number of software tools to build a page. The content, structure & presentation are created dynamically via databases & style sheets based on user preferences, access profiles, user query, and/or capabilities of the user’s browser.

Comments / Notes: