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Government-initiated community website schemes: what can we learn from the implementation of an Australian model?

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Government-initiated Community Website Schemes:
What can we learn from the implementation of an Australian model?

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

ALISON ELIZABETH NORRIS

Bachelor of Information & Communication Technology (Honours Class I) (UOW)
Graduate Diploma in Education (UNE)

School of Information Systems and Technology
2007
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Abstract

As the Internet has become integral to our daily lives, many community websites have been developed in an attempt to create ‘community’ online and to support traditional communities. These community websites were typically developed on an ad-hoc basis. In 2002, the Australian Domain Name Administrators responded to the lack of government-initiated, structured community website schemes by establishing the Community Geographic Domain Name (CGDN) Scheme. This Scheme created new domain names, solely for the use of community groups with the purpose of building community websites. Before gaining access to a CGDN, a community group must demonstrate their links to the community and meet numerous conditions.

To date, there has been limited research into the issues that affect government-initiated, structured community website schemes, and no studies have compared the experiences of multiple community websites developed under such schemes to identify factors that affect the viability of these websites and the schemes as a whole. This thesis aims to develop a deeper understanding of the issues associated with government-initiated, structured community website schemes, using an instance of such schemes: the CGDN Scheme. Using a case study approach, an analysis of the CGDN Scheme, and its viability, is completed. Through case studies of the three communities participating in the trial of the CGDN Scheme (Wollongong, New South Wales; Bathurst, New South Wales; and Ballarat, Victoria), rich qualitative data is collected from a variety of data sources about the experiences of the case study participants. Qualitative data is also collected from and about the CGDN management bodies and the CGDN Policy. Based on this data, issues faced by these case studies and by the CGDN Scheme management bodies are identified and their implications discussed.

To consolidate the findings of the case studies in a format that is easy for communities to manage and apply, the relationships between these issues are modelled, and the issues are grouped into eight categories: auDA and auCD, Policy, CGDN Project leadership, Publicity and advertising, Community involvement, Finance, Community Website Group and Infrastructure. These issues and factors are mapped using four models. A comparison of approaches chosen by the three test cases allows the implications of such decisions to be considered, and recommendations to improve the viability of the CGDN
Scheme are provided. Finally, recommendations for the establishment of government-initiated, structured community website schemes are presented. These recommendations provide a summary of the contribution that this thesis makes to a deeper understanding of government-initiated, structured community website schemes.
Thesis Certification

I, Alison Elizabeth Norris, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Information Systems and Technology, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Alison Norris

13\textsuperscript{th} November 2007.
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<td>.au Community Domains</td>
<td>auCD</td>
<td>The body responsible for the allocation and management of CGDNs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian (.au) Domain Name Administrator</td>
<td>auDA</td>
<td>The policy authority and industry self-regulatory body for the .au domain space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Geographic Domain Name</td>
<td>CGDN</td>
<td>An Australian scheme that created a new second level domain name space of Australian geographic locations for the exclusive use of Australian local geographic communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Geographic Domain Name Policy</td>
<td>CGDN Policy</td>
<td>The legal document that specifies the rules of use for CGDNs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Geographic Domain Name Project</td>
<td>CGDN Project</td>
<td>A practical, community-based application of the CGDN Scheme with the goal of producing a community website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Geographic Domain Name Scheme</td>
<td>CGDN Scheme</td>
<td>Encompasses the CGDN Policy and the related processes and activities that are related to the implementation and use of CGDNs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Informatics</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>A field of research and practice concerned with technology projects that are designed to enhance community experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Information and Communications Technology</td>
<td>OICT</td>
<td>The state government department under which the OCOS Project was implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One City One Site Project</td>
<td>OCOS Project</td>
<td>The Australian state government project that organised and managed the trial of the CGDNs.</td>
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