

REPORT ON THE GRADUATE STUDENT SESSION

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For this special session, graduate students involved in Digital Government projects met and shared information about their research projects as well as discussed issues surrounding graduate student roles in these projects. The presenters were asked to give a brief talk about their project, highlighting the roles and issues of students involved in the project.

The first presentation, entitled "E-government Project Experience as a graduate student", was given by Soon Ae Chun of Rutgers University and Melania Degeratu of Columbia University. Their research collaboration between a number of state government agencies and universities attempts to build on-line applications to automate business reporting and amending services. They discussed the multiple roles that graduate students are asked to assume, such as a researcher (obtaining documentation and finding contact people), developers (to design and prototype the system), assistant to the research process (writing reports, proposals, and annual reviews), and liaisons (between the research team and government officials). These roles offer a number of challenges in balancing work tasks as well as offer many advantages, enhancing student experience on a project.

The second presentation, "Webview: A Content-based Geographical Image Retrieval System: Design and Implementation", was given by Lei Zhu of the Dept. of Computer Science, SUNY at Buffalo. He discussed his project, dealing with content-based image retrieval, design and implementation. He shared a soccer metaphor: describing the graduate student researcher/principal investigator advisor relationship as terms of players and coaches. As graduate students/players on a soccer team, we need to be creative, using what our advisor gives us, but not assuming too much. Advisors/coaches need to build a team of players yet controlling quality is difficult. Lei discussed the importance of having a "captain" to facilitate communication between the students/players and the advisor/coach, dealing with the mismatch of goals that the different groups may have.

Seung-Yong Rho and Lung-Teng Hu from the Department of Public Administration at Rutgers University presented their paper

"Citizens' Trust in Digital Government: Toward Citizen Relation Management", in which they investigate the issue of citizen trust in the digital government services offered. They discussed their method of conducting research, including literature review, research question generation, survey design, data collection, and statistical analyses.

The final presentation, "Working in the Forest (Project): Research, Activities, and Opportunities" was given by Shawn Bowers from the Oregon Graduate Institute. This project deals with the need to access information effectively by the US Forest Service and other agencies. He discussed the importance of collaboration between information management researchers with experts and specialists in other domains. He also spoke of the importance of having research grounded within real projects and how this fosters learning. Typical graduate student activities on this project consist of "lots of meetings", interviewing, data collection, and writing papers.

In summary, this session included presentations of numerous digital government projects and graduate student roles in these projects, resulting in discussion of issues regarding technology, policy, different methodologies, and techniques. A number of common themes emerged from the presentations and discussions. One theme is that graduate students see themselves becoming a medium between academia and agency, a role in which students act as trust-building agents working with "clients", unlike in other typical research projects. Working on these digital government projects have also given us, as graduate students working on these projects, the opportunity to gain experience in publishing, giving presentations and demonstrations at conferences and meetings. Being a graduate student researcher in the area of digital government comes with tradeoffs: we are often times given responsibility with little power, yet we have the opportunity to work with real government organizations, attempting to solve real problems. It is obvious that we feel that this experience that we all share has and will continue to enhance our learning and research abilities throughout our careers.

Attendees at the session were:

Roslin Hauck, University of Arizona	Shawn Kerrigan, Stanford University
Shawn Bowers, OGI	Gloria Lau, Stanford University
Soon Ae Chun, Rutgers University	Seung-Young Rho, Rutgers University
Melania Degeratu, Columbia University	Mathew Weaver, OGI
Sherri Harms, U of Missouri- Columbia University	Lei Zhu, SUNY Buffalo
Lung-Teng Hu, Rutgers University	