

The Digital Towpath Project



Internet-based
Government Services through
Inter-municipal Cooperation and
Shared Resources

SUNYIT's ILG



- Mission – To support the implementation and application of technology in the business practice of local governments in NYS
- Grew out of a collaboration between the Office of Continuing Professional Education and representatives from ten nearby small towns and villages - a collaboration that has become the Digital Towpath Project
- Provides administrative services and support for the DTP participants

DTP - The Beginning

- 1999
- 10 villages and towns
- Desire to use the internet
- SUNYIT CPE/NiMo
- A year of weekly meetings
- A patient web developer
- Inter-municipal agreement

Excerpt from:
Post more on Internet
Leader-Herald, (Gloversville) 09/14/2008
http://www.leaderherald.com/page/content_detail/id/505664.html?nav=5005

Web sites are a part of today's American culture, as are newspapers and television. Municipal leaders should get with the times and post more public information and documents online.

Small Governments Require Specialized Business Processes

- Part-time staffing
- Limited resources
- No responsive local news provider
- Unpredictable skill-sets

Some Realities of Local Governments

- Most contacts between the public and municipal government are requests for information.
- Most transactions between the public and municipal government are initiated by submission of a specific form.

Our Goals

- Easy to use
- Update content in real time
- Intuitive data entry

- Low cost
- Lots of support

- Bridge the gap between part-time government and full-time constituent needs

Consider

- Avoid the all too common mistake of producing a website that mirrors your government structure but does little to facilitate citizens' use of it.
- Citizens often know very little about how their government works but they are clear about what they want and expect from it.
- Use this information to produce a website that meets your community's needs.

Consider

<http://digitaltowpath.org/study>

Think of it from the resident's point of view

- What are the questions asked repeatedly?
 - › Be sure to include the answers to those questions on your site.
- What services are most requested?
 - › Be sure to describe these services well on your site and include clear instructions on accessing them.
- What are the major complaints you hear?
 - › Be sure to address them with your website.

How ...

- Buy the hardware and software; hire or learn the skill-set
- Contract with a developer / host
- Use a skill-set-neutral tool

- Gather the information
- Input it into the site

Custom Site/In House

- Responsive
- Greater utility
- Fits business process well

- Hardware
- Software
- Skill-set

Skill-set Costs



<http://www.eiffrefreelancing.com/2008/09/average-salary-for-web-designer-web-developer-jobs/>

Custom Site/Contractor

- Potential for great utility
- Potential for great flexibility of design
- Historically less responsive than needed
- Expensive

Grade	Ball Park Estimate
Premium	\$17,850.00 - \$24,150.00
Medium Discount Professional Designer or Company	\$10,710.00 - \$14,490.00
Small Company or Freelancer	\$4,462.50 - \$6,037.50
Student or Offshore	\$6,037.50

http://www.designquote.net/html/dq_estimate_wizard.cfm

Content Management System

- Template
- Database
- Very responsive
- Location specific content
- Skill-set neutral (relatively)

Digital Towpath

- Content management system specifically designed for local governments in NYS
- Governance through Digital Towpath Cooperative, formed through IMA
- Supported by SUNYIT/ILG
- Shared resources / reduced cost
- Support group of your peers

What ...

- Who does what and how to contact them
- Calendar of meetings, hearings, events
- Minutes of meetings, hearings
- Forms and applications (with instructions)
- Laws
- History
- Local services / amenities
- Economic development / tourism
- Local events
- Jobs / volunteer opportunities

Expanded E-government

- Online, fill-in forms and applications
- Secure, off-site backup of electronic documents
- Online assessment roll information
- Email and email management
- Stormwater management program and plan
- Theme choices
- Security

Alternatives

- Informational page
- Online tools

Informational Page

- Often free or nearly free
- Related to some other entity
- Limited utility
- Hard to change or get changed

Online Tools

- Low cost
- Lots of choices
- Advertising
- Support?
- Control
- Ownership

Costs

- Time
- Money
- Initial content
- On-going maintenance
- Major updates

Results

- Serve more people without increasing office hours or staffing
 - › Answer those same questions less often
- More public participation
- Less public dissatisfaction

More Results

- Resident complaints
- Requests for inclusion, linking
- Unauthorized links
 - <http://www.seologic.com/faq/link-popularity-check.php>
- Policy
- Disclaimer – website/page

Security

- Any use of the internet brings with it security threats
- Technology solutions to security issues are critical
- Information security is essential whether that information is digital or a piece of paper
- There are resources to help local governments meet the challenges

Local Government Cyber Security Committee

Committee established in 2005 includes:

- Conference of Mayors
- Association of Towns
- County IT Directors
- Digital Towpath
- Town Supervisor
- Town Clerk
- Local Government Records Officers
- NYS
 - Office of the State Comptroller
 - CSCIC (OCS)
 - ORPS
 - IG
 - State Archives
- Center for Technology in Government



Learn More About Digital Towpath

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