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**THE COMMUNICATION AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION  
BETWEEN STATE AND STAKEHOLDERS**

**VOLUME I: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE CANDIDATE'S  
PORTFOLIO OF PUBLIC OUTPUT**

**GRAEME BAXTER**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
Robert Gordon University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**August 2014**



This thesis is dedicated to my late father, Lewis Baxter, who sadly passed away shortly before its completion. He helped to instil in me an interest in the democratic process, as well as a healthy political cynicism, perhaps essential for research of this kind.



Hear, Land o' Cakes, and brither Scots,  
Frae Maidenkirke to Johnie Groat's; -  
If there's a hole in a' your coats,  
I rede you tent it:  
A chield's amang you takin notes,  
And, faith, he'll prent it:

***On The Late Captain Grose's Peregrinations Thro' Scotland***  
**(Robert Burns, 1789)**



# Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Portfolio of Public Output</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3 Context in which the candidate's research has been conducted</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 Devolution in the UK	10
3.2 Openness, transparency and freedom of information in the UK	12
3.2.1 Non-statutory codes of practice	12
3.2.2 Crown copyright and the re-use of public sector information	13
3.2.3 Freedom of information	15
3.2.4 Environmental information regulations	17
3.2.5 INSPIRE regulations	18
3.3 Digital government in the UK	18
3.4 Government consultative processes in the UK	30
3.5 Online election campaigns	32
<b>4 Candidate's professional background and earlier, related research projects and outputs</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>5 Research from which the Portfolio of Public Output has emerged</b>	<b>37</b>



5.1	Sub-theme 1: the provision and communication of information by, and within, parliaments	37
5.2	Sub-theme 2: the use of the Internet for information provision and exchange by political parties and candidates during parliamentary election campaigns	41
5.3	Sub-theme 3: the exchange of information between government and stakeholders during formal public consultation exercises	44
5.4	Other relevant research projects and non peer-reviewed outputs, November 2000 to date	47
<b>6</b>	<b>Empirical, methodological and theoretical contribution to the field of library and information science</b>	<b>51</b>
6.1	Empirical contribution	53
6.1.1	The provision and communication of information by parliaments	53
6.1.2	The provision and communication of information within parliaments	64
6.1.3	The use of the Internet for information provision and exchange by political parties and candidates during parliamentary election campaigns	69
6.1.4	The exchange of information between government and stakeholders during formal public consultation exercises	82
6.2	Methodological contribution	90
6.2.1	Development of the interactive, electronically-assisted interview method	92
6.2.2	Development of protocol analysis codes for the interactive, electronically-assisted interview method	95
6.2.3	Development of a framework for the analysis of election campaign websites	98
6.2.4	Use of covert research in the online electioneering studies	99

6.2.5	Development of a coding scheme for political parties' and candidates' social media posts	102
6.3	Theoretical contribution	107
6.3.1	The theory of Information Interchange	110
6.4	Summary of contribution to library and information science	116
<b>7</b>	<b>Postscript: future research plans and opportunities</b>	<b>119</b>
	<b>References</b>	<b>124</b>
	<b>Appendix I: Other academic papers citing outputs in the candidate's Portfolio</b>	<b>157</b>
	<b>Appendix II: Summary of citations of outputs in the candidate's Portfolio</b>	<b>161</b>

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of people for their assistance and support during the period in which the Portfolio of Public Output has emerged.

Firstly, I would like to thank all of my co-authors, whose contributions have been very much appreciated. Particular thanks are extended to Professor Rita Marcella — a co-author of all but two of the papers in my Portfolio — who has encouraged and counselled my work from the very beginning of my research career.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistance and input of the various editorial teams and anonymous referees involved in the review, preparation and publication of the Portfolio outputs.

Grateful thanks are also due to my PhD supervisors, Dr Simon Burnett and Dr Peter McLaverty, for the sage advice provided throughout the compilation of this thesis.

For their support and friendship over the years, I am indebted to my other colleagues, both past and present, at Robert Gordon University, particularly those within the Research Assistant community.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to thank the hundreds of research subjects who, sometimes unwittingly, have contributed towards the work discussed in this thesis. Without their participation it would have been impossible.

## **Abstract**

This thesis presents a critical review of the candidate's Portfolio of Public Output, which is based on research conducted in the period November 2000 to date, and which consists of 21 peer-reviewed, publicly available papers published since 2001. The subject area which forms the basis of the thesis is the communication and exchange of information between 'the state' (i.e. parliaments and governments at the local, devolved, national and European levels, as well as those who aspire to become part of the state during parliamentary elections) and its 'stakeholders' (i.e. citizens, businesses, interest groups, etc.). Within this overarching theme, the thesis focuses on three distinct but interrelated sub-themes: 1) the provision and communication of information by, and within, parliaments; 2) the use of the Internet for information provision and exchange by political parties and candidates during parliamentary election campaigns; and 3) the exchange of information between government and stakeholders during formal public consultation processes. Within all three sub-themes, the thesis demonstrates the candidate's contribution to the advancement of knowledge in two key and closely linked areas: the investigation of users' information needs and information-seeking behaviour; and the critical evaluation of information service provision.

The thesis begins by placing the Portfolio of Public Output in an historical, political context, by discussing the various parliamentary and government openness, transparency and consultative agendas that have influenced or driven the research on which the 21 papers are based. It continues by describing some of the candidate's earlier research work, to illustrate his long-standing interest in state-stakeholder information provision and exchange, before outlining the various research projects from which the Portfolio outputs have emerged.

In the core part of the thesis the 21 Portfolio outputs are synthesised and considered as part of a narrative whole, which reflects critically on their contents and which illustrates the candidate's empirical, methodological and theoretical contribution to the field of library and information science (LIS). Here, the candidate argues that he has contributed significantly towards developing a better understanding of the information behaviour of stakeholders when engaging with the state, and a greater awareness of the ways in which government and parliamentary information systems and services might be more responsive to their stakeholders' information needs, thus theoretically enabling a more informed, engaged and participatory body politic.

In terms of the candidate's empirical contribution, the thesis demonstrates that his papers have largely been unique, relevant and timely additions to the literature, written in a conscious effort to address gaps in our knowledge of: parliamentary information services and the ways in which citizens, elected members and officials engage with parliamentary information; the nature and the extent of online information provision and exchange by political actors during parliamentary election campaigns, as well as the online behaviour of voters when attempting to determine their democratic choice; and the accessibility and communication of information during government consultative processes.

With regard to the candidate's methodological contribution, the thesis records his key role in the design of innovative and effective data collection and analytical techniques, including: a series of protocol analysis codes to record citizens' use of parliamentary websites; frameworks and schemata for the content analyses of political actors' election campaign websites and social media sites; the use of covert research to measure politicians' responsiveness online; and, perhaps most significantly, the interactive, electronically-assisted interview in a roadshow setting.

In terms of his theoretical contribution, the thesis discusses the candidate's part in the development of the theory of Information Interchange, which considers the roles and aims of both the information provider *and* the information user in assessing the effectiveness of the information communication process, and which is built upon the dichotomy that appears to exist between the two perspectives. The theory recognises the significance of the different agendas and objectives of the actors involved in information interchange, in what can be a complex interaction between two or more parties with potentially conflicting conceptions of the purpose of the interchange process.

Throughout the thesis, the candidate considers the actual and potential impact of his work on the LIS academic and practitioner communities. His 21 Portfolio outputs have created considerable academic interest internationally, and have been discussed and critiqued in numerous text books, journal articles, conference papers, research reports and doctoral theses; although there is only minimal evidence of others adopting, or adapting, his data collection and analytical techniques. While interest has been most significant amongst those in the LIS field, the multidisciplinary relevance of the candidate's work has resulted in it being cited by authors from a wide range of other disciplines, from business administration to computing, and from engineering to public relations.

In terms of the more practical impact of the candidate's research work, on government and parliamentary information services and practices, the picture has been mixed. Research commissioned by the European Parliament has had the clearest and most significant impact, on its Library's marketing and service strategies. In some cases, although a number of the candidate's recommendations — relating to parliamentary public information services in the UK, and Scottish Government website deficiencies — have subsequently been addressed by these bodies, no direct causal relationship can be established. In other cases — particularly in relation to Scottish Government consultative processes, and the online electioneering of parliamentary candidates in Scotland — his recommendations have been ignored completely, and information practices have remained idiosyncratic, inconsistent and flawed.

The thesis concludes by considering some of the candidate's future research plans and opportunities in the specific field of state-stakeholder information provision and exchange.

# 1. Introduction

This thesis is presented as part of the author's submission for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) by Public Output. It is based largely on research conducted in the period November 2000 to date, and on a Portfolio of 21 peer-reviewed, publicly available papers published since 2001. Throughout, however, reference is also made to earlier, related, peer-reviewed work co-authored by the candidate,<sup>1</sup> as well as other, pertinent, but non peer-reviewed outputs.

While the majority of the Portfolio outputs have been co-authored, the candidate will aim, in this thesis, to demonstrate the significance of his own contribution, in terms of the theoretical, empirical and methodological direction of the research discussed in the outputs, and to the written content of the outputs themselves.

The research area that is of prime interest to the candidate, and which forms the basis of the thesis, might be summarised as the communication and exchange of information between 'the state' (i.e. parliaments and governments at the local, devolved, national and European levels, as well as those who aspire to become part of the state during parliamentary elections) and its 'stakeholders'<sup>2</sup> (i.e. citizens, businesses, interest groups, etc.). Within this overarching theme, the thesis focuses on three distinct but interrelated sub-themes, namely:

- 1) the provision and communication of information by, and within, parliaments;**
- 2) the use of the Internet for information provision and exchange by political parties and candidates during parliamentary election campaigns; and**

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<sup>1</sup> Some of these items were included in the Portfolio of one of the co-authors, Professor Rita Marcella, when awarded a PhD by Public Output by Robert Gordon University in 2001 (Marcella, 2001). As such, they do not form part of the current candidate's Portfolio.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'stakeholder' has become widely used in the parliamentary and governmental arenas, although definitions vary. For example, the Scottish Government (2011a, p.4) defines stakeholders as 'individuals or bodies with expertise/interest in a specific policy, or cross-cutting policies, whose contribution should be sought by officials to ensure policies and services meet the diverse needs, priorities and expectations of the people of Scotland'. The European Commission's Directorate General Internal Market and Services (2010), meanwhile, describes a stakeholder as being 'a person or organisation with a legitimate interest in a given situation, action or enterprise'.

### **3) the exchange of information between government and stakeholders during formal public consultation processes.**

Within all three sub-themes, the thesis aims to demonstrate the candidate's contribution to the advancement of knowledge in two key and closely linked areas:

- **the investigation of users' information needs and information-seeking behaviour** — i.e. the extent to which stakeholders have expressed or unexpressed needs for information produced by the state, the ways in which they go about attempting to obtain such information, and the ways in which they evaluate and use the information obtained; and
- **the critical evaluation of information service provision** — i.e. the ways in which the state provides and communicates information to stakeholders, and the extent to which these satisfy the stakeholders' information needs.

Section 2 of the thesis lists the 21 peer-reviewed papers that constitute the Portfolio of Public Output. It also includes an indication of the actual or estimated written contribution to each public output made by the candidate.

Section 3 places the Portfolio of Public Output in some historical, political context, in terms of the various parliamentary and government openness, transparency and consultative agendas that have influenced or driven much of the candidate's work.

Section 4 discusses the candidate's research and outputs produced prior to the period covered by the Portfolio, to illustrate that the provision and use of 'official' information emanating from the state has always been his prime research interest.

Section 5, meanwhile, outlines the various research projects from which the Portfolio outputs have emerged, as well as other relevant research work conducted by the candidate during the period covered by the thesis.

In Section 6, the core element of the thesis, the 21 Portfolio outputs are synthesised and considered as part of a narrative whole, which reflects critically on their contents and which illustrates the candidate's contribution to the field of library and information science (LIS). This section is presented in three distinct parts, so as to render it more accessible to the



reader. It firstly considers the candidate's empirical contribution to the LIS discipline, by illustrating how his research has largely been aimed at addressing existing gaps in our knowledge of state-stakeholder information exchange. It then focuses on the candidate's methodological contribution to the field, by discussing his key role in the development of new and innovative data collection and analysis techniques employed during the Portfolio period. It then moves on to reflect upon those information theorists that have most influenced the candidate's work, before considering what is his own most significant theoretical contribution to LIS — the theory of Information Interchange. Throughout Section 6, the candidate considers the actual and potential impact of his work and outputs on the academic and practitioner communities worldwide, and also reflects upon the limitations of his research.

In Section 7, the thesis concludes with what might be described as a 'postscript', in which the candidate considers some of his future research plans and opportunities in the specific field of state-stakeholder information provision and exchange.

## 2. Portfolio of Public Output

The candidate's Portfolio of Public Output consists of 21 peer-reviewed, publicly available papers, published in the period 2001 to date. These are listed below, arranged by the three sub-themes and numbered sequentially.

It should perhaps be emphasised here that a number of the outputs in the Portfolio have been published in some of the most highly reputable journals in the LIS field. For example, three were published in the *Journal of Documentation*, which is widely regarded as the top LIS journal in the UK, and which is currently ranked 28<sup>th</sup> out of 85 LIS journals internationally in the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) Journal Citation Reports, based on its 5-year impact factor. Another appeared in *Government Information Quarterly*, currently ranked 16<sup>th</sup> out of the 85 journals on the same scale.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the other outputs appear in journals which, although not ranked as highly in terms of their ISI impact factors, are respected and read widely throughout the LIS academic and practitioner communities. For instance, two of the Portfolio papers were published in the international, open access journal, *Information Research*, which draws 31.5% of its readership from LIS academics, and 25.9% from managers in the library and information sector (Wilson, 2012).

As will also be seen, while the majority of the outputs appear in LIS literature, the multidisciplinary nature of much of the candidate's work means that he has occasionally published in titles more closely associated with other subject areas, including marketing, political science, and media and communication studies.

The percentage figure in brackets after each output refers to the actual or estimated *written* contribution made by the candidate (his overall contribution to the research on which the outputs are based, in terms of theoretical and methodological direction, and data collection and analysis, is discussed more fully throughout Sections 5 and 6 of this thesis). Viewed chronologically, the Portfolio reflects the candidate's growing independence as a researcher during the last 13 years, through an incremental growth in his proportional written

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<sup>3</sup> Another of the outputs was published in the *Journal of Government Information*, a journal which, in 2004, was incorporated into *Government Information Quarterly*.

contribution to the co-authored papers, and in the number of papers of which he is the first-named or sole author.

The full text of all of the outputs is presented as the separately bound Volume Two of the thesis. Where the outputs have been co-written, confirmation of the candidate's contribution has been obtained, wherever possible, from the co-author(s). These appear as the Supporting Statements, which are included as an appendix to Volume Two.

### **Sub-theme 1: the provision and communication of information by, and within, parliaments**

1. Marcella, R. and Baxter, G. (2001). Citizenship information research at the School of Information and Media. Paper presented at the Information for Scotland VII conference, Edinburgh, 16 November 2000. Published in *Library Review*, 50 (2), pp.65-72. **(50%)**
2. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Moore, N. (2002). Theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of information need in the context of the impact of new information and communications technologies on the communication of parliamentary information. *Journal of Documentation*, 58 (2), pp.185-210. **(50%)**
3. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Moore, N. (2002). An exploration of the effectiveness for the citizen of Web-based systems of communicating UK parliamentary and devolved assembly information. *Journal of Government Information*, 29 (6), pp.371-391. **(50%)**
4. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Moore, N. (2003). The effectiveness of parliamentary information services in the United Kingdom. *Government Information Quarterly*, 20 (1), pp.29-46. **(60%)**
5. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Moore, N. (2003). Data collection using electronically assisted interviews in a roadshow — a methodological evaluation. *Journal of Documentation*, 59 (2), pp.143-167. **(75%)**

6. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Moore, N. (2005 & 2006). The impact of new technology on the communication of parliamentary information. A paper presented at the Political Studies Association 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference, Leicester, 15-17 April 2003. Published in the *Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing*, 2005, 14 (1/2), pp.185-203. Also published in: Wymer, W.W. and Lees-Marshment, J. (Eds.). *Current issues in political marketing*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press Inc., 2006. ISBN: 0-7890-2437-3. **(50%)**
7. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Moore, N. (2006). The impact of information and communication technologies on the communication of parliamentary information in the United Kingdom. Paper presented at the European Communication Association Congress, Munich, 24-26 March 2003. Published in: Schorr, A. and Seltmann, S., (Eds.). *Changing media markets in Europe and abroad: new ways of handling information and entertainment content*. New York/Lengerich: Pabst Science Publishers, pp.63-77. ISBN: 3-89967-179-1. **(50%)**
8. Marcella, R. and Baxter, G. (2005). Information interchange. In: Fisher, K.E., Erdelez, S., and McKechnie, E.F. (Eds.). *Theories of information behavior*. Medford, NJ: Information Today, pp.204-209. ISBN: 1-57387-230-X. **(50%)**
9. Marcella, R., Baxter, G., Davies, S. and Toornstra, D. (2007). The information needs and information-seeking behaviour of the users of the European Parliamentary Documentation Centre: a customer knowledge study. *Journal of Documentation*, 63 (6), pp.920-934. **(60%)**

**Sub-theme 2: the use of the Internet for information provision and exchange by political parties and candidates during parliamentary election campaigns**

10. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Smith, S. (2003 & 2004). The use of the Internet by candidates as part of their campaign for election to the Scottish Parliament in 2003. In: Carrasquero, J.V., Welsch, F., Urrea, C., and Tso, C. (Eds.). *Proceedings of the international conference on politics and information systems: technologies and applications, 31 July – 2 August 2003, Orlando*. Orlando: International Institute of Informatics and Systemics, 2003, pp.246-251. ISBN: 980-6560-10-8. Also published in the *Journal of Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics*, 2004, 2 (2), pp.54-59. Available at [www.iiisci.org/journal/CV\\$/sci/pdfs/P108958.pdf](http://www.iiisci.org/journal/CV$/sci/pdfs/P108958.pdf). **(70%)**
11. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Cheah, S. (2008). The use of the Internet by political parties and candidates as part of their campaign for election to the Scottish Parliament in 2007. Paper presented at the first Information: Interactions and Impact (i<sup>3</sup>) conference, Aberdeen, 25-28 June 2007. Published in *Libri*, 2008, 58 (4), pp.294-305. **(95%)**
12. Baxter, G., Marcella, R. and Varfis, E. (2011). The use of the Internet by political parties and candidates in Scotland during the 2010 UK General Election campaign. *Aslib Proceedings*, 63 (5), pp.464-483. **(95%)**
13. Baxter, G. and Marcella, R. (2012). Does Scotland like this? The use of social media by political parties and candidates in Scotland during the 2010 UK General Election campaign. Paper presented at the third Information: Interactions and Impact (i<sup>3</sup>) conference, Aberdeen, 20-23 June 2011. Published in *Libri*, 2012, 62 (2), pp.109-124. **(95%)**
14. Baxter, G., Marcella, R., Chapman, D. and Fraser, A. (2013). Goin' Holyrood? A study of voters' online information behaviour when using parties' and candidates' websites during the 2011 Scottish Parliament election campaign. Paper presented at the second International Conference on Integrated Information, Budapest, 30 August to 3 September 2012. Short version of paper published in *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2013, 73, pp.209-216. Available at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042813003364>. **(95%)**

15. Baxter, G., Marcella, R., Chapman, D. and Fraser, A. (2013). Voters' information behaviour when using political actors' websites during the 2011 Scottish Parliament election campaign. A full version of the paper presented at the second International Conference on Integrated Information, Budapest, 30 August to 3 September 2012. Published in *Aslib Proceedings*, 2013, 65 (5), pp.515-533. **(95%)**
16. Baxter, G. and Marcella, R. (2013). Do online election campaigns sway the vote? A study of the 2011 Scottish Parliamentary election. *Libri*, 63 (3), pp.190-205. **(95%)**
17. Baxter, G. and Marcella, R. (2013). Bravehearts or tim'rous beasties? A decade of research into online election campaigns in Scotland. Paper presented at the Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government 2013, Krems, Austria, 21-25 May 2013. Published in: Parycek, P. and Edelmann, N. (Eds.). *CeDEM 13: Proceedings of the International Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government*. Krems: Edition Donau-Universität, 2013, pp.75-87. ISBN: 978-3-902505-30-9. **(95%)**
18. Baxter, G. and Marcella, R. (2013). Online parliamentary election campaigns in Scotland: a decade of research. An updated and extended version of the paper presented at the Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government 2013, Krems, Austria, 21-25 May 2013. Published in *eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government*, 2013, 5 (2), pp.107-127. Available at <http://www.jedem.org/article/view/210>. **(95%)**

**Sub-theme 3: the exchange of information between government and stakeholders during formal public consultation processes**

19. Baxter, G. (2010). The best-laid schemes? The provision and accessibility of government consultation information in the UK. Paper presented at the second Information: Interactions and Impact (i<sup>3</sup>) conference, Aberdeen, 22-25 June 2009. Published in *Libri*, 2010, 60 (3), pp.253-267. **(100%)**
20. Baxter, G., Marcella, R. and Illingworth, L. (2010). Organizational information behaviour in the public consultation process in Scotland. Paper presented at the eighth Information Seeking in Context conference, Murcia, Spain, 28 September to 2 October 2010. Published in *Information Research*, 15 (4), paper 442. Available at <http://informationr.net/ir/15-4/paper442.html>. **(90%)**

21. Baxter, G. (2014). Open for business? An historical, comparative study of public access to information about two controversial coastal developments in North-east Scotland. Paper presented at the fourth Information: Interactions and Impact (i<sup>3</sup>) conference, Aberdeen, 25-28 June 2013. Published in *Information Research*, 2014, 19 (1), paper 603. Available at <http://www.informationr.net/ir/19-1/paper603.html>. **(100%)**

### **3. Context in which the candidate's research has been conducted**

During the course of the candidate's academic career, from 1995 to date, much of his research has been driven by a desire to develop an understanding of the information needs and information seeking behaviour of individual citizens and the wider civil society, and about how access to information provided by government and other public bodies might enable them to become more involved in the democratic process. Understandably, then, his research agenda has frequently been influenced by political, constitutional and legislative changes, as well as by various parliamentary and government openness, e-government and consultative agendas and initiatives. This section of the thesis provides an overview of some of these key events, so that the research encompassed by the Portfolio of Public Output, as well as the candidate's earlier work (see Section 4), might be viewed in an historical, political perspective. As will be seen, the last two decades have been particularly dynamic, in terms of political, policy and technological change, meaning that the field of state-stakeholder information communication and exchange has been ripe for exploration.

#### ***3.1 Devolution in the UK***

One of the most influential factors has been the dramatic constitutional change that took place in the UK in the late 1990s, with the decentralisation of certain powers from Westminster to three new devolved legislatures: the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, and the Northern Ireland Assembly. At the time, the Labour-led UK Government's joint consultative committee with the Liberal Democrat Party outlined four key principles of the new devolved approach, including 'making government more open and accountable to the people' (Liberal Democrat Party, 1998).

A significant proportion of the candidate's research has focused on the situation within a devolved Scotland; for the formation of the Scottish Parliament, in particular, was viewed as heralding a new, more transparent style of democracy:



‘an open, accessible Parliament; a Parliament where power is shared with the people; where people are encouraged to participate in the policy process which affects all our lives; an accountable, visible Parliament.’ (Consultative Steering Group on the Scottish Parliament, 1998, foreword)

The Consultative Steering Group also developed a draft information strategy, based on the Swedish parliamentary model, which stated that:

‘The Scottish Parliament is committed to providing an Information Service aimed at ensuring that the Parliament is as open, accessible and participative as possible. Only well-informed citizens can maximise the opportunities which this presents for individuals and organisations to contribute to the democratic process. Only well informed MSPs [Members of the Scottish Parliament] can contribute fully to the governance of Scotland.’ (Consultative Steering Group on the Scottish Parliament, 1998, annex F)

That draft information strategy considered external information services to the general public, as well as internal information services to parliamentary staff and to MSPs and their staff. And while these goals have been addressed by, respectively, the Scottish Parliament Public Information Service and SPICe, the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (see, for example, Seaton, 1999, 2005 & 2006; Hubbard, 2001), it was not until 2011 that a formal information strategy was adopted by the Scottish Parliament, and only, it would appear, for internal, corporate information management (Scottish Parliament Leadership Group, 2011). A similar situation is to be found in the National Assembly for Wales, where both a Members’ Library and a Public Information and Education Service were established immediately after devolution, yet an overarching information strategy is still under development (National Assembly for Wales, 2012). In Northern Ireland, meanwhile, there were early visions of an Assembly that would be ‘as open, transparent, accessible and accountable as possible’, with a ‘high standard of information and communication systems’ (Fee, 1999), although delays in the peace process meant that information services did not develop as rapidly as in Scotland and Wales. Only recently, the Assembly’s Research and Information Directorate set out a strategic vision for the development of internal and external information services, so that it might be regarded as a ‘modern, open, inclusive and efficient legislature’ (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2012).

At the time of writing, the UK is on the eve of potentially its most significant constitutional change in over 300 years. In the Scottish independence referendum of 18 September 2014, the people of Scotland will be asked the dichotomous Yes or No question, 'Should Scotland be an independent country?', which may result in the end of the UK in its present form. However, *Scotland's Future* (Scottish Government, 2013b), the 670-page white paper which sets out the current Scottish Government's blueprint for an independent Scotland, makes little mention of information policy; therefore, any potential strategic change of direction, in terms of information provision, is currently unclear.

### ***3.2 Openness, transparency and freedom of information in the UK***

The candidate's research career has also coincided with a growing acceptance of the concept of 'open government' in the UK. As Gay (1997, p.5) observed, pressure for greater access to official information in the UK grew in the 1960s and 1970s, fuelled largely by the adoption of freedom of information (FOI) laws abroad. In 1977, the head of the Civil Service issued what became known as the 'Croham Directive', intended to secure the release of more of the background detail and information behind Ministerial decisions. Then, in 1979, shortly before the General Election, the Labour Government published a green paper, *Open Government*, which favoured a non-statutory code rather than FOI legislation; although this was then disregarded by Margaret Thatcher's incoming Conservative Government. Between 1979 and 1984, four private member's bills promoting FOI were introduced in the UK Parliament, but none reached the statute book.

#### *3.2.1 Non-statutory codes of practice*

Although the *Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985* gave the general public the right to attend local council meetings and to gain access to relevant documents (i.e. agendas, reports, background papers and minutes) before, during and after these meetings, it was not until the 1990s that national government turned its attention again to an openness agenda. The 1991 white paper, *The Citizen's Charter: Raising the Standard*, set out the post-Thatcher Conservative Government's public service reform programme, and listed the 'principles of public service' that 'every citizen is entitled to expect'. These included 'openness' and 'full, accurate information...readily available, in plain language, about what

services are being provided' (p.5). Two years later, the introductory paragraph of another white paper, *Open Government*, declared that:

'Open government is part of an effective democracy. Citizens must have adequate access to the information and analysis on which government business is based. Ministers and public servants have a duty to explain their policies, decisions and actions to the public. Governments need, however, to keep some secrets, and have a duty to protect the proper privacy of those with whom they deal' (p.1).

This, in turn, led to the introduction in 1994 of a non-statutory *Code of Practice on Access to Government Information*, which committed government departments and public bodies under the jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Ombudsman to:

- publish the facts and analyses relating to major policy proposals and decisions;
- publish explanatory material (such as rules, procedures and administrative manuals) on departments' dealings with the public;
- provide reasons for administrative decisions to those affected;
- provide information about public service costs, targets, standards and results achieved; and
- respond to specific requests for information from the general public.

Following devolution, the Scottish Executive<sup>4</sup> (1999a) and the National Assembly for Wales (1999) each introduced their own non-statutory codes of practice on public information access.

### *3.2.2 Crown copyright and the re-use of public sector information*

The late 1990s also saw considerable attention paid to Crown copyright. In January 1998, a green paper — *Crown Copyright in the Information Age* — considered the future management of Crown copyright,<sup>5</sup> and, amongst seven options, mooted the possibility of its

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<sup>4</sup> In September 2007, Scottish Ministers decided to formally adopt the title Scottish Government to replace the term Scottish Executive as an expression of corporate identity (Scottish Government, 2007). In this thesis, the two terms Scottish Executive and Scottish Government should be regarded as synonymous, with their use being dependent on the time period being discussed.

<sup>5</sup> Section 2.8 of the green paper defined Crown copyright as covering those works 'made by Her Majesty or by an officer or servant of the Crown in the course of his duties'.

abolition and the placing of all material originated by government in the public domain. Then, in March 1999, the UK Government published a white paper — *Future Management of Crown Copyright* — which listed a number of categories of material (e.g., primary and secondary legislation, government consultative documents, headline statistics, and published papers of a scientific, technical or medical nature) from which Crown copyright was being waived, and which also announced the launch of an electronic Information Asset Register, *inforoute*, that would act as a gateway and central information point to direct the public to government information and materials.<sup>6</sup> These papers were followed closely by a review of government information carried out during the UK Government's Spending Review of 2000, as part of a *Cross-Cutting Review of the Knowledge Economy* (HM Treasury, 2000). This review was concerned primarily with the ways in which information subject to Crown copyright might be acquired and re-used by the publishing and online information industries. It proposed a simplified system of pricing and licensing for government information, which included a new, online 'click-use-pay' licensing service. The review also resulted in the creation, in April 2003, of the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information,<sup>7</sup> a non-departmental public body charged with advising Ministers on how to encourage and create opportunities in the information industry for greater re-use of public sector information. 2003 also saw a European directive on the re-use of public sector information, which stated that:

'Making public all generally available documents held by the public sector — concerning not only the political process but also the legal and administrative process — is a fundamental instrument for extending the right to knowledge, which is a basic principle of democracy' (European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2003a, p.92).

This directive established a minimum set of rules governing the re-use of information held by public sector bodies, which in the UK were implemented through *The Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005*.

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<sup>6</sup> *inforoute* (at [www.inforoute.hmso.gov.uk](http://www.inforoute.hmso.gov.uk)) existed until at least April 2010, and concentrated on information resources that had not yet been, or would not be, formally published. The reasons for its demise are unclear: all that now exists is an archived 'snapshot', from 2 April 2010, on the UK Government Web Archive at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202113922/opsi.gov.uk/iar/index.htm> (Accessed 24 October 2013)

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/appsi>

### 3.2.3 Freedom of information

In 1997, fulfilling an election manifesto pledge to introduce a Freedom of Information Act (see, for example, Campaign for Freedom of Information, 2000, p.1), the New Labour Government published a white paper — *Your Right to Know* — which stated that:

‘Unnecessary secrecy in government leads to arrogance in governance and defective decision-making. The perception of excessive secrecy has become a corrosive influence in the decline of public confidence in government. Moreover, the climate of public opinion has changed: people expect much greater openness and accountability from government than they used to.’ (p.1).

This eventually led to the introduction of the *Freedom of Information Act 2000*, which came into force fully on 1 January 2005 and which gives the public the basic right to access any recorded information held by public authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and by those UK-wide public authorities based in Scotland. It does, however, include 24 exemptions, applying to either particular categories of information (‘class-based’ exemptions), or cases where disclosure may cause specific types of harm (‘prejudice-based’ exemptions). The public’s rights under the Act are upheld by an independent public authority, the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) (see [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)).

In Scotland, meanwhile, the Scottish Executive (1999b) issued a consultation document — *An Open Scotland: Freedom of Information* — on its proposals for a separate Freedom of Information Bill. This subsequently resulted in Scotland introducing its own legislation — the *Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA)* — which also came into force on 1 January 2005, entitling citizens to see information held by Scottish public authorities. It, too, contains a list of (17) class-based or prejudice-based exemptions from public disclosure. Here, however, the *FOISA* is worded more strongly than its UK equivalent, referring to cases that might ‘prejudice substantially’ the activity or interest described in the exemption, rather than the simpler ‘prejudice’ used in the UK Act. These access rights are enforced and promoted by an independent public official, the Scottish Information Commissioner (SIC) (see [www.itspublicknowledge.info](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info)).

Parts of the UK FOI Act were amended following the introduction of the *Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010*. These amendments related to communications with the

Royal Family and the Royal Household (see Maer, 2013). The effectiveness of the UK FOI Act was also explored recently in an inquiry conducted by the House of Commons Justice Committee, which concluded that it ‘has been a significant enhancement of our democracy’ and ‘was working well’ (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2012, p.3). While the ICO (2012) welcomed the Justice Committee’s report, the Commissioner himself was critical of what he described as a ‘recent and loud *cri de couer* from the establishment’ about FOI, which, he believed, was encouraging Ministers and civil servants to partake in practices (e.g., using unofficial, private email addresses for government correspondence) specifically designed to circumvent FOI legislation (see Syal, 2012). And while it was noted that, on gaining power in 2010, the new Conservative—Liberal Democrat Coalition Government had promised to extend the scope of the UK Act (HM Government, 2010, p.11), and had expressed a desire to see the UK Government become ‘one of the most open and transparent in the world’ (Cameron, 2010), the Information Commissioner had detected a move away from these declared ideals:

‘The coalition government is keen on transparency and open data<sup>8</sup> but at the same time I get the sense they are much less enthusiastic about FOI than when they came in. Possibly, it’s all a bit hard to live with in government.’ (in Syal, 2012).

Changes were also made to the *FOISA* as a result of the *Freedom of Information (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2013* (see SIC, 2013a); although one original proposal, to create a new absolute exemption for information relating to communications with senior members of the Royal Family, was abandoned. Despite repeated appeals by the SIC to extend FOI to a greater range of organisations, particularly where public services are operated by charitable trusts, private contractors and other ‘arms-length’ bodies (e.g., SIC, 2007 & 2011; Rhodes, 2011), the Amendment Act brought no new public authorities under the Scottish legislation. However, in June 2013, the Scottish Government brought forward a draft order under section 5 of the *FOISA*, which, from April 2014, will extend coverage to certain arms-length trusts delivering cultural, sporting and recreational services. It also plans

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<sup>8</sup> The Coalition Government’s policy *Improving the Transparency and Accountability of Government* (Cabinet Office and Efficiency and Reform Group, 2013) includes a number of action points, such as: ensuring that each government department includes specific open data commitments in its business plan; publishing financial and performance datasets on the website [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk); and establishing an advisory Public Sector Transparency Board.

to 'consult further in due course' on extending FOI coverage to other arms-length organisations (Scottish Government, 2013a).<sup>9</sup>

The SIC has also recently expressed concerns about a rise in the number of appeals she receives because of public authorities failing to respond to FOI requests:

'Eight years on from the implementation of FOI, we would expect to see authorities becoming more effective in the technical aspects of request handling, not less so. A failure to respond is, quite simply, a failure to respect the requester's statutory rights...' (SIC, 2013b)

### 3.2.4 *Environmental information regulations*

The ICO and the SIC are also responsible for enforcing the *Environmental Information Regulations 2004* and the *Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004*, respectively.<sup>10</sup> Like the two FOI Acts, these came into force on 1 January 2005. These regulations implement a European directive on public access to environmental information (European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2003b), which was itself derived from the 1998 'Aarhus Convention', i.e. the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 1998). They give the public a general right of access to environmental information held by UK public authorities, with 'environmental information' being defined as information on:

- the state of the elements of the environment (i.e. air, water, soil, etc.) and the factors affecting these;
- the measures or activities designed to protect these elements, and the analyses and assumptions associated with these;
- reports on the implementation of environmental legislation; and

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<sup>9</sup> The Scottish Government's white paper on independence, published in November 2013 (Scottish Government, 2013b), makes no mention of extending the applicability of FOI to arms-length bodies in an independent Scotland: it merely notes that the SIC will assume some of the functions currently dealt with by the ICO, including data protection.

<sup>10</sup> An access to environmental information regime has actually been in place in the UK since 1992, in the form of the *Environmental Information Regulations 1992* (amended by the *Environmental Information (Amendment) Regulations 1998*), and the *Environmental Information Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993* (amended by the *Environmental Information (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998*).

- the state of human health and safety as they are affected by the state of the elements of the environment (adapted from European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2003b, Article 2(1)).

### 3.2.5 INSPIRE regulations

More recently, the ICO and the SIC have also assumed the responsibility of enforcing the *INSPIRE Regulations 2009* and the *INSPIRE (Scotland) Regulations 2009*, respectively. These regulations came into force on 31 December 2009, and implement another European directive (European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2007), this time on establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community, with the aim of enabling the sharing of environmental spatial information among public sector organisations, and better facilitating public access to such information across Europe (Information Commissioner's Office, 2009). Public authorities have obligations under these regulations if they hold one or more 'spatial data sets', i.e. datasets in electronic form that have a direct or indirect reference to a specific location or geographical area. Both sets of regulations have since been amended — by the *INSPIRE (Amendment) Regulations 2012* and the *INSPIRE (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2012*, respectively — to take account of technical implementing rules on the conformity and interoperability of spatial datasets and services that were not in place when the INSPIRE directive was made. At the UK Government level, the INSPIRE work is being led by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and a portal to the spatial datasets is currently available at <http://data.gov.uk/location>. The Scottish Government's Scottish Spatial Data Infrastructure, meanwhile, is being developed in partnership with the University of Edinburgh's EDINA data centre, with access to datasets available at <http://scotgovsdi.edina.ac.uk/srv/en/main.home>.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.3 Digital government in the UK

The candidate's earliest research work took place at a time when the UK Government was increasingly making information publicly accessible via its new Government Information Service website (then at [www.open.gov.uk](http://www.open.gov.uk)). That site, managed by the Central Computer

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<sup>11</sup> A Northern Ireland equivalent is located at <http://www.gistrategyni.gov.uk/index/spatialni.htm>, while the Welsh Government's spatial datasets have been made publicly available at <http://data.gov.uk/publisher/welsh-government-spatial-data-infrastructure>. All spatial dataset portal links were accessed on 28 October 2013.



and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA) was established in November 1994 and attempted to provide a coordinated single point for information produced by central government departments and agencies.

In November 1996, the Conservative Government issued the green paper, *government.direct*, which set out a prospectus for delivering government services (e.g., providing information, collecting taxes, granting licences, paying grants and benefits) to citizens and the business community using new information and communication technologies (ICTs). These proposed reforms, the government believed, would:

‘change fundamentally and for the better the way that government provides services to citizens and businesses. Services will be more accessible, more convenient, easier to use, quicker in response and less costly to the taxpayer. And they will be deliverable electronically.’ (p.1).

For those citizens without a computer at home, the government envisaged a network of ‘special easy-to-use terminals with touch-sensitive screens’ made available in public places such as libraries, post offices and shopping centres, as well as the eventual use of cable and satellite television services (p.16). Providing government information online to businesses, the green paper stated, ‘has the potential to improve UK national competitiveness’ (p.19); while an online public information service ‘would allow the citizen to be more fully involved in the democratic process’ (p.20).

After winning the 1997 General Election, the new Labour Government asked the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) to review the use of ICTs in government worldwide. The POST report, *Electronic Government* (1998),<sup>12</sup> identified three key areas in which government had the opportunity to harness new technologies, namely to:

- improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the ‘executive functions’ of government, including the delivery of services;

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<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that the POST report (p. 67) cited some of the results of the current candidate’s citizenship information research (see Section 4 of this thesis); specifically the public’s preferred sources and methods of obtaining citizenship information identified in the first UK-wide survey conducted in 1997. These findings came from an unpublished interim report to the British Library Research and Innovation Centre, a copy of which was provided to the POST report authors. They were eventually published in Marcella and Baxter (1998a, 1999a, 1999b & 1999c).

- enable government to be more transparent to citizens and businesses giving access to more of the information generated by government; and
- facilitate fundamental changes in the relationships between the citizens and the state, with implications for the democratic process and structures of government.

In March 1999, the Labour Government set out its *Modernising Government* agenda (Cabinet Office, 1999), including its visions of 'information age government', where it would provide 'new, efficient and convenient ways for citizens and businesses to communicate with government and to receive services' (Chapter 5). This included a proposal that 50% of all dealings with central government be capable of being delivered electronically by the year 2005, and 100% by 2008. Twelve months later, it revised this target, proposing that *all* services now be deliverable electronically by 2005 (McCartney, 2000). In April 2000, it published its strategic framework for e-government (Cabinet Office, 2000a), which was based on the application of e-business models throughout the public sector; and in September 2000, it set out its strategy for the electronic delivery of government services to the citizen (Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit, 2000). This latter document emphasised the need for electronic service delivery to be: joined-up, to break down silo-based delivery networks; delivered through a range of channels, such as personal computers, digital TVs, and mobile phones; backed up by access to advice and support; open to the private and voluntary sectors, to offer a new, mixed economy of electronic service provision; competitive, to result in improved value for money; and driven forward by government operating in new ways, borrowing from examples of best practice internationally. This strategy was to be championed largely by the Office of the e-Envoy (OeE; established by New Labour in 1999 and based in the Cabinet Office), and the e-Government Minister (a position also established in 1999). In 2001, the OeE also replaced the UK Government's original portal with a new single online point of entry to central government services, *UK Online* (at [www.ukonline.gov.uk](http://www.ukonline.gov.uk)).

A 2002 National Audit Office report noted that the 2005 target regime had been a useful incentive to encourage government departments to offer services electronically, but was critical of the lack of up-to-date and good quality information emanating from the OeE about the development and public take-up of e-government services (p.3). A subsequent report by the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2002) noted that the OeE had made 'limited progress' in this regard. During this period, several independent studies were also scathing of inaccessible, poorly maintained and financially wasteful government websites (see, for example, Arnott, 2003a & 2003b; BBC News, 2002a, 2002b & 2003).

In 2004, the OeE was replaced by an e-Government Unit, also in the Cabinet Office, and the central government portal moved into its third incarnation, this time called *Directgov* (at [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)). In November 2005, with its e-delivery target having almost been achieved (96% of government services would be 'e-enabled' by the end of the year), the UK Government launched its latest e-government strategy, under the title *Transformational Government* (Cabinet Office, 2005). This strategy was based around three key themes:

- services enabled by technology must be designed around the citizen or business, rather than the provider;
- government must move to a more efficient, shared services culture; and
- there must be increased government professionalism, in terms of the planning, delivery, management, skills and governance of technology-enabled change (p.7).

*Transformational Government* (p.10) noted that there were currently over 2,500 government websites in the UK. It emphasised the need to rationalise the web presence of government, and, in the process, converge services on two primary online entry points — *Directgov* for citizen-centred services, and *Business Link* (then at [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)) for business-related information and transactions. The follow-up implementation plan (Cabinet Office, 2006) set a target that each government department review its websites and produce a strategy for the consolidation and convergence of its online services by November 2006.

Building on, and in parallel with, the *Transformational Government* agenda, the Chancellor of the Exchequer commissioned Sir David Varney to undertake an independent review of service transformation, which aimed 'to identify further savings to government, citizens and businesses by focusing on the channels through which services are delivered and how they can be made more responsive to citizen and business needs' (Varney, 2006, p.7). It, too, emphasised a need for government website rationalisation, and recommended that there be a freeze on the development of new websites providing citizen or business e-services unless authorised by the Ministerial Committee on Public Services and Public Expenditure Sub Committee on Electronic Service Delivery. The Varney Review also recommended that 'almost all' citizen and business e-services migrate to *Directgov* and *Business Link* by 2011 (p.52), suggesting a range of 'incentives and levers' to aid the process (pp.31-32). A series of annual progress reports on the *Transformational Government* programme (Cabinet Office, 2007a, 2008 & 2009a) charted the implementation of this new website rationalisation policy; with, for example, the 2007 report (Cabinet Office, 2008, p.25) noting that 712 out of 765

central government websites would close by the end of the Comprehensive Spending Review period of 2008-2011.

In February 2007, following a Policy Review seminar on 'The Power of Information', the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Hilary Armstrong, commissioned Tom Steinberg, Director of mySociety,<sup>13</sup> and Ed Mayo, Chief Executive of the National Consumer Council, to 'explore new developments in the use of citizen- and state-generated information in the UK'. Amongst the 'sub questions' the reviewers were tasked to answer were:

- How can government catalyse more beneficial creation and sharing of information, and mutual support, between citizens?
- What can be done to improve the way government and its agencies publish and share the data they already have? (Mayo and Steinberg, 2007, p.7).

The Power of Information review highlighted the emergence of citizen-generated content using new, more interactive, Web 2.0 technologies, and made 15 practical recommendations to support a strategy in which government:

- welcomes and engages with users and operators of user-generated sites in pursuit of common and social and economic objectives;
- supplies innovators that are re-using government-held information with the information they need, when they need it, in a way that maximises the long-term benefits for all citizens; and
- protects the public interest by preparing citizens for a world of plentiful (and sometimes unreliable) information, and helps excluded groups take advantage (Mayo and Steinberg, 2007, p.4).

In its response (Cabinet Office, 2007b), the UK Government accepted (at least partially) all 15 of Mayo and Steinberg's recommendations; and, in 2008, created a taskforce<sup>14</sup> to help develop the Power of Information agenda. In their first and only report, in February 2009, the

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<sup>13</sup> mySociety is a project of the charity, UK Citizens Online Democracy. It has a mission 'to help people become more powerful in the civic and democratic parts of their lives, through digital means', and has developed a number of online tools that allow citizens to, for example, contact and monitor the activity of their elected representatives, make FOI requests, or report local neighbourhood or public transport problems (see [www.mysociety.org](http://www.mysociety.org)).

<sup>14</sup> The taskforce consisted largely of civil servants from the Cabinet Office, the Central Office of Information, the Office of Public Sector Information, and the National Archives, but also included representation from the Google corporation, and the online parenting organisation, Netmums.

Power of Information Taskforce listed their work to date, noting, for example, that they had been able to:

- support the creation of social media guidance for civil servants;
- examine the usability of key government websites and commission new guidance;
- experiment with using modern web publishing tools for data that is currently published using traditional methods;
- develop a model for an architecture for government websites that better supports content re-use; and
- begin work on the concept of a repository for government information.

Emphasising that they themselves had worked largely through Web 2.0 tools (e.g., publishing their progress via a blog, and producing their report collaboratively on a wiki), the Taskforce made a series of 25 recommendations aimed at ensuring that ‘public services are making as full a use as possible of the potential offered by evolving internet technologies’ (p.2). Again, the UK Government was largely responsive to the Taskforce’s ideas, accepting all recommendations at least partially and promising ‘greater engagement with the public through more interactive online consultation and collaboration’, as well as making a commitment to ‘publish information about public services in ways that are easy to find, use, and re-use’ (Cabinet Office, 2009b, p.3).

In June 2009, the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, in presenting a package of constitutional reforms, announced to the House of Commons that the inventor of the World Wide Web, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, had agreed to help the UK Government ‘drive the opening up of access to Government data on the web’ (Brown, 2009). Six months later, in a white paper entitled *Putting the Frontline First: Smarter Government*, the UK Government set out its proposals for ‘smarter, more efficient government’, which included plans to accelerate the move to digitalised public services (HM Government, 2009, pp.22-26) and to radically open up data and promote transparency (pp.26-28). As part of this latter aim, the UK Government announced that it would make government datasets (e.g., detailed departmental spending data, lists of schools, trunk road traffic volume data, Ordnance Survey mapping data) available through a single access point, at [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk). Launched in January 2010, with over 1,100 central government datasets, the *data.gov.uk* website currently contains over 9,000 datasets from central government departments, local authorities and other public sector bodies.

The May 2010 General Election saw Labour lose power to the new Coalition Government, which the following month pledged that it would 'scrap hundreds of unnecessary and expensive government websites' (Cabinet Office, 2010a). The Coalition also announced that it would be working with its new Digital Champion,<sup>15</sup> the Internet entrepreneur Martha Lane Fox, on how it might further transform government websites. In a strategic review of the *Directgov* portal, Lane Fox (2010) recommended that it concentrate on service quality and that it be the centre of, and the 'citizens' champion with sharp teeth' for, transactional service delivery. She also proposed that a new Chief Executive Officer for Digital be appointed in the Cabinet Office, who would have absolute authority over the user experience across all government online services. In its response (Cabinet Office, 2010b), the Coalition Government promised a 'channel shift' that would increasingly see public services provided digitally 'by default'; and that it would use digital technology to 'drive better services and lower costs'. This led to the publication, in November 2012, of the Government's Digital Strategy which set out:

'how the government will become digital by default... By digital by default, we mean digital services that are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will choose to do so whilst those who can't are not excluded' (Cabinet Office, 2012a, p.2).

With this strategy, the Coalition Government pledged to, for example: move all central government departments' corporate publishing activities onto a new government portal, *GOV.UK* (launched in October 2012 at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)), by March 2013, with those of government agencies and other arms' length bodies following by March 2014; improve departmental digital leadership; develop digital capability throughout the civil service; redesign transactional services to meet a new service standard; build common technology platforms for these services; remove unnecessary legislative barriers to developing digital services; and use a wider range of digital tools to communicate with and consult people, both within the UK and internationally. At the time of writing, quarterly reports on the strategy's progress are being posted online at <http://publications.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digital/#quarterly-reports>.

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<sup>15</sup> Lane Fox had previously been appointed as the previous Labour Government's Digital Inclusion Champion, with the remit to 'be the conscience of government on behalf of those citizens who are disadvantaged due to digital exclusion' (HM Government, 2009, p.23).

The situation within the three devolved administrations has been equally dynamic over the last 15 years, with many of the e-government initiatives and delivery targets developed by each one having been based on those of the UK Government. In Scotland, the Scottish Executive's first programme for government had proclaimed that 'modern government for Scotland depends on the effective use of digital technology' (Scottish Executive, 1999c, p.18); and, in March 2000, the First Minister, Donald Dewar, set a target identical to that of the UK Government — that all dealings with government in Scotland be deliverable electronically by 2005 (Scottish Executive, 2000a). A Digital Scotland Task Force — established by the Scottish Executive to promote digital technology across all sectors of Scottish life — produced a report, in May 2000, which declared:

'Scotland needs an information age government strategy in respect of devolved services, now' (p.20).

The Task Force advised that such a strategy needed strong leadership; required interoperability with UK Government departments in Whitehall, and between public sector bodies in Scotland; should be practical; and be the subject of wide consultation. In its response, the Scottish Executive (2000b) agreed that action was needed to ensure that the Scottish public sector becomes an 'exemplar of best practice' in digital government (p.2), and shortly afterwards published its draft e-government framework for consultation (Scottish Executive, 2000c). The revised framework (Scottish Executive, 2002) announced the creation of a Scottish government portal, under the banner *Openscotland* ([www.openscotland.gov.uk](http://www.openscotland.gov.uk)<sup>16</sup>), that would bring together the key web-based information sites and web-enabled services already in existence across the Scottish public sector. An *Openscotland Information Age Framework* followed in 2004, setting out common interoperability standards for use in public service delivery organisations, and was updated in 2006 (Scottish Executive, 2006a). In 2006, the Scottish Executive also reported that it had achieved 'exceptional progress' against the First Minister's electronic service delivery target, with 99% of information services and 77% of transactional services available online (Scottish Executive, 2006b).

In an outline paper in 2010, the Scottish Government (2010a) set out its *Digital Ambition for Scotland*, in terms of enabling 'fit-for-purpose' broadband connectivity across the country, ensuring Scotland's education system embraces innovative technologies, and using digital

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<sup>16</sup> This portal no longer exists, and it is unclear when it was withdrawn.

technology in the delivery of more efficient public services. In this last regard, the paper discussed a number of new initiatives, including: the launch in December 2010 of a new online portal ([www.tellmesotland.gov.uk](http://www.tellmesotland.gov.uk)) for advertising local authorities' public information notices; and Customer First, a collaborative programme with Scottish councils, aimed at encouraging online access to services and ensuring that at least 75% of core service requests can be handled at the first point of contact. In March 2011, shortly before the Scottish Parliamentary election, the Scottish Government published its digital strategy, *Scotland's Digital Future*, one section of which set out how it would use new technology to 'simplify and co-ordinate public sector work, deliver services directly, and inform and engage with the public' (Scottish Government, 2011b, Section 2). This strategy included the development of a new public services and information portal, *DirectScot*,<sup>17</sup> which, the Scottish Government argued, offered the opportunity for efficiency savings through the rationalisation of large numbers of government-run websites. The following year, the new Scottish National Party (SNP) majority government published a strategy and action plan specifically aimed at developing and delivering digital transactional and informational services. Its vision was of Scotland as a country in which:

- digital technology provides a foundation for innovative, integrated public services that cross organisational boundaries and deliver to those in most need, and for services to business that promote growth;
- digital technology captures patterns of service use and feedback, so that users of public service are more directly involved in service design and improvement; and
- this use of digital technologies provides a firm basis for a shared commitment to, and responsibility for, public services (Scottish Government, 2012a, p.3).

In its most recent progress report, the Scottish Government (2013c) stated that 'we are gaining momentum' with the delivery of the public services strategy, and noted that a priority list of services for the online portal (now, apparently, to be known as *Mygovscot*) would be available in Autumn 2013.

In Northern Ireland, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) published a corporate strategic framework for delivering government services electronically in 2001, which included the development of a website portal — *OnlineNI* — and which also

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<sup>17</sup> At the time of writing, the site is still in an experimental prototype form, at [www.directscot.org](http://www.directscot.org). It would also appear that trials took place with an earlier version in 2008, under the brand of *OneScotland* (see, for example, Scottish Government, 2008a)



set a target date of 2005 for all online service delivery (see Northern Ireland Assembly, 2001).<sup>18</sup> In 2003, the Central Information Technology Unit (Northern Ireland) set out its *OnlineNI* vision for e-government in the Province, where ‘customer choice, service accessibility, responsiveness and social inclusion will be the key drivers for the provision of government services’ (p.4). The *OnlineNI* portal was eventually launched in March 2003, and was redesigned extensively in January 2005. By the end of 2005, Northern Ireland Government departments had fallen short of their delivery targets, with just 93% of their key services capable of being delivered electronically. A report by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland (2008) was also critical of the lack of meaningful data on the performance of these electronic services, in terms of take-up by the public, user satisfaction, and departmental cost savings or efficiency gains.

The Northern Ireland Executive’s Programme for Government for the period 2008-11 (Northern Ireland Executive, 2008) was based around a framework of 23 Public Service Agreements (PSAs), including PSA 20, ‘Improving Public Services’. Based partly on research which found that most stakeholders in Northern Ireland accepted that ‘the current system of contacting the Government and accessing Government Services does not work’ (Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, 2007, p.10), the Executive proposed to meet many of the objectives of PSA 20 through its *NI Direct* programme, aimed at ‘simplifying and improving the current experience of contacting government by telephone and other electronic channels’ (Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, 2007, p.4). The *NI Direct* programme included a target of consolidating 70% of department and agency websites into a single, thematic-based website by March 2009 (Northern Ireland Executive, 2008, p.50). This portal — *nidirect* (at [www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)) — was launched in March 2009, and all citizen-facing content had been moved onto the site by September 2010 (Northern Ireland Executive, 2011). By April 2011, a website rationalisation programme was also well underway, with 55 of 91 Northern Ireland Civil Service sites having closed over the previous twelve months, with the ultimate aim of reducing the number to 27 (see Say, 2011). In the Executive’s most recent Programme for Government, for the period 2011-2015, the ‘improvement of online access to government services’ remains one of its key commitments (Northern Ireland Executive, 2012, p.55).

In Wales, meanwhile, the Welsh Assembly Government published *Cymru Ar-lein*, its Information Age Strategic Framework, in 2001. In this document, the Assembly Government

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<sup>18</sup> Due to a breakdown in the Northern Ireland peace process, devolution was suspended, and direct rule from Westminster was reimposed, for a near five-year period, from 15 October 2002 to 8 May 2007. Devolution had previously been suspended for much shorter periods three times during the period 2000 to 2001.

identified the opportunities that new ICTs presented in enabling sustainable development, social inclusion and equal opportunities throughout Wales; and, in the process, stated that they wanted the country to be 'served by modern, effective, efficient and accessible public services that use ICT to enhance their services' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2001, p.4). Noting that the UK Government had set 'demanding targets' for electronic service delivery, the Welsh Assembly Government (unlike its counterparts in Scotland and Northern Ireland) decided not to follow suit, instead declaring that the situation in Wales required 'an approach suitably tailored to our needs' (p.15), with delivery targets and approaches to be agreed in collaboration with Assembly-sponsored public bodies. By March 2004, however, the Audit Commission in Wales (2004) found that progress in implementing the e-government agenda had generally been 'slow and inconsistent'.

In September 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government published *Making the Connections*, its vision for the design and delivery of public services in Wales in the period to 2010. Here, it promised to provide more citizen-centred services, and to deploy new ICT applications to deliver these services more efficiently. In the associated five-year action plan (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005), one of its 'top 10 commitments' was to 'refresh our priorities for e-government' and to further draw upon the potential of electronic information, payment and purchasing systems, and of smartcard and broadband technologies. A priority was also to increase the availability of e-services to citizens and communities through the Assembly-supported all-Wales portal, *Wales on the Web*.<sup>19</sup> In July 2006, a team headed by Sir Jeremy Beecham reviewed local service delivery in Wales, and concluded that e-government 'should be the focus of much greater ambition in Wales' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006a, p.57). In its response to the Beecham Report, the Welsh Assembly Government (2006b) acknowledged that 'we need a revolution in how people are able to contact services' and that it should be 'exploiting more effectively the potential of the explosion in people's use of ICT' (p.11). It promised to deliver a 'new vision for e-enabled public services and transformed citizen access' by the winter of 2006-07 (p.16). A policy framework for the transformation of public services (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007, p.3), announced that a specific policy statement on 'access transformation' would follow, providing direction on how technology could be best harnessed to enable citizen-centred service delivery. While a vision of public service in Wales in 2020 (which included the existence of a single 'Wales Serving You' public

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<sup>19</sup> *Wales on the Web* (at [www.walesontheweb.org](http://www.walesontheweb.org), with a Welsh-language version, *Cymru ar y We*, at [www.cymruarywe.org](http://www.cymruarywe.org)) was launched in November 2002, and was a subject gateway to 'high quality websites about all aspects of Wales'. It existed until at least January 2007. All that now remains of the site are archived 'snapshots' on the UK Web Archive at <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/ukwa/target/103136/source/alpha> (Accessed 19 November 2013)

service website), together with an associated 'roadmap' and action plan, was discussed at Cabinet Sub-Committee level (see Welsh Assembly Government Cabinet Sub-committee on Local Government and Public Services, 2006 & 2007), it would appear that these never fully entered the public domain. Indeed, in December 2010, in its framework document, *Delivering a Digital Wales*, the Welsh Assembly Government acknowledged that 'more work is needed' (p.21) in terms of designing, developing and delivering online public services; and in its subsequent delivery plan (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011) declared:

'Our ambition is that public, government, health and social services are more accessible, sustainable and affordable through the innovative application of digital technologies. People in Wales will have better, more convenient and easier access to relevant services through multiple digital channels. Public sector delivery costs will be reduced.' (p.30).

The delivery plan also highlighted a need to rationalise the number of ICT systems used throughout the Welsh public sector, and move to all-Wales online services as the default option.

In 2012, influenced by the UK Coalition Government's 'Digital by Default' agenda discussed above, the Digital Wales Advisory Network undertook a review of online public sector services in Wales on behalf of the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science, finding that 'the pace of change has been slow' (p.1) and recommending that the Welsh Government<sup>20</sup> adopt a 'Digital First' approach that should 'aim to make online services in Wales the very best in Europe' (p.2). Most recently, the Welsh Government (2013a) reviewed progress against its *Delivering a Digital Wales* objectives, noting that, while there had been significant developments in terms of building shared services, progress in increasing the public take-up of online public services remained slow.

In terms of digital government, then, the situation has been broadly similar across central UK Government and the three devolved executive bodies over the last 15 years. The late 1990s and the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century witnessed a race to ensure that as many government informational and transactional services as possible were deliverable electronically. This was accompanied by considerable rhetoric about the accessibility, convenience and ease of use of these online services, the social and economic benefits that they would bring to the UK,

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<sup>20</sup> In May 2011, the Welsh Assembly Government followed the precedent of the Scottish Executive, and rebranded itself as the Welsh Government (see BBC News, 2011).

and the positive effects that they would have on the state-citizen relationship. However, this early enthusiasm was subsequently tempered by some costly ICT project failures, by a lack of evidence of the take-up and impact of these services, and by a need, in increasingly difficult financial times, to rationalise and consolidate government websites. More recently, there have been moves by government towards the provision of more citizen-centred online services, and to the adoption of more interactive, Web 2.0 technologies. It remains to be seen whether these will result in the 'modern, 'smarter', 'transformational', 'information age' government envisaged during the last two decades.

### **3.4 Government consultative processes in the UK**

In the UK governmental sphere, there is a deep-rooted tradition of ministers and civil servants consulting with representatives of those interests likely to be affected by policy decisions. Indeed, in a study of post-war British politics, the American political scientist Samuel Beer observed a 'widespread acceptance of functional representation in British political culture', where government regularly sought 'advice, acquiescence, and approval' from interest groups (Beer, 1969, pp.329-330).

Over the last 15 years, however, government at all levels in the UK has increasingly recognised the need for enhanced dialogue between policy makers and stakeholders during the formulation of policy. One of the main drivers here was the New Labour Government's *Modernising Government* agenda, which included a commitment to 'consult outside experts, those who implement policy and those affected by it early in the policy making process' (Cabinet Office, 1999, p.16). It coincided with the publication in 1998 of Cabinet Office guidance on conducting written consultation exercises (Cabinet Office, 1998a), and, in turn, led to the production of a *Code of Practice on Written Consultations* (Cabinet Office, 2000b). In 2008, the UK Government released a revised *Code of Practice on Consultation*, reaffirming its commitment to 'effective consultation; consultation which is targeted at, and easily accessible to, those with a clear interest in the policy in question' (Better Regulation Executive, 2008, p.3). That revised code highlighted seven key criteria, including the clarity, accessibility and responsiveness of consultation exercises. More recently, the UK Coalition Government has replaced the code with a set of looser *Consultation Principles*, to allow a 'more proportionate and targeted approach' to consultation (Cabinet Office, 2012b).

In Scotland, prior to the election of the first Scottish Parliament in 1999, the Consultative Steering Group on the Scottish Parliament (1998, section 2, paragraph 2) had recommended that the Parliament and its associated Scottish Executive be ‘accessible, open, responsive, and develop procedures which make possible a participative approach to the development, consideration and scrutiny of policy and legislation’. Indeed, by 2003, the Scottish Executive had its own consultation good practice guidance, which was revised in 2008 with an accompanying declaration that ‘the consultation process remains fundamental to good government’ (Scottish Government, 2008b, p.5). In 2004, the Scottish Executive also launched an email notification service, *seConsult*, to provide weekly updates on new and forthcoming consultation exercises. This, it was hoped, would ‘help bring new voices into the policy arena’ (Scottish Executive, 2004).

The Welsh Government, too, has introduced a weekly consultation e-newsletter,<sup>21</sup> and has its own internal good practice guidance for staff conducting public consultation exercises, which notes that ‘consultation and engagement are essential to effective policy-making’ (Welsh Government, 2013b, p.2<sup>22</sup>). It has also endorsed Participation Cymru’s (2011) *National Principles of Public Engagement in Wales*. In Northern Ireland, meanwhile, the OFMDFM (2003) provided guidance on the consultation process as part of its *Practical Guide to Policy Makers*, maintaining that it is ‘at the heart of the Executive’s commitment to openness and inclusivity’ (p.44). The OFMDFM’s Policy Innovation Unit (2007) also produced a *Policy Toolkit* aimed at civil servants, including a workbook devoted to formal consultation exercises.

Some of the candidate’s more recent research work has focused on public consultation during major planning applications in Scotland, where, as in the rest of the UK, there is less of a participative tradition. A statutory requirement for public participation only came into force with the *Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1969*, which referred quite vaguely to providing ‘adequate publicity’ and ‘an opportunity of making representations’ (p.4). The *Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997*, which still acts as the basis for the Scottish planning system, contained similar statements. However, post-devolution reforms by the Scottish Executive were heralded by a consultation paper, *Getting Involved in Planning*, which considered ways in which ‘greater public involvement and consensus’ might be built into planning processes (Scottish Executive Development Department, 2001, p.2). A

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<sup>21</sup> See <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/consultnewsletter?lang=en>

<sup>22</sup> This document is not publicly available. A copy was obtained by the candidate following a FOI request.

consequent white paper — *Your Place, Your Plan* — contained a number of proposals for ‘strengthening and enhancing public involvement at all stages in the land use planning system’ (Scottish Executive Development Department, 2003, p.v). The 1997 Act was amended by the *Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006*, which talked repeatedly of ‘involving the public at large’; and, in 2007, the Scottish Executive published its first detailed advice on how planning authorities and developers should engage properly with local communities in planning matters (Scottish Executive Development Department, 2007). More recently, though, the Scottish Government has sought to simplify and streamline the planning system, with a view to it supporting economic recovery. One of the key areas for improvement identified is the management of consultations, where, the Scottish Government now believes, ‘the practice of over consulting needs to be reversed with planning officers taking professional responsibility for identifying the key issues raised by an application and consultations focused on these issues’ (Scottish Government, 2012b, p.7). With this in mind, plans are afoot for the Scottish Government to conduct pilot exercises with some planning authorities to explore ways in which administrative burdens and delays might be reduced.

### **3.5 Online election campaigns**

In addition to investigating the provision and communication of information by individuals and organisations that already form part of the state, a significant proportion of the candidate’s research has examined the online information behaviour of those who aspire to become part of the state via parliamentary elections. Since Bill Clinton’s 1992 US presidential election campaign, where position papers, full texts of speeches, and candidate biographies were posted online (Bimber and Davis, 2003), the Internet has been adopted as an electoral tool by an increasing range of political actors worldwide. Accordingly, a significant body of literature on online electioneering has emerged since the mid-1990s. As Ward and Vedel (2006) observed, the earliest literature heralded a general wave of enthusiasm about the potential political impact of the Internet, where ‘mobilisation’ or ‘equalisation’ theorists predicted that it would facilitate a new, more participatory style of politics, bringing politicians and parties and an increasingly disaffected electorate closer together, and drawing more people into the democratic process. Within a few years, however, these Utopian claims were being questioned by a second wave of more sceptical voices — ‘normalisation’ or ‘reinforcement’ theorists who argued that the Internet, far from revolutionising political communication and democratic participation, simply reflected and reinforced existing patterns of offline behaviour:

'Politics on the Internet is politics as usual conducted mostly by familiar parties, candidates, interest groups and news media.' (Margolis and Resnick, 2000, p.vii)

More recently, a new wave of enthusiasm has emerged, prompted largely by developments in the US, where, for example, Howard Dean's 2004 presidential candidacy campaign (Hindman, 2005) and, in particular, Barack Obama's 2008 campaign (e.g. Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011) successfully utilised new, more interactive, Web 2.0 technologies to raise campaign funds and create networks of supporters and volunteers. In the UK, meanwhile, the 2010 General Election was predicted by many observers (e.g. Helm, 2010; Swaine, 2010) to be one on which the Internet, and especially new social media, would have a significant impact. However, in the immediate aftermath of the election, other commentators (e.g. Newman, 2010; Williamson, 2010a) suggested that television was probably the real 'killer app' of the 2010 campaign, particularly during a series of televised party leaders' debates, and was far more influential than any online media in shaping public opinion. Indeed, Williamson (2010a, p.60) concluded that 'it is time to put aside the idea of an 'internet election'' in the UK, arguing that the party-oriented nature of British politics does not lend itself to web-based campaigns that capture the public's imagination, unlike the more personality-led campaign culture in the US (Williamson, 2010b). Yet, just twelve months later, following the 2011 Scottish Parliament election, the victorious SNP claimed that its digital campaign had resulted in the 'first European election where online has swayed the vote' (Gordon, 2011); an assertion which, as will be seen later in this thesis, has been challenged by the candidate.

#### **4. Candidate's professional background and earlier, related research projects and outputs**

In June 1995, the candidate obtained a BA with First Class Honours in Librarianship and Information Studies from Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. Although a peer-reviewed paper was published based on one of his student undergraduate projects, on image indexing and retrieval (Baxter and Anderson, 1995), the foundations of his main research interests, and of the overarching theme of this thesis, were laid in an unpublished piece of undergraduate work, conducted in 1995, which examined the impact of European Union (EU) legislation on the responsibilities and services of Scottish local authorities. That student project included an investigation of how the then Regional and Islands Councils in Scotland managed the flow of EU information to and within their organisations.

Immediately after graduating, the candidate was appointed as a Research Assistant within Robert Gordon University's School of Information and Media, to work with the principal investigator (PI), Professor Rita Marcella, on a one-year project funded by the British Library Research and Innovation Centre (BLRIC). This project investigated the provision of EU information in public libraries in the United Kingdom, exploring, in particular, the implementation of the Public Information Relay (PIR), a European Commission initiative designed to bring European information closer to the British public through the existing public library network. The key elements of the project were: a questionnaire-based survey of public library authorities participating in the PIR; a series of eight case studies of a representative sample of PIR members; and a survey of the European information needs of over 370 users in Aberdeen City, Glasgow City and Moray District Libraries.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the project team organised a seminar, held at the Representation of the European Commission in London in June 1996, which was attended by almost 50 delegates from UK public library authorities and other interested organisations. The purpose of that event was to allow feedback and qualitative response from practitioners on the project results. During the course of the project, the candidate was also invited to become an observational member of the Scottish Public Information Relay Users Group, which consisted of practitioners from Scottish public library authorities. In addition to a final report to the BLRIC (Marcella, Baxter and Parker,

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<sup>23</sup> It is worthwhile noting that results from this survey were cited in a Scottish Executive review of evidence of 'attitudes towards the EU and the challenges in communicating 'Europe'' (Mahendran and McIver, 2007). That evidence review was conducted as part of Building a Bridge, a European Commission and Scottish Executive project (2005-07) which looked at how the experiences of a devolved Scotland might help the EU connect better with its citizens.



1996a), this research project resulted in a number of papers in peer-reviewed and professional journals (Marcella and Baxter, 1996 & 1997a; Marcella, Baxter and Parker, 1996b & 1997; Marcella, Parker and Baxter, 1996; Marcella *et al.*, 1997), as well as a chapter in a research monograph (Marcella, Baxter and Parker, 1999).

In 1996, with Professor Marcella, the candidate co-wrote a successful research proposal to the BLRIC. Consequently, between February 1997 and January 1999, he was the Research Assistant on the project, which investigated the extent to which members of the UK public have expressed or unexpressed needs for what the researchers termed 'citizenship information' (i.e. information produced by government or public sector bodies which may be of value to the citizen as part of everyday life or in democratic participation), their preferred routes to the acquisition of such information, and the suitability and approachability of the public library, among other agencies, for the user seeking citizenship information. The key elements of that study were: a national survey of almost 1,300 users of public libraries, Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABx) and other information and advice agencies; another national survey, this time by personal doorstep interview, of just under 900 members of the public; a series of nine focus groups with representatives of various sector or interest groups, including disabled people, ethnic minority groups and jobseekers; and 27 case studies of libraries, CABx and other information and advice agencies throughout the UK. As well as a report to the BLRIC (Marcella and Baxter, 1999a), this extensive project produced a host of peer-reviewed and other journal articles (Marcella and Baxter, 1997b, 1997c, 1998a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c & 2000d), two published conference papers (Marcella and Baxter, 1999d & 2001a) and a book chapter (Marcella and Baxter, 1999e).

In the period prior to that covered by his Portfolio of Public Output, the candidate was also heavily involved in adapting the work of some of the School of Information and Media's best Masters student dissertations into a style and format suitable for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals. A number of these focused on the information needs and information seeking behaviour of citizens or parliamentarians, including: a study of the information and advice requirements of the residents of the Shetland Islands (Beer, Marcella and Baxter, 1998); an investigation of the information needs of UK Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) (Marcella, Carcary and Baxter, 1999); and an observational study of the information seeking behaviour of two Members of the UK Parliament (Orton, Marcella and Baxter, 2000).

The early years of the candidate's academic career also saw him publish widely in other subject areas, largely connected with course provision, career progression and continuing

professional development in the LIS field (e.g., Marcella and Baxter, 1998b, 2001b & 2001c; Campbell, Marcella and Baxter, 2000). However, as this section of the thesis has illustrated, the need for, and the provision and use of, 'official' information emanating from the state has always been to the fore in his research work.

## **5. Research from which the Portfolio of Public Output has emerged**

This section of the thesis provides an overview of the various research projects, conducted since November 2000, from which the candidate's Portfolio of Public Output has emerged. It discusses these in relation to the three key sub-themes of the candidate's submission. It also briefly outlines some other research projects and outputs to which the candidate has contributed during the same period, and which are of direct relevance to the main thrust of this thesis.

### **5.1 Sub-theme 1: the provision and communication of information by, and within, parliaments**

#### ***ESRC-funded project: the impact of new technology on the communication of parliamentary information***

In 2000, with Professor Marcella, the candidate co-wrote a successful proposal to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). This was the first ever ESRC research grant received by Robert Gordon University. Consequently, between November 2000 and September 2001, he was the Research Assistant on a project, which investigated the impact of new technology on the communication of parliamentary information in the UK. It should also be noted that this project was conducted in conjunction with the School of Information Studies at Northumbria University, to which Professor Marcella had moved for a period.

The study consisted of two stages. Firstly, a series of in-depth interviews with representatives of the public information services of the UK Parliament (both in the House of Commons and in the House of Lords), the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly. Secondly, the testing of a new data collection tool: an interactive, electronically-assisted interview, taken out across Great Britain as part of a 'roadshow' to organisations such as public libraries, community centres, sheltered accommodation and universities. Here, members of the public were given the opportunity to explore, and provide critical feedback on, the websites of the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly.<sup>24</sup> Throughout both stages, all data was collected and analysed solely by the candidate.

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<sup>24</sup> While it was initially planned to conduct roadshows in Northern Ireland also, the re-emergence of violent incidents in the Province, coupled with the relative lack of developments in the Northern Ireland Assembly's public information service, led to a decision to exclude Northern Ireland from this stage of the research.

As well as a final report to the ESRC (Marcella, Baxter and Moore, 2002), this project resulted in **Outputs 1 to 7** in the candidate's Portfolio (see Section 2 of this thesis). Professor Nick Moore, the managing director of Acumen Research and Consultancy Ltd., acted as an advisor during the study and was a co-author of six of the seven outputs.

Output 1 was based on a paper (delivered by Professor Marcella) to the Information for Scotland VII Conference<sup>25</sup> in Edinburgh, in November 2000. It provided something of a bridge between the candidate's previous research work and that encompassed in his Portfolio, in that it discussed the results of the BLRIC-funded citizenship information project (highlighting those occasions where the results in Scotland differed significantly from national trends) before providing readers with an introduction to the ESRC project that had just commenced.

Output 2 discussed the political, theoretical and methodological background to the project. It firstly set out the context of the study in terms of the constitutional changes that were taking place in the UK at the time, with the decentralisation of power in Westminster to the three new devolved legislatures, and a general move to make government more open and accountable to the public. It then provided an overview of the public information strategies being developed by the devolved administrations at the time, and of various government initiatives relating to information provision and accessibility, such as the forthcoming FOI legislation and the setting of targets to make all dealings with government in the UK deliverable electronically by 2005. Via a wide-ranging literature review, it then discussed the theoretical and methodological approaches that had fed into the authors' research to date, and which underpinned the ESRC project. In particular, the review highlighted the authors' move towards a more person-centred approach in information behaviour research, where the methodologies adopted were determined partly by a need to get as close to the everyday lives of information users as possible. Finally, Output 2 provided an overview of the methodology — the interactive, electronically-assisted interview — about to be piloted.

Outputs 3 to 7, meanwhile, presented the results of the research. Each output differed, however, in that it either reported particular aspects of the results, discussed them in varying degrees of detail, or was aimed at a specific audience. Outputs 3 and 5 focused solely on the results of the roadshow events, with the latter paper also providing an extensive critical

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<sup>25</sup> This conference was organised by the Cataloguing and Indexing Group in Scotland, the Library Association Information Services Group, and the National Library of Scotland.

evaluation of the pilot methodology employed.<sup>26</sup> Outputs 4 and 7, meanwhile, focused more on the results of the interviews with representatives of the legislatures' public information services, relating these to what was learned about user information behaviour during the roadshows. Incidentally, Output 7 resulted from a presentation made by the candidate to the European Communication Association Congress in Munich, in March 2003.

Output 6 was based on a presentation (delivered by Professor Marcella) to the UK Political Studies Association Conference in Leicester, in April 2003. This output subsequently appeared both in a special journal issue devoted to political marketing, and in a monograph on current developments in that field; thus, the literature review reflected the project's applicability to political marketing theory. It also took into account the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, in terms of the impact upon government openness and online interaction in both the UK and the United States.

It should also be noted that Outputs 3 and 4 were written in such a way that might render them more accessible to a largely US-based journal readership, who were perhaps unaware of the UK constitutional situation.

### ***Invited book chapter: Information Interchange theory***

In 2004, Professor Marcella and the candidate were invited to contribute to a book on information behaviour theory, to be published by the American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIST). Their chapter, **Output 8**, formed part of a collaborative effort by the international information behaviour community, with contributions from 85 scholars in ten countries.<sup>27</sup> It presented their theory of Information Interchange, which drew on the results of the ESRC project described above, as well as the previous studies into EU and citizenship information needs and provision (discussed in Section 4 of this thesis), and which was built upon the dichotomy between the views and aims of the information provider and those of the information user.

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<sup>26</sup> Gender issues associated with the roadshow approach, together with gender variations emerging from the analyses, were also discussed by Professor Marcella in a paper presented to the Gender Research Forum in London in February 2002 (Marcella, 2002). The Gender Research Forum (2002-2004) was a tripartite initiative of the ESRC, the Women and Equality Unit at the Cabinet Office, and the Office of National Statistics.

<sup>27</sup> Invited contributors were largely information scientists who had presented at the 2003 Symposium of ASIST's Special Interest Group on Information Seeking and Use, or at any of the international, peer-reviewed, Information Seeking in Context (ISIC) conferences.

### ***European Parliament funded project: Parliamentary Documentation Centre customer knowledge study***

In late 2003, Professor Marcella and the candidate were invited by the European Parliament's internal library, the Parliamentary Documentation Centre (PDC), to submit a tender to conduct a customer knowledge study, aimed at obtaining a better understanding of the views and information needs of the PDC's client base. This study was being commissioned as part of a wider development programme, with the ultimate aim of re-launching the PDC service in an enhanced form. The PDC development programme was devised following a decision of the Bureau of the European Parliament, and took into account three Parliamentary priorities: internal administrative reforms (entitled 'Raising the Game') based on pooling and exploiting existing in-house expertise; enlargement, with ten new Member States joining the EU in May 2004; and the European Parliament elections taking place in June 2004. In inviting the research team to tender, the PDC representatives made it clear that they were aware of the previous research described above.<sup>28</sup> This tender, co-written by the candidate, was successful, and he and Mrs Sylvie Davies conducted the study during a three-week fieldwork trip to the European Parliament in Brussels in early 2004. It consisted of 72 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with actual and potential PDC users (i.e. MEPs and their assistants, Observers from countries about to join the EU, Administrators, and other parliamentary officials), and a further 11 interviews with PDC staff. Just over half of the interviews (43 of 83) were carried out by the candidate, and the subsequent transcription and analysis was conducted jointly with Mrs Davies.

A confidential report, co-authored by the candidate, was prepared for the European Parliament in June 2004 (Marcella, Baxter and Davies, 2004), and the project team also presented the main study findings to parliamentary officials in Brussels in August 2004. Shortly afterwards, some of the results were presented by Mr Dick Toornstra (who was a special adviser on democracy at the European Parliament at the time) to representatives of around 40 parliamentary libraries worldwide, at a special European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation seminar on meeting users' changing needs (Toornstra, 2004, pp.4-5). European Parliament officials subsequently acknowledged that the study results would be of interest to a wider professional and academic audience, and a peer-reviewed paper, **Output 9**, was eventually published in 2007. This paper provided an account of the

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<sup>28</sup> Indeed, one paper co-authored by the candidate (Marcella, Carcary and Baxter, 1999), was cited both in an account of the organisational review of the PDC taking place at the time, written by the then Head of Service (Watt, 2003), and in the European Parliament's restricted invitation to tender document, No. III/PDC/2003/QS/001.

customer knowledge study, highlighting the difficulties encountered in attracting participants, and the methodological steps taken 'in the field' to overcome these hurdles.<sup>29</sup> It also discussed the main results of the study, in terms of: the significance of information in the parliamentary context; the information seeking behaviour and skills of parliamentarians and officials; their preferred information sources; and their use of, and opinions on, the PDC. Output 9 was co-written with Professor Marcella, Mrs Davies, and Mr Toornstra.

## **5.2 Sub-theme 2: the use of the Internet for information provision and exchange by political parties and candidates during parliamentary election campaigns**

In 2003, Professor Marcella and the candidate conducted the first in an ongoing series of studies which has investigated the use of the Internet by political parties and candidates in Scotland during parliamentary election campaigns. To date, these are the only such projects to have looked primarily at the Scottish political scene. The 2003 study took place during the four weeks immediately preceding the Scottish Parliament election on 1 May (a period sometimes known in the UK as 'purdah'), and consisted of two main elements: 1) an analysis of the content of the websites of political parties and candidates, to identify the ways in which political participation by the Scottish public was encouraged via the provision of information and of opportunities for interaction and debate; and 2) a series of email enquiries on key policy issues, directed at parties and individual candidates, to measure the speed and extent of response, as well as any efforts made towards creating an ongoing relationship with potential voters. A similar, but expanded, study took place during the build up to the next Scottish Parliament election on 3 May 2007.

As the UK Parliament election campaign in 2010 was predicted to be one that would widely utilise new social media (e.g., Helm, 2010; Swaine, 2010), another study took place in the five weeks preceding the 6 May election date. While this study retained the basic structure of the previous two, it also included a systematic investigation of the ways in which social media (more specifically, blogs, Facebook and Twitter) were used by parties and candidates during the campaign. Twelve months later, another study of Internet use was conducted, this time during the 2011 Scottish Parliamentary election campaign. While similar in structure to the 2010 research, the 2011 study included an additional element: a user information behaviour

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<sup>29</sup> A range of mechanisms was eventually adopted to encourage participation, including: project announcements and calls for participation in internal European Parliament bulletins; telephone calls; emails; and floor walking throughout the parliamentary building in Brussels.

study, using the interactive, electronically-assisted interview methodology (as already discussed in Sub-theme 1, Outputs 3 and 5), where 64 members of the Aberdeen public were given the opportunity to explore, and provide critical feedback on, the websites and social media sites of parties and candidates. All but nine of these participants were interviewed by the current candidate. The 2011 study also paid particular attention to the 145 individual candidates who stood in both the 2010 and 2011 elections, to establish if election failure in 2010 had had any obvious impact on their social media use one year later.

In each of these four studies, the researchers were assisted, in data collection, by Aberdeen Business School placement students, namely Ms Sandra Smith (in 2003), Ms Shih Cheah (2007), Mr Evaggelos Varfis (2010), and Ms Denise Chapman and Mr Alan Fraser (2011). These students all worked under the direction of the candidate, and assisted largely in identifying party and candidate websites, logging particular features of these sites, and sending policy enquiries by email and social media. Consequently, each one was named as a co-author on at least one of the associated outputs. Throughout all of these studies, however, the vast majority of the analysis work has been carried out by the candidate. Table 1 provides an overview of the research conducted during the four election campaigns.

<b>Table 1: Research activities during the candidate's four parliamentary election campaign studies, 2003-2011</b>				
<b>Research activity</b>	<b>2003 Scottish Parliament Election</b>	<b>2007 Scottish Parliament Election</b>	<b>2010 UK General Election</b>	<b>2011 Scottish Parliament Election</b>
Party websites analysed	11	27	18	22
Candidate websites analysed	11	12	12	12
Enquiries sent to parties by email	19	82	32	34
Enquiries sent to candidates by email	24	46	39	56
Enquiries sent to candidates via Facebook	-	-	8	51
Enquiries sent to candidates via Twitter	-	-	30	20
Party Facebook wall posts analysed	-	-	150	2,073
Candidate Facebook wall posts analysed	-	-	2,966	6,226
Party Tweets analysed	-	-	857	1,728
Candidate Tweets analysed	-	-	6,181	13,900
Candidate blog posts analysed	-	-	1,586	543
User study interviews conducted	-	-	-	64



**Output 10** was based on the results of the 2003 study, and on a paper presented by the candidate to the International Conference on Politics and Information Systems: Technologies and Applications, held in Orlando, Florida, in the July of that year. That paper, incidentally, was selected by the conference as the best one presented in the Informatics, Voting and Political Parties session. **Output 11** evolved from the 2007 study, and from another conference paper presented by the candidate, this time to the first Information: Interactions and Impact (i<sup>3</sup>) conference held in Aberdeen in June that year.

**Output 12**, meanwhile, was based on the 2010 study, and compared the overall situation with that encountered in 2003 and 2007. **Output 13** was also drawn from the 2010 study and focused on the extent and nature of social media use by parties and candidates during the campaign. A paper based on this social media analysis was also presented by the candidate to the third i<sup>3</sup> conference, held in Aberdeen in June 2011.

**Outputs 14 and 15** were, respectively, short and full versions of a paper presented by the candidate to the second International Conference on Integrated Information, in Budapest, Hungary, in September 2012. That presentation drew on the study of voters' online information behaviour conducted during the 2011 Scottish Parliament election campaign. **Output 16** was also based on the 2011 campaign study, focusing on Scottish political actors' use of social media and challenging the assertion of the victorious SNP that it had been the 'first European election where online has swayed the vote' (Gordon, 2011).

**Output 17** was based on a paper presented by the candidate to the Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government (CeDEM13), in Krems, Austria, in May 2013, and consisted of a reflective, longitudinal overview of a decade of research into online election campaigns in Scotland. That paper was judged by the CeDEM committee as one of the best peer-reviewed papers of the conference, and the candidate was subsequently invited to submit an updated and extended version of the paper — **Output 18** — which was published in a special issue of the *eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government*.

### **5.3 Sub-theme 3: the exchange of information between government and stakeholders during formal public consultation processes**

#### ***ESRC-funded project: the mobilisation of organised interests in policy making***

From October 2006 to January 2009, the candidate was the principal Research Assistant to Professor Darren Halpin in an ESRC-funded project which investigated the mobilisation of group interests in the Scottish policymaking process; in particular, their involvement in Scottish Government written consultation exercises. The candidate's main role in that project was in the compilation of a dataset that recorded over 185,000 written responses from almost 19,000 organisations and interest groups (and thousands of individual citizens) to almost 1,700 Scottish Office and Scottish Government consultation exercises conducted in the period 1982 to May 2007. This was the first ever large-scale dataset to map mobilisation by policy participants in the UK. The candidate played a key part in devising the structure of the dataset, so that it might be readily analysed by policy area, consultation title and type, interest group name and type, etc. Here, each response to a Scottish Office/Government consultation, by an individual or an organisation, was treated as a separate case in the dataset. This approach drew on the dataset structure used by Baumgartner and Leech (2000) when analysing lobbying disclosure reports filed with the Clerk of the House of Representatives and with the Secretary of the Senate in Washington, DC, USA.

Subsequently, the candidate analysed the data obtained from a questionnaire-based survey of 469 non-governmental organisations known to have responded to at least one Scottish Government consultation during the post-devolution period. That survey explored the frequency, nature and perceived importance of the groups' political and policy-related activities.

As well as a report to the ESRC (Halpin and Baxter, 2009a), the project gave rise to three peer-reviewed papers, co-authored by the candidate, and presented by Professor Halpin to political science conferences in North America (Halpin and Baxter, 2008a; Halpin, Thomas and Baxter, 2009; Halpin and Baxter, 2009b); as well as a chapter in a research monograph (Halpin, Baxter and MacLeod, 2011). The candidate also co-presented the research results at a meeting of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations Policy Officer Network in Edinburgh, in August 2009.

The results of the interest group survey were sent to all 469 participants, and were also made publicly available on the ESRC website (Halpin and Baxter, 2008a). This created some interest within the Scottish Parliament, from where a request for further data on interest groups' communication with parliamentary committees was received.<sup>30</sup> This subsequently led to the candidate being invited to join the Study of Scottish Parliament Group, a group consisting largely of parliamentary officials and political scientists.

The project also created considerable interest within the Scottish Government itself, and, in January 2008, Professor Halpin and the candidate met with representatives of the Scottish Government's Office of the Chief Researcher, and its Constitutional Policy and Civic Participation Team, and outlined the research results to date. A further meeting took place with the Scottish Government's Chief Researcher in December 2009, again to discuss the project results, and to obtain permission to interview civil servants with consultation responsibilities.

While the prime aim of the ESRC project was to quantify and map interest group mobilisation, the act of collating the dataset raised some interesting issues concerning the accessibility, presentation and communication of consultation information, which the candidate felt worthy of further investigation. Indeed, prior to his interest in this area, very little had been written on the information management issues surrounding government consultations. With this in mind, two complementary 'offshoot' studies were conducted by the candidate; the first examining information issues from the policymaker's (i.e. the Scottish Government's) perspective, and the second from the perspective of organisations who participate in public consultations.

The first study was based largely on an analysis of the content of the Scottish Government website ([www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)), and of paper-based records held by the Scottish Government Library. However, the candidate also conducted a number of interviews with officials from the Library and the Scottish Government's Information Systems and Information Services department. The results were presented by the candidate at the second i<sup>3</sup> conference, held in Aberdeen in June 2009, and were subsequently published as **Output 19**.

The second study consisted of 54 semi-structured telephone interviews with representatives of non-governmental organisations that had participated in post-devolution Scottish

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<sup>30</sup> Personal communication with a clerk of a Scottish parliamentary committee, January 2013.

Government consultations. Interviewees were drawn from a 'pool' of volunteer organisations identified during the aforementioned postal survey of interest groups. The vast majority (45) of these interviews were conducted and transcribed by the candidate, who was also responsible for the subsequent analysis. The interviews explored in some detail the information behaviour within these organisations, in terms of finding out about relevant consultations, gathering information in preparation for a response, and obtaining post-consultation feedback. The candidate presented the results at the eighth Information Seeking in Context conference, held in Murcia, Spain, in September 2010; and **Output 20** is based on that conference paper. It was co-authored by Professor Marcella and Ms Laura Illingworth, the latter having conducted the balance of the interviews.

***An historical, comparative study of public access to information about two controversial coastal developments in North-east Scotland***

In November 2009, the candidate began an historical, comparative study of public access to information about two controversial coastal building developments in North-east Scotland: the construction of the St. Fergus Gas Terminal in the 1970s, and the current development of Donald Trump's golf resort on the Menie Estate. These two developments have much in common. For example, both have had potential or actual impacts on environmentally sensitive sites: the preferred location for the gas terminal was immediately adjacent to the Loch of Strathbeg, a site of exceptional scientific interest due to its bird and plant life and its geology and limnology; while the Trump golf course has encroached on a dynamic dune system designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Both projects were responsible for significant levels of public participation in the planning processes; and indeed both planning applications resulted in the creation of new groups with the primary aim of opposing and preventing the proposed developments. Both projects have also been affected by plans for other major structures in their immediate vicinity: in the case of the gas terminal, this was a Ministry of Defence radio station; in the case of the golf resort, an 11-turbine offshore wind farm.

The gas terminal application was made at a time when there was little history of public participation in planning processes in Scotland, when environmental impact procedures were not yet widely accepted, when (as Section 3.2 of this thesis has explained) the concept of 'open government' was only beginning to emerge, and, of course, before the appearance of the World Wide Web. In contrast, the Trump development has taken place at a time when public input into planning decisions is now taken for granted, when European legislation has

made environmental assessments a key element of many major development proposals, when FOI law has, theoretically at least, led to more open and transparent government, and when documentation relating to planning applications is readily accessible online. With these points in mind, the study is exploring what information was made publicly available during each of the two projects, and what impact this may have had on the public's engagement in the planning and decision-making processes. Data has been collected from a range of primary and secondary sources, including: government records; records of the developers and participating interest groups; newspaper articles in the local, regional and national press; and interviews with some of the key individuals involved in the two developments.

While data collection and analysis is still in progress, due largely to the ongoing issue of Trump's objections to the windfarm, the candidate presented an initial paper on the research at the fourth i<sup>3</sup> conference in Aberdeen, in June 2013. **Output 21** is based on that presentation and is currently in press. It describes the methodologies employed in the study, highlighting the challenges the candidate faced in obtaining data relating to the gas terminal proposals, some 40 years after the event. It also makes some initial observations on what opportunities and barriers the public faced in obtaining comprehensive and objective information about the two projects and in making a meaningful contribution to planning decisions.

#### **5.4 Other relevant research projects and non peer-reviewed outputs, November 2000 to date.**

Throughout the period covered by the Portfolio of Public Output, the candidate has played a significant role in a number of other research projects, and has been the author, or co-author, of any associated outputs. While some of this work has been on subjects outwith that discussed in this thesis, such as e-reference library services (Johnson *et al.*, 2004a) and the economic and social impact of creative and performing arts research (Marcella, MacDonald and Baxter, 2008), the majority have been related in some way to the provision and use of 'official' information. These outputs have generally been commissioned research reports, non-peer reviewed conference/seminar papers, and book reviews, and therefore cannot form part of the candidate's core Portfolio. However, it is believed that they provide additional evidence of his esteem within the LIS and research communities.

Between 2001 and 2003, the candidate was approached by the *Journal of Documentation* to contribute critical reviews of three different published works (two monographs and one research report), all of which related to information provision, access and policy (Baxter, 2001; Baxter, 2003a & 2003b).

Between April and October 2002, the candidate formed part of a research team that undertook a critical literature review on behalf of Resource: the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries. The review was intended to identify any published evidence of the impact of UK museums, archives and libraries on key government policy areas, more specifically social equity, learning, and economic prosperity. This included literature on how the sector contributed to citizenship, community empowerment and democratic participation. As well as the commissioned review (Wavell *et al.*, 2002), a paper based on this work was presented by Mr Ian Johnson to the Joint Conference of the European Association for Library and Information Education and Research and the Association for Library and Information Science Education, in Potsdam, Germany, in July 2003, and was subsequently published in two forms (Johnson *et al.*, 2004b & 2005).

In March 2003, Professor Marcella presented a paper, co-written by the candidate, to the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the European Information Association, held in Cambridge, UK. This paper drew on the researchers' experiences of conducting large-scale surveys of users' information needs, in an effort to encourage European information professionals to carry out studies of their own (Marcella and Baxter, 2003a).

Between June and October 2003, Professor Marcella and the candidate were commissioned by Robert Gordon University to review and assess records management practices throughout the University and to develop a corporate records management strategy for the institution, taking into account future obligations and duties under the *FOISA*, which was, of course, to be brought fully into force on 1 January 2005 (Marcella and Baxter, 2003b). This, in turn, led to the candidate becoming the University's representative on SHEIP, the Scottish Higher Education Information Practitioners Group (which focuses on FOI and data protection issues), from its inception in November 2003 until October 2004 (when the University appointed its first Records Manager).

Subsequently, between January and May 2004, Professor Marcella and the candidate were commissioned by JISC infoNet (an advisory service of the Joint Information Systems Committee) to prepare and test a public interest questionnaire which might be adopted by

Scottish higher and further education institutions in response to the requirements of the *FOISA*. As well as a report to JISC infoNet (Marcella, Webster and Baxter, 2004), the authors presented a paper based on this work to a conference in Stirling in April 2004 (Marcella, Baxter and Webster, 2004). The candidate also presented these results at a meeting of the SHEIP Group in October 2004.

Between January 2004 and March 2006, Professor Marcella headed a team of Robert Gordon University researchers (including the current candidate) that conducted two European Social Fund projects investigating the barriers, problems and difficulties encountered by women in the Scottish creative industries. Year one of this project consisted of a postal survey of Scottish creative companies, and telephone interviews with 138 individuals working in the Scottish creative industries. Year two comprised 51 best practice case studies of creative businesses in Scotland, and a series of seven focus groups held throughout Scotland. The case study element of this research raised a number of interesting issues relating to the provision of business start-up information and advice by government (or government-funded) agencies. These were discussed as part of a paper, co-written and co-presented by the candidate at the third Joint Annual Conference of the Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) and the Association of Media Practitioners in Education, in Coventry, in January 2007. This paper was subsequently transformed by the candidate into one of a collection of essays published the following year (Marcella, Illingworth and Baxter, 2008).

In June 2006, conscious of the researchers' work in this area, Screen Academy Scotland, at Edinburgh Napier University, commissioned Professor Marcella and the candidate to: catalogue existing generic and targeted business support structures (including business information and advice services) in Scotland; identify the extent to which they targeted under-represented groups, such as people from black and ethnic minority communities and individuals from socially or economically disadvantaged areas; and question a sample of recent screen business start-ups and review their experiences of using these support services. Again, many of the services examined were operated or funded by government, at the local, devolved or European levels, therefore that piece of research was clearly related to the main thrust of this thesis. In addition to co-writing the commissioned research report (Marcella and Baxter, 2007), the candidate presented the results at a special event held at Screen Academy Scotland in December 2006 (Marcella and Baxter, 2006).

The candidate's work on the ESRC-funded research into group interests in the Scottish policymaking process, described above, led to him being invited to cooperate in the international INTERARENA (Interest Groups Across Political Arenas) research project (January 2011 to December 2014), funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research, and led by the Department of Political Science at Aarhus University, Denmark. This project is examining the influence of interest groups in the administrative, parliamentary and media arenas in Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK, with the Dutch element of the research taking place at Leiden University. To date, the candidate's involvement in the research has consisted of identifying coverage of UK interest groups in two British broadsheet newspapers in the period 2009-2011 (this work was conducted in January-April and October-December 2012, and in November 2013), and the administration of a postal survey of UK interest groups, conducted between June and December 2013.

In 2013, the candidate had a significant part in writing a paper presented to the 12<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies, held in Guimaraes, Portugal, in July that year. This paper was co-written by Professor Marcella and Miss Hayley Rowlands, who jointly presented it to the conference (Marcella, Rowlands and Baxter, 2013). It discussed the use of the critical incident technique (CIT) in information behaviour research, and more specifically its use in an earlier Aberdeen Business School research project examining the information-seeking behaviour of oil and gas professionals in a health and safety context. The CIT is very similar to the method discussed in Output 19 (which was cited in the conference paper), where the non-governmental organisations were asked to base their interview answers on their experiences during the most recent consultation (the 'critical incident') to which they had responded.



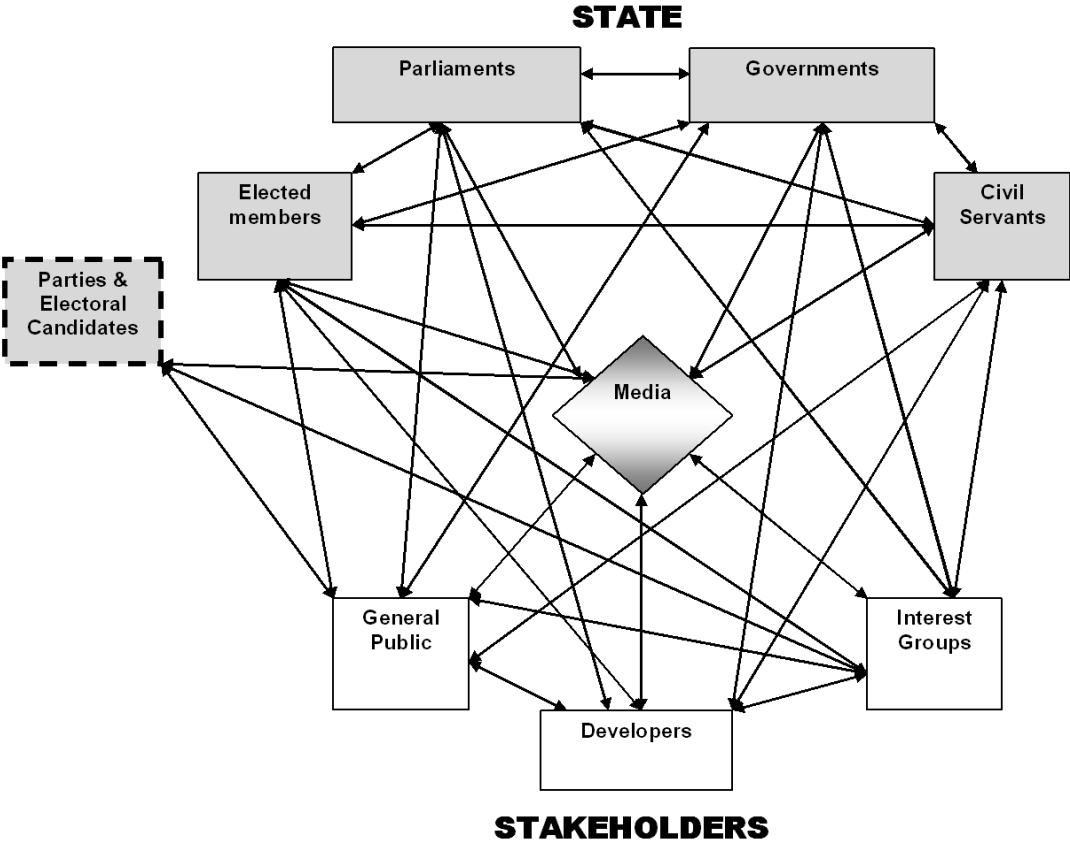
## **6. Empirical, methodological and theoretical contribution to the field of library and information science**

Figure 1 illustrates the many and varied patterns of information exchange between state and stakeholders explored in the candidate's 21 Portfolio outputs. The 'state', at the top of the figure, includes parliaments (at the European, national and devolved levels) and governments (at the European, national, devolved and local levels), together with the elected members and civil servants associated with each level. To the left, it also includes the political parties and candidates who, during UK and Scottish parliamentary election campaigns, have aspired to become part of the state. The 'stakeholders' at the bottom of the figure include the 'general public' (in the broadest sense of the term), 'interest groups' (i.e. pressure groups, trade unions, business and professional associations, etc.), and, specifically in connection with Sub-theme 3 of this thesis, the developers of controversial building projects.

'The media', meanwhile, appear in the centre of the figure. This is to demonstrate that the candidate's studies have considered the media both as stakeholders in their own right, and as intermediaries in the process of information exchange between state and citizen. The figure also serves to illustrate the fact that there have been occasions, discussed in the Portfolio outputs, when the information providers and/or information seekers have made conscious efforts to circumvent the media as a transmitter or source of information. Equally, there have been occasions when the media has had a crucial (and sometimes less than objective) role in the communication of information.

Figure 1 also demonstrates that the flow of information between the state and its stakeholders is rarely one-way. The candidate's Portfolio outputs, and his earlier, related papers, have highlighted the complex, two-way interchange of information that can take place between provider and user, where the extent and the nature of the behaviour of each 'information actor' will be influenced by their motivations, objectives, or by their work or life context. In this, the main section of the thesis, these complex patterns of information flow will be considered as part of a narrative whole, which will reflect critically on the 21 Portfolio outputs and which will aim to demonstrate the significance of the candidate's empirical, methodological and theoretical contribution to the field of LIS.

Figure 1: The patterns of information exchange explored in the Portfolio of Public Output



## 6.1 Empirical contribution

### 6.1.1 *The provision and communication of information by parliaments*

Much of the research work discussed in the Portfolio of Public Output has been aimed at addressing existing empirical gaps in our knowledge of state-stakeholder information exchange. For example, in considering Sub-theme 1 of this thesis — the provision and communication of information by, and within, parliaments — Outputs 1 to 7 in the Portfolio discussed two topics that had been little explored previously: parliamentary public information services in the UK; and the ways in which citizens engage with online parliamentary information.

With regard to public information services, both Pond (1991) and Menhennet (2000) had traced the genesis and development of the House of Commons Public Information Office (PIO) at Westminster, which was established formally on 1 June 1978.<sup>31</sup> Both authors observed that, by 1990, the PIO was dealing with around 90,000 enquiries annually (90% by telephone), and had a well-established publications programme and an Education Unit. Menhennet (2000) noted that the PIO (renamed the House of Commons Information Office in 1998) began to post its publications on the Internet in December 1995, and that its education service commissioned its own interactive website, *Explore Parliament*, in April 1999. In the new devolved legislatures, meanwhile, Nicol (1999), Seaton (1999) and Hubbard (2001) briefly outlined the Scottish Parliament's external information services; while Speight (2001) described how the publications of the National Assembly for Wales were to be made publicly available. Anderson (2000), and Sheehy and Sevetson (2001), had focused on the creation of the Scottish Parliament's Partner Library Network – a network of 80 public libraries across the 73 Scottish parliamentary constituencies designed to act as a focal point for information about the parliament. Consequently, Outputs 2, 4, 6 and 7 in the candidate's Portfolio represented the first ever published comparative overviews of the public information services in the long-established Westminster parliament and in the three new devolved bodies.

Prior to the period in which Outputs 1 to 7 were written and published (2001-06), there had also been little research into public perceptions of online communication with elected representatives and with parliaments more broadly. As Coleman and Spiller (2003, p.8) observed:

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<sup>31</sup> Pond (1991, p.102) also noted that a small House of Lords Information Office was introduced in 1974.

‘The academic literature has tended to examine the effects of new media upon politicians and their traditional representative practices and to neglect the effects of new media upon the represented... there has been little systematic research into whether and how citizens would like to use new media to access or participate in the democratic process. There is very little established knowledge about how the public wants to communicate with its representatives and how they perceive communication opportunities as they stand.’

Indeed, in a paper discussing the results of a 2004 UK-wide public opinion survey, which partly explored attitudes towards the use of the web and email to interact with representative institutions, Lusoli, Ward and Gibson (2006, p.40) cited Output 4 and described it as one of only two previous studies of public attitudes towards online communication with parliament in the UK; the other being a country-wide public opinion survey conducted in 2001 (Coleman, 2001).

The work of Coleman, and of Lusoli and his colleagues, was based on large-scale, quantitative surveys of the public. Before the publication of Outputs 1 to 7 (which discussed, in varying degrees of detail, the ESRC-funded project’s roadshow-based data collection approach) there had been no qualitative studies of the ways in which the public at large seek and use online parliamentary information, and very few qualitative investigations into the public’s perceptions and use of online information emanating from state institutions more broadly. In the US, Hert and Marchionini (1997) had studied the users of three federal government statistical sites using a variety of methods, including interviews, focus groups, usability tests and transaction log analyses. While, in the UK, an extensive market research study conducted by BMRB International on behalf of the Cabinet Office Central IT Unit (Cabinet Office, 1998b) had examined the propensity for the take-up of the electronic delivery of government services. This included the use of a computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) system, where citizens responded to a standard series of video clips of proposed technologies (i.e. personal computer with keyboard, touchscreen, interactive television, and touchtone telephone) for delivering online government services. With these points in mind, Outputs 1 to 7 provided unique and particularly timely additions to the literature.

In terms of the five parliamentary public information services studied, Outputs 2, 4, 6 and 7 revealed that the services shared similar overall visions, particularly in contributing to a

greater public awareness of, and interest in, parliamentary processes. And while these services tended to have common elements, there appeared to be little consensus on best practice, with each of the legislatures having adopted slightly different approaches in developing certain aspects of their service. The main services provided in 2001 are summarised in Table 2.

<b>Aspect of service</b>	<b>UK Parliament</b>	<b>Scottish Parliament</b>	<b>National Assembly for Wales</b>	<b>Northern Ireland Assembly</b>
Enquiry service	House of Commons: 93,000 per annum House of Lords: 25,300 per annum	7,400 per annum	200 per week	120 per week
Publications programme	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Website	Yes, although a redesigned site was due to be launched in summer 2002. A separate educational site, <i>Explore Parliament</i> , also existed	Yes	Yes	Yes
Webcasting of parliamentary proceedings	Yes	Yes	Was being piloted	Yes
Visitor Centre	No	Yes	Visitor Centre was about to open; a publicly accessible Publications Centre already existed	No
Tours of parliament buildings	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outreach activities: talks, touring exhibitions, etc.	Yes, but largely London-based	No, although present at any country-wide parliamentary committee meetings	Yes, at major public events such as cultural festivals and agricultural shows	No
Education service	Yes	Yes	Yes	No, but service planned
Links with public libraries	No	Yes, Partner Library network	Yes, Information Link network	No

While approaches across the public information services differed, some common trends did emerge, including that:

- all services were experiencing a rapid growth in the number of e-mail enquiries received from the public at large;
- if, as was anticipated, this growth in email correspondence were to continue, then this would have a significant impact on service resources, due to the fact that most email enquiries tended to require an individualised and time-consuming response;
- although there were certain predictable areas of need, citizens' information needs are likely to be driven by the often unpredictable political agenda of the day, and to be significantly influenced by media coverage of that agenda; and
- there was considerable public confusion about the structure, role and responsibilities of the UK Parliament and the three new devolved legislatures, as well as their respective executive bodies.

In these Outputs — particularly Output 7 — the candidate and his co-authors were critical of the lack of meaningful data about the public information services' users, and recommended that further research be conducted into the nature and extent of citizens' use (both actual and potential) of parliamentary public information services, beyond the simple gathering of enquiry statistics that currently took place within the services.

With regard to the roadshow results, meanwhile, Outputs 3 to 7 noted a distinct lack of public interest in using parliamentary websites: many of the 79 citizens who participated in the research (as well as those who declined to take part) believed that the content of such sites had little or no relevance to their own day-to-day lives. Echoing the earlier comments of the information services' staff interviewed, the roadshow participants tended to be uncertain about the purpose of the legislative bodies and consequently about the nature of the information likely to be available on their websites. The technology, too, was a barrier or a deterrent for many of the participants: several (particularly older people and novice users of ICTs) found the hardware difficult to handle, and the websites themselves frequently proved un navigable. There was little understanding of how the information was ordered on the websites, nor of the means available (e.g., Boolean operators, phrase matching) to retrieve information. Yet, after they had engaged in the exploration of a parliamentary website, with

the support of the current candidate, the majority expressed positive feelings about the experience. For example, of the 79 participants, 68 believed that the website they had looked at served a useful purpose; 71 described it as easy to use; 61 thought that the information they had found was very or quite interesting; 69 found the information easy to understand; and 61 felt that they might visit the site again in the near future. Although, on a more negative note, just 43 felt that the type of information contained within these websites was relevant to their own day-to-day lives.

The candidate and his co-authors therefore recommended in these five papers that the parliaments and assemblies give more serious consideration to ways in which they might encourage use of their websites and demonstrate the relevance and practical value of their contents to citizens' daily lives, perhaps through promotional or educational programmes. They also suggested that more research be conducted into users' information needs and information seeking behaviour when considering the design of parliamentary websites: that site developments should take place based upon what citizens really need, rather than what public servants think is needed.

Outputs 1 to 7 have subsequently been cited widely by the international academic community, in a range of journal articles, conference papers and student theses.<sup>32</sup> In some of these cases, they have simply been included in literature reviews, as an illustration of an 'e-democracy' or 'e-government' study. For example, Liu (2005, p.212) provided suggestions for the development of e-democracy in Taiwan, based on the results of studies conducted in the US and the UK; and, in so doing, discussed Output 4 as an example of a study which explored 'how to make Congress or Parliament more efficient with respects to servicing the constituency'. Päivärinta and Sæbø (2006, p.828), assigned existing e-democracy literature to one of four idealised models, and categorised Output 3 as an example of a Liberal Democracy project. While, in a paper presenting an instrument designed to measure user satisfaction with the Kuwait e-government portal, Farhan and Sanderson (2010, p.201) cited Output 4 as an illustration of a research project that had investigated e-government service quality.

Other authors, however, have focused on particular aspects of the research findings reported in Outputs 1 to 7. In terms of the public information services, for example, Kanthawongs (citing Output 2) developed an e-parliament engagement model for the Thai Parliament

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<sup>32</sup> Appendix II summarises the total number of citations that each output in the candidate's Portfolio has received.

(Kanthawongs, 2007; Kanthawongs and Lee, 2009), and in the process discussed the types of materials made publicly available on the Scottish Parliament website, such as bills, research briefings, and news releases. While Hogenboom, Jongmans and Frasincaar (2012), in proposing an importance-ranking method for retrieving Dutch Parliament debate documentation, cited House of Commons Information Office enquiry statistics (reported in Output 4) to suggest that the general public and the business community are the most likely users of parliamentary information. In terms of users' information behaviour, meanwhile, a number of commentators have concentrated on the complexity and unpredictability of citizens' needs for parliamentary information. For example, Martínez (2004, p.13), when providing a history of the Spanish Government's communication offices, recognised the observation of the candidate and his co-authors in Output 2 that each citizen may take on different roles and manifest different levels of information need and information-seeking activity in varying life contexts. And Lusoli, Ward and Gibson (2006, p.29) concurred with the requirement (highlighted in Output 4) for parliamentary websites to visibly enable meaningful and useful interaction that is relevant to people's everyday lives. On this last point, the conclusions of Output 3 (p.387) had stated:

'...the results appear to indicate that the availability of information in readily accessible electronic form is not enough alone to encourage citizen participation. Other motivators and forms of support are required to encourage and enable people to access, use, and apply that information and to encourage them to use ICTs to interact with democracy.'

This suggestion appears to have struck a chord with e-democracy and other scholars, for it has subsequently been quoted or paraphrased in a number of academic publications that have reported upon, or called for, more user-centred systems research (e.g., Conroy and Evans-Cowley, 2005, p.97; Higgs, 2006, p.112; Papacharissi, 2009, p.239).

While the contents of Outputs 1 to 7 have clearly reached the consciousness of elements of the political and information science communities, what, if any, influence have they had on the practitioner communities within the parliaments and assemblies themselves? At the conclusion of the research on which these outputs were based, the candidate had sent a copy of the final report (Marcella, Baxter and Moore, 2002) to each of the participating parliamentary public information services. Have the findings and recommendations contained within that report and the seven papers had any subsequent influence on parliamentary practice?



Any direct impact has proved difficult to ascertain, largely because the candidate's work was followed closely by two high-profile, large-scale inquiries that investigated broadly similar themes, came to similar conclusions and made some similar recommendations.<sup>33</sup> In March 2003, just a few months after the publication of Output 3 (the first output to include project results), the House of Commons Select Committee on Modernisation of the House of Commons began an inquiry into how the UK Parliament might better connect with citizens. This inquiry was prompted largely by ever-decreasing election turnouts in the UK, and downward trends in public levels of trust of politicians. During the course of the inquiry, the Select Committee had informal discussions with parliamentary officials, academics and broadcasters, held various public meetings, organised an online consultation with the assistance of the Hansard Society, and visited both the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales to see how they approached public engagement issues. In its report of June 2004, the Committee made a number of recommendations concerning visitor and educational services and facilities, but also highlighted the need for a 'radical upgrading' (p.20) of the UK Parliament website, with which 'widespread dissatisfaction' (p.18) had been expressed, despite the 2002 redesign. Indeed, in comments reminiscent of those reported in the Portfolio Outputs 3 to 7, inquiry participants suggested that 'the search facility was not satisfactory and that information was not classified and grouped in a helpful way' (p.18). Consequently, as the candidate and his co-authors had done some 18 months earlier, the Select Committee suggested that:

'Further research could also be commissioned into the needs and interests of potential target audiences (e.g., young people, aged people, ethnic minorities, the disabled) for whom there may be better ways of explaining and presenting information about the House of Commons using the Internet' (p.18).

In January 2004, the Hansard Society set up a Commission on the Communication of Parliamentary Democracy, to examine how the UK Parliament presented itself, and was presented by others, to the general public. As was the case with the House of Commons Select Committee, this Commission was created in response to increasing public cynicism and disengagement with Parliament. Chaired by Lord Puttnam, the Commission comprised individuals drawn from the fields of media, politics and academia, and drew on written

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<sup>33</sup> In both inquiries, evidence was gathered partly from named representatives of parliamentary public information services across the UK. A number of these individuals had previously been interviewed by the candidate during the ESRC-funded project, thus it is perhaps unsurprising that similar issues emerged in each study.

evidence, round-table seminars, a young people's working group, and an online citizens' panel. The 'Puttnam Commission' report, published in May 2005, declared that 'the public have a right to expect a Parliament which communicates its work promptly, clearly and usefully'. In this regard, the Commission believed, 'Parliament is failing' (p.viii). Echoing the earlier findings of the current candidate and his co-authors, the Commission observed that:

'Where the public look for clear and readily accessible information, it remains unnecessarily difficult to find the information people need' (p.viii).

It, too, found the UK Parliament website unsatisfactory, describing it as 'impenetrable to most people, difficult to navigate, with almost no opportunity for interaction, and a wholly inadequate search engine' (p.51). The Commission called for 'radical' improvements to the site, so that it might become 'consultative, interactive and easily navigable' and likely to 'engage the widest range of citizens' (p.xi).

Following these two inquiries, in 2006, the administrations of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords adopted a public engagement strategy for the period 2006-2011, which had been outlined in the business plan of the Group on Information for the Public (GIP<sup>34</sup>). The three key aims of the strategy were to: inform the public about the work and role of Parliament; promote Parliament as an institution and explain why it should be valued; and listen and respond to public feedback. The guiding vision was that, by 2011, the UK Parliament should be recognised by citizens as:

- distinct from government
- holding government to account
- welcoming to citizens
- working for citizens
- worthwhile
- personal — relevant to the concerns of individuals (see House of Lords Information Committee, 2009b, p.117)

A number of parliamentary officials (Pullinger and Smith, 2010; Cowan, 2012; Sandford, 2012; Walker, 2012), as well as the Hansard Society (Fox, 2011), have written in positive terms about the subsequent public engagement developments that have taken place. These

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<sup>34</sup> The GIP consists of senior officials from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords and is charged with developing public information policy within the UK Parliament.

initiatives have included: an expanded educational service and school visits programme; a new parliamentary outreach service, with regional outreach officers located across the UK; revised broadcasting arrangements; and the establishment of a team of Visitor Assistants to guide and inform visitors to the Parliament.<sup>35</sup>

2009 saw the appearance of two further parliamentary reports that each referred to the importance of better communication and engagement with the general public. One of the main aims of the House of Commons Reform Committee (2009) was ‘to give the public a greater voice in parliamentary proceedings’ (p.5); and its report concluded that ‘the primary focus of the House’s overall agenda for engagement with the public must now be shifted beyond the giving of information towards actively assisting the achievement of a greater degree of public participation’ (p.68). Meanwhile, the House of Lords Information Committee (2009a, p.5), pointing to the low public reputation of the UK Parliament and the public’s expectations for greater openness and transparency, declared that ‘the House of Lords can and should do more to communicate our activity to the world outside and to make it easier for people to understand our work’. In this context, the GIP, in 2010, produced its second five-year public engagement strategy, for the 2010-2015 UK Parliament. Here, a ‘broader and deeper’ process of engagement is planned, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that, by 2016, the public recognise that Parliament ‘is the heart of our democracy’, that it ‘holds the government to account’, and that its ‘work matters to everyone’. Elements of this second GIP strategy are again reminiscent of the recommendations made by the candidate and his co-authors in Outputs 3 to 7. While recognising the need to engage with all citizens, the UK Parliament will place an emphasis on those ‘who want to change things but do not know enough about Parliament to engage effectively’, as well as those who do not yet actively engage with Parliament ‘either because they have little knowledge or interest or because they do not yet see the benefits to them of doing so’ (Group on Information for the Public, 2010, p.2).

A similar picture has emerged in the devolved legislatures. Through its existing outreach work and its work with under-represented groups, the Scottish Parliament (again echoing the conclusions of Portfolio Output 3) had recognised that:

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<sup>35</sup> Pullinger and Smith (2010), Sandford (2012) and Walker (2012) all note that a UK Parliament visitor centre, and latterly an educational visits centre, have also been proposed, but that these plans have so far floundered on the grounds of costs and the lack of a suitable location.

‘For some information is enough – and all we need to do is make sure it is available – for example through our website or at the end of a telephone line. For others simply giving out information isn’t enough if they lack confidence and the wherewithal to engage and so a different approach is required.’ (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, 2011a, p.2)

This led to the introduction of a public engagement strategy, covering the period 2009-11, which set out broadly to: increase awareness and understanding of the Scottish Parliament’s work and its relevance to Scottish citizens; build confidence that the Parliament is publicly accessible; and improve engagement opportunities with under-represented groups (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, 2011a, p.2). Drawing additionally on public attitudinal research conducted in 2011, the Scottish Parliament adopted a new engagement strategy for Session 4 of the Parliament (i.e. 2011-16), which aimed to ensure that some of its efforts were directed at those ‘who are most hard to reach either geographically or for socio-economic reasons’ (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, 2012, p.2).

In Wales, meanwhile, the *Government of Wales Act 2006* created a formal legal separation between the legislature, the National Assembly for Wales, and the executive body, the Welsh Assembly Government. This Act (p.101) placed a duty on the Assembly Commission<sup>36</sup> to ‘promote public awareness’ of the system of devolved government in Wales and the system for electing Assembly Members. The Assembly Commission therefore agreed a communications strategy in 2007, designed in part to ‘inform and promote a widening understanding of the work of the Assembly’ and to ‘encourage engagement and participation in Assembly business and Welsh democracy’ (National Assembly for Wales, 2013, p.25). A number of the initiatives designed to enhance the public engagement strategies of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly — for example, the Scottish Parliament’s annual Festival of Politics, and the Assembly’s outreach bus — have since been included in the Hansard Society’s report on innovative and potentially transferable good practice from parliaments around the world (Fox, 2011).

Since the candidate conducted the research work in 2001, considerable attention has also been paid by the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales to their respective websites. The UK Parliament site has undergone a series of successive changes since 2006 with a view to making more information available and

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<sup>36</sup> The Assembly Commission is the corporate body responsible for ensuring that property, staff and services are provided for the National Assembly for Wales.

making the site more accessible. Pullinger and Smith (2010, Annex C) provide details of these changes, which have included a new navigational structure and design, a new search engine, more frequently updated news, an e-consultations system, and links to and from the UK Parliament's presence on new Web 2.0 applications such as Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube. Given that the candidate and his co-authors had appealed in Outputs 3 to 7 (particularly Output 4, p.42) for a more user-centred approach to parliamentary website design, it is particularly interesting to note that the new UK Parliament site developments have been 'guided by intensive usability testing with different groups of users based on tasks they wish to perform' (Pullinger and Smith, 2010, p.16). Pullinger and Smith (p.23) explain that additional audience research on website users' needs was also conducted by interview with a range of users, including students, journalists, researchers, lawyers, government officials, elected members and the general public. They also report that the usability index of key aspects of the site increased positively between 2006 and 2008 (Pullinger and Smith, 2010, pp.5-6).

Outputs 3 to 7 in the candidate's Portfolio reported that the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly websites had received slightly better ratings from roadshow participants than had the UK Parliament site. However, Outputs 3 and 6 also noted that the Scottish Parliament's search engine had proved particularly frustrating for its users, as it automatically sought exact phrase matches for any two keywords entered together, resulting in very low numbers of hits. Since then, both legislatures have undertaken large-scale redevelopments of their websites. Indeed, in the case of the Scottish Parliament, two major redesigns have taken place, the first in 2004, in advance of the Parliament's move to its new building in Holyrood, Edinburgh.<sup>37</sup> Within a few years, however, it was regarded as a 'text-heavy website' and 'difficult to search' (Devon, 2008, p.39); and it was acknowledged that, in considering future website developments, the Scottish Parliament, needed to 'look again' at their target audiences and 'be more successful in consulting with them to find out what they want' (Devon, 2008, p.40). A further redesign therefore took place in 2011, and this time included extensive user consultation, again in line with the recommendations made by the candidate and his co-authors in Outputs 3 to 7. This consultation included: drop-in sessions and workshops for MSPs and parliamentary staff; focus groups with, and online surveys of, external user groups; and usability tests involving 30 volunteers from the general public, where they were asked to locate different items within the website 'to ensure that the structure and navigation was correct and intuitive' (Leston-Bandeira and Thompson, 2013,

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<sup>37</sup> From 1999 to 2004 the Parliament met in the General Assembly Building of the Church of Scotland, on the Mound in central Edinburgh.

pp.14-15). 'Early indicators', the Scottish Parliament reports, are that the new website design 'has been received positively' (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, 2011b, p.8). The National Assembly for Wales, meanwhile, launched a new website in May 2007, to coincide with the start of the Third Assembly (National Assembly for Wales, 2008, Section 3), with this site being reviewed further in 2010. There is evidence to suggest that they, too, sought user input into the process (National Assembly for Wales, 2010), with the result, the designers claim, that 'users could find information far more quickly, spent more time on the website and support calls were significantly reduced' (ITWales, 2012).

Clearly, then, a number of the key information provision and communication issues identified in the candidate's Portfolio Outputs 1 to 7 have subsequently been addressed to varying degrees by the UK Parliament and the devolved legislatures.<sup>38</sup> In particular, the intervening decade has witnessed increased efforts to: allay public confusion about the roles and responsibilities of the legislatures; demonstrate the relevance of parliament to citizens' everyday lives; overcome the structural, navigational and information retrieval barriers that impede parliamentary website usability; and undertake more user-focused research into information needs and behaviour. However, in the absence of any citations of his work appearing in parliamentary reports or in the other published accounts by parliamentary officials, the candidate would hesitate to attribute any direct causal relationship. Rather, he would argue that Portfolio Outputs 1 to 7 provided significant, complementary additions to a concurrent and subsequent body of research work that was largely conducted by, or on behalf of, the legislatures themselves.

### **6.1.2 The provision and communication of information within parliaments**

While Outputs 1 to 7 discussed the provision and communication of information by parliaments to external stakeholders, Output 9 focused on information provision and communication *within* a parliament; specifically the European Parliament. As Section 5 of this thesis noted, the customer knowledge study on which Output 9 was based was conducted in 2004, and was commissioned and driven by the European Parliament as part of a wider

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<sup>38</sup> As was explained in Section 5.1 of this thesis, the public information service of the Northern Ireland Assembly was not as advanced as those of the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales in 2001, and therefore did not form a major part of the research discussed in Outputs 1 to 7. However, in 2010, the Northern Ireland Assembly also set out an engagement strategy, which included a complete redevelopment of its website (described as 'not fit for purpose'), improvements to visitor and educational facilities, and an expanded outreach programme (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2010).

internal development programme, 'Raising the Game'. However, in the ten years preceding the study, there had been relatively few published accounts of investigations into the information needs and information seeking behaviour of internal users and non-users of other parliamentary information and research services worldwide, suggesting that the research discussed in Output 9 had relevance and value beyond its immediate remit.

A number of the papers that did exist at the time had been written by parliamentary library staff. For example, Bannenberg (1994), Tanfield (1995) and Gardner (2002) described the client needs assessment methods (e.g., committees of Members, focus groups, exit interviews, online questionnaires, etc.) used in their own libraries, in the Queensland Legislative Assembly in Australia, the UK House of Commons, and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in Canada, respectively; although details of the results of these client needs studies were lacking. Other parliamentary practitioners had been more forthcoming in presenting the results of their user studies: Feliú and Délano (1994) discussed the results of a questionnaire-based survey conducted by the Chilean Library of Congress; Fløistad (2003) did the same with a study of users of the Norwegian Parliament's Research Service; while Verrier (2002) provided some findings from the triennial external evaluation of the Department of the Parliamentary Library at the Australian Commonwealth Parliament, as well as from its 'Bouquets and Brickbats' database of client-initiated feedback.

Apart from the work co-authored by the candidate (i.e. Marcella, Carcary and Baxter, 1999; Orton, Marcella and Baxter, 2000), there had only been a small number of earlier, independent, academic studies of actual and potential users of internal parliamentary library services. In the UK, Serema (1999) had used interviews and existing House of Commons Library survey data to explore MPs' information needs; while, in continental Africa, self-completion questionnaires had been used to investigate the information needs and information seeking behaviour of parliamentarians in Botswana (Thapisa, 1996) and Ghana (Alemna and Skouby, 2000). The candidate believes, therefore, that Output 9 provided a valuable addition to what was a small body of literature on internal parliamentary information needs and provision, particularly as it focused on the European Parliament, with its uniquely complex, multi-national and multi-lingual information environment.

The main findings discussed in Output 9 can be summarised as follows:

- Information played a crucial role in Members' and parliamentary officials' day-to-day working lives, but their information needs were unpredictable and diverse.

- Access to information was regarded as a key component in a host of activities, from preparing for media interviews to drafting legislative proposals.
- A wide range of information sources was used to address these needs, from online news agencies and legal databases, to external lobbyists/pressure groups and networks of professional contacts.
- Those interviewed tended to be complacent about their own information-seeking skills; and they were frequently uncritical and pragmatic in their use of the most readily available information, sacrificing quality in favour of ease of access (often via the Google search engine).
- While most of the interviewees were aware of the existence of the Parliamentary Documentation Centre, relatively few used its services regularly. Reasons given for not using the PDC included: its perceived physical remoteness; the fact that it was a supplementary step in the research process; and uncertainty about the speed of delivery.

These findings have subsequently been cited by academics and practitioners worldwide, in a range of research papers, theses and conference presentations. These authors have largely focused on the complexity and unpredictability of information needs within the European Parliament. For example, Lofgren (2008) discussed this in his own study of civil servants' information needs in the Swedish Parliament; Worthy (2012) did the same when investigating UK MPs' use of Freedom of Information legislation; and Svarre (Svarre and Nielsen, 2008; Svarre, 2012; Svarre and Lykke, 2013) also covered this aspect of Output 9 in some length, when exploring the extent to which automatically assigned indexing techniques aid users' access to documentation within the Danish tax authority, SKAT.

Buckley Owen (2011), in a thesis investigating the development of UK government policy on citizens' access to public sector information, indirectly<sup>39</sup> cited Output 9 in noting MEPs' and parliamentary officials' overestimation of their own information seeking and evaluative capabilities. Meanwhile, in a literature review supporting her study on information behaviour in the Ugandan Parliament, Nalumaga (2009 & 2012) discussed the lack of awareness of the

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<sup>39</sup> The research findings discussed in Output 9 were conveyed to Buckley Owen during face-to-face interviews conducted with the candidate and Professor Marcella in July 2009.



PDC amongst its client base, highlighting the example from Output 9 (p.932) of one MEP who had never set foot within the library, despite having been part of the European Parliament for almost 30 years. Other academics have related the complex information needs identified in the PDC customer knowledge study to those in non-parliamentary settings, including engineering teachers (Mahapatra, Swain and Jena, 2011) and students (Swain and Panda, 2013) in India, and Lithuanian business managers (Skyrius and Bujauskas, 2010).

Perhaps the most significant interpretation of the findings outlined in Output 9 is that provided by Watt, who, as was previously noted, was Head of Service at the PDC at the time of the customer knowledge study. He cites Output 9 throughout three papers (Watt, 2009, 2010a & 2010b) that question the 'standard narrative of parliamentary library history — that the evolving visions of parliamentary libraries are responses to the needs of Members'. He proposes an alternative model of parliamentarians' information behaviour, based on the concept of bounded rationality and the German psychologist Gigerenzer's work on 'fast and frugal' decision making. Here, Watt argues, the focus should be on the quality of information actually used by elected members, rather than on the quality of the information produced and delivered by parliamentary libraries: that, to retain their relevance, parliamentary libraries must understand and connect with their clients' real use of information. He believes that improving ease of access to information, and concentrating on the information needs of 'Specialist Members',<sup>40</sup> may have greater impact than incremental efforts to improve the quality of library products.

Beyond this academic recognition, the research work discussed in Output 9 appears to have had considerable impact on a more practical level, within the European Parliament itself. Indeed, in a conference paper summarising the changes made in the PDC (since renamed the Library of the European Parliament) as a result of the 'Raising the Game' reform programme, Watt (2007, p.7) stated:

'The 'customer knowledge' study was useful in that external experts, not just library management, were pointing to issues for both staff and senior stakeholders. It subsequently also proved very useful for developing marketing and service strategies.'

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<sup>40</sup> Watt refers to Searing's (1994, p.58) description of the information seeking behaviour of 'Specialist Members' at the UK Parliament: 'While important books in the field are read, and research is done in the House of Commons Library, Specialists seek current and first-hand knowledge, much of which comes from contact with organizations and individuals outside Parliament'.

Output 9 and the original commissioned report (Marcella, Baxter and Davies, 2004) had made several recommendations to the PDC, including that:

- it should raise awareness of its services amongst its client base, particularly Members;
- there should be closer consultation with users in developing service strategy, via an enhanced annual survey, focus groups with particular client sub-sectors, and an advisory group; and
- an information literacy training programme be introduced, which would partly aim to demonstrate to PDC clients the limitations and dangers of relying on the most readily available information.

A series of papers written by practitioners within the Library of the European Parliament indicates that a number of these recommendations have subsequently been put into practice. For example, Car (2008) notes that the 2004 customer knowledge study had set the benchmarks for measuring client satisfaction with the Library of the European Parliament, and describes annual user surveys conducted between 2006-2008 using the SERVQUAL (Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1990) and, in 2008, LibQUAL+ (see [www.libqual.org](http://www.libqual.org)) methods.<sup>41</sup> Kaskla and Watt (2007) discuss a more proactive awareness-raising approach adopted by Library staff, where they 'go out' to existing and potential clients and seek to convey that the Library is 'friendly, fast and professional'. Kaskla and Watt also note that, in an effort to deliver the message that 'good information work demands more than a simple search on Google', the Library has developed an information literacy programme, consisting of 'InfoSessions'. This programme began as a series of introductory sessions on using the Library, but has been extended to more specialised sources and to sessions tailored for specific client groups, including Members' assistants and secretarial staff who are the most common intermediaries in the information seeking process. Kaskla and Watt also mention the creation of an advisory Library Board, comprising senior Members.

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<sup>41</sup> To measure satisfaction with the PDC, the 2004 customer knowledge study had used a list of quality criteria which related to the five service quality dimensions – reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles – included in the SERVQUAL instrument. The final report to the European Parliament (Marcella, Baxter and Davies, 2004) noted that SERVQUAL had been adapted and reconfigured as LibQUAL+ for use in the library environment; but also that using LibQUAL+ in its entirety would have added significantly to the length and complexity of the customer knowledge interview schedule. The candidate and his co-authors had suggested in the final report that the more rigorous and extensive approach to service quality assessment offered by LibQUAL+ would be worthy of a separate, stand-alone study with a much larger sample of clients.

These themes of awareness raising, and of client engagement and training, were repeated recently by De Feo and Finer (2013) in an overview of the Library's 'new concept' programme (2011-2014), established in response to a request by the European Parliament's Bureau. The overall goal of the 'new concept' is to increase the value of the Library by: 1) better engagement with members; 2) increasing the visibility and accessibility of the service to members;<sup>42</sup> and 3) building knowledge capital within the Parliament. De Feo and Finer outline a number of innovative developments designed to meet these objectives, including: providing Members with dedicated Library 'account managers'; creating small, temporary 'pop-up libraries' in the Parliament's coffee bars and committee meeting rooms; developing online services for mobile devices; making selected Library products more widely available on the Internet (as opposed to just the European Parliament's intranet site); and maintaining a social media presence.<sup>43</sup> It is clear, then, that a number of the issues identified in Output 9 remain high on the agenda of the Library of the European Parliament.

### ***6.1.3 The use of the Internet for information provision and exchange by political parties and candidates during parliamentary election campaigns***

Outputs 10 to 18, which present the candidate's body of research work from 2003 to date on the provision and exchange of information online by political actors during parliamentary election campaigns, can be considered important empirical contributions in a number of respects. Firstly, and perhaps most significantly, they have a distinct, Scottish focus. Certainly, there have been several authors who, as part of UK-wide studies, have investigated the online presence of some of the parties and (to a lesser extent) individual candidates contesting Scottish constituencies during the UK General Elections of 1997 (Auty and Nicholas, 1998; Gibson and Ward, 1998), 2001 (Auty and Cowen, 2001), 2005 (Jackson, 2007; Gibson, Lusoli and Ward, 2008), and 2010 (Apex Communications and Get Elected, 2010; Gibson, 2013); as well as the European Parliament elections of 1999 (Gibson and Ward, 2000a) and 2009 (Jackson and Lilleker, 2010). However, the studies conducted by the candidate and Professor Marcella are the only ones to have looked extensively at online

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<sup>42</sup> De Feo and Finer (p.8) also observe that the European Parliamentary elections in 2014 may result in a more than 50% turnover in the Library's priority client base. They note the importance of establishing contact with new Members, and giving a positive image of the Library and its services, at the earliest possible opportunity.

<sup>43</sup> The Library now has its own blog (<http://libraryeuroparl.wordpress.com/>), together with Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/LibraryOfTheEuropeanParliament>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/EuroparlLibrary>) accounts.

electioneering in the Scottish political arena, particularly during Scottish Parliamentary election campaigns.

As was noted earlier, the formation of the new Scottish Parliament in 1999 was widely regarded as an ideal opportunity to introduce a new, more transparent style of democracy. But it was also forecast that the Scottish Parliament would make extensive use of developing ICTs. Indeed, the Parliament's Consultative Steering Group identified two main objectives for ICTs, namely:

‘...promoting Parliamentary efficiency through supporting modern ways of working with well-designed information technology; and promoting openness, accountability and democratic participation in Scotland by using technology to make information about the Parliament and its work available to everyone.’ (Consultative Steering Group on the Scottish Parliament, 1998, section 3.6, paragraph 20)

Research conducted in 2002, during the first Session of the Scottish Parliament, had found that MSPs were already ‘intensive and competent users of ICTs’ and that new technologies were ‘embedded into their parliamentary activities’ (Smith and Webster, 2004). With these points in mind, the candidate and Professor Marcella hypothesised that those seeking to gain election to this new legislature would also wish to take advantage of the opportunities offered by new technologies, and, in 2003, embarked upon their ongoing series of investigations examining the ways in which Scottish political parties and individual candidates use the Internet during parliamentary election campaigns.

Indeed, the candidate would argue that the longitudinal aspect of his research in this area — where the four studies have retained a generally consistent approach whilst taking account of the various political, social and technological changes occurring in Scotland over the last decade — adds to its empirical value. Amongst the vast body of international literature on online electioneering, the current candidate is aware of only two other systematic, longitudinal studies of the situation in specific countries: Schweitzer (2011) has presented an overview of her analyses of German party websites during three national election campaigns in the period 2002-09; while Gibson and McAllister (2011) have compared data from four post-election Australian Candidate Studies conducted between 2001 and 2010. It is believed, therefore, that Outputs 17 and 18, which provide comparative overviews of the four studies conducted between 2003 and 2011, represent particularly valuable additions to the literature.

Again reflecting the candidate's interest in the two-way interchange of information, his research in the area of online electioneering has also been notable for the inclusion of responsiveness tests, where political parties and parliamentary candidates have been sent questions on key campaign and policy issues, by email or via social media, in order to measure the speed and extent of their responses. Very few other studies have explored the extent to which political actors respond online to questions from citizens during campaign periods. In 1998, Stromer-Galley (2000) sent an email question on various policy issues to 20 US gubernatorial candidates; Bowers-Brown and Gunter (2002) directed a total of 12 email questions at the three main UK parties (i.e. Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats) during the 2001 General Election campaign; while Vaccari (2012) has reported on a cross-country study of parties' and candidates' responses to emails containing policy questions and volunteer pledges during election campaigns in Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK, and the US, between 2007 and 2010. With this in mind, Outputs 10 to 12 and 16 to 18, which discuss the results of the candidate's responsiveness tests in varying degrees of detail, are important contributions to what is a rather sparse body of literature on a relatively unexplored aspect of online campaigning.

Another unusual aspect of the candidate's work into electioneering online has been the inclusion of a qualitative user information behaviour study during the 2011 Scottish Parliament campaign research. As Gibson and Ward (2009) pointed out, when providing a concise review of the key studies in the field, the literature on e-campaigning has been dominated by 'supply-side' questions, where researchers have quantified the extent to which political actors have adopted online campaign tools, or where they have analysed the content of campaign websites. Gibson and Ward also argued that far less attention has been paid to the 'demand side' of online electioneering — studies that have explored the extent to which the electorate visit campaign websites or, more significantly, what impact exposure to these sites has on voting decisions. Certainly, there have been several large-scale, quantitative surveys, mostly in western, liberal democracies (e.g., Lusoli, 2005; Smith, 2011), that have explored the public's use of the Internet to obtain and exchange electoral information. There has also been a raft of studies, predominantly conducted in the US and frequently based on existing survey data, which have used multiple regression techniques to explore relationships between Internet use during elections and citizens' levels of political efficacy, knowledge, trust or engagement (e.g., Drew and Weaver, 2006; Kenski and Stroud, 2006). A number of more experimental, laboratory-based investigations have also taken place, again largely in the US and often involving convenience samples of university students, where participants have been exposed to candidates' websites and their attitudes towards the candidates and

political issues have then been measured using Likert-type scales (e.g., Hansen and Benoit, 2005; Towner and Dulio, 2011).

Most studies of users of online campaign sites have been largely quantitative in nature: few researchers have adopted more qualitative approaches. In the US, Stromer-Galley and Foot (2002) and Wells and Dudash (2007) conducted focus groups with citizens and students, respectively, to explore their perceptions of the participative opportunities presented by campaign websites. Away from the campaign trail, Ferguson and Howell (2004) discussed the deliberations of a 'blog jury' who monitored political blogs in the UK; while Lynch and Hogan (2011) used focus groups of young citizens to investigate the use of social media by political parties in Ireland. This lack of qualitative user studies has been bemoaned by those observers who point out that 'we still know relatively little about the way citizens engage with technology and online information' (Gibson and Ward, 2009, p.96). Indeed, Gibson and Römmele (2005, p.283) argue that obtaining 'a better in-depth understanding of individuals' online election experiences' would assist in better shaping the questions asked in quantitative opinion surveys, allowing more precise causal inferences to be drawn about voters' exposure to campaign sites. The largely qualitative nature of the voters' information behaviour study discussed in Outputs 14 and 15 means, therefore, that these were particularly timely and valuable additions to the literature.

Given the range and extent of the research activities that have taken place during the candidate's four campaign studies (see Table 1 in Section 5 of this thesis), the themes discussed in the related outputs are many and various. Outputs 17 and 18 provide overviews of the main issues to have emerged, which might be further summarised as follows:

### ***Content analyses of campaign websites***

- Party manifestos have been prominent on parties' websites, but are frequently lengthy, unwieldy documents. More recently, some of the larger parties have started to present additional, more concise policy statements. Policy commentaries have been less common on candidates' websites.
  
- The provision of candidate information on parties' websites has been inconsistent and, at times, illogical. Parties have frequently appeared to have consciously discouraged voters from making personal contact with their prospective representatives, and to have expected the online electorate to make their voting choice based on minimal personal information.

- In terms of campaign news, only the largest parties with the greater resources have tended to provide regularly updated news on their websites. The provision and delivery of subscription-based e-newsletters has also been erratic during campaign periods. More recently, small numbers of parties' and candidates' websites have incorporated real-time feeds from social media sites, giving them a more dynamic, up-to-date feel.
- While the vast majority of party and candidate websites provide some method of online contact, the provision of other opportunities for online engagement with the electorate (e.g., discussion boards or fora) has been limited.
- Video clips of election broadcasts and speeches have become standard fare on the websites of larger parties, but remain rare on those of the fringe parties. The 2007 Scottish Parliament campaign saw some experiments with real-time online TV broadcasts, which have not been repeated.
- The most recent campaigns have witnessed a disappointing decline in the provision of campaign information in alternative formats, aimed at website users with a disability or whose first language is not English.
- In contrast, there has been a growing trend of parties and candidates using their websites as resource generation tools, in terms of providing online party membership and donation facilities, online volunteering or 'pledge of support' forms, and/or online shops where supporters can purchase party merchandise.
- Other interactive features, such as online polls, surveys and petitions, and postcode-based constituency or candidate search facilities, have remained relatively rare.

### ***Enquiry responsiveness tests***

- Figure 2 (which originally appeared as Figure 1 in Output 18) provides an overview of the response rates to the researchers' email enquiries during the four studies. A good party response rate of 84% in 2003 declined dramatically in the following two studies. The most recent study in 2011 saw an improved party response, but still almost half (47%) of all enquiries went unanswered. This disappointing reaction to campaign and policy questions is in line with the other published responsiveness tests (i.e. Stromer-Galley, 2002; Bowers-Brown and Gunter, 2002; Vaccari, 2012).

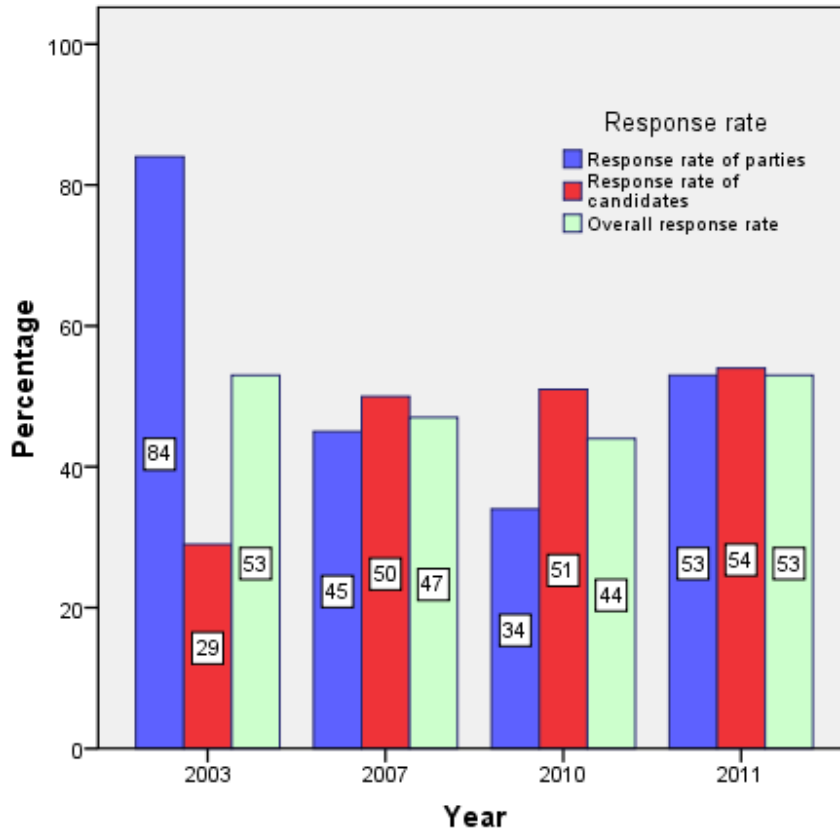


Figure 2: Email enquiry response rates, 2003-2011

- No clear patterns have emerged in terms of the most or least responsive parties. The major parties have tended to adopt a ‘copy-and-paste’ approach to answering enquiries, where they have simply copied paragraphs from manifestos and other policy documents and pasted these into the body of the email response.
- The extent and nature of the candidates’ replies have varied widely; from the curt and uninformative, to those that have been constructive, responsive and relatively detailed. Over the four studies, Scottish Green Party candidates have consistently been the most likely to respond. It has frequently been the candidates from the fringe parties, with little or no chance of electoral success, who have been most willing to initiate further online discussion with the enquirer.
- Table 3 (originally Table 2 in Output 18) illustrates the response rates to the researchers’ questions sent to candidates via Facebook and Twitter during the 2010 and 2011 studies. They suggest that Scottish political actors are reluctant to use social media as a vehicle



for answering policy questions, at least from enquirers with whom they are not personally acquainted.

<b>Table 3 : Facebook and Twitter enquiry response rates by candidates, 2010-2011</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Twitter</b>
<b>2010</b>	50%	0%
<b>2011</b>	35%	30%

### **Content analyses of campaign social media sites**

- During the 2010 and 2011 elections, Scottish political actors appeared increasingly keen to be seen embracing new social media as electoral tools; although in both campaigns the Conservative candidates were the most reluctant adopters of Facebook and Twitter amongst the major parties.
- The number of friends and followers each candidate had by polling day varied dramatically, ranging from the two Facebook friends of one Conservative hopeful in 2010, to the near 27,000 people following the notorious Respect Party politician, George Galloway, on Twitter in 2011. Indeed, with the exception of the more prominent figures, most candidates had relatively modest online followings, who appeared to be largely family, friends and associates of the contestants, and/or existing party members, supporters or activists. Thus, they seemed to be ‘preaching to the converted’ rather than reaching out to the wider electorate.
- The numbers of social media posts also varied widely. At one end of the extreme, one Conservative candidate sent 1,449 tweets during the 2011 campaign. In complete contrast, significant numbers of candidates’ accounts were completely inactive during the two campaigns.
- Throughout both campaigns, social media were used primarily for the one-way flow of information from the parties and candidates to the electorate: there was relatively little two-way interaction with potential voters, and a general reluctance to respond to ‘difficult’ policy questions and critical comments. In this respect, Output 13 referred to Francoli and Ward’s (2008) analogy of politicians’ social media sites (more specifically, political blogs) being ‘21<sup>st</sup> century soapboxes...where most people ignore the speaker and walk on by, a

few people stop, and some shout abuse but few actually listen or debate' (p.37). The 2011 campaign also saw a move towards candidates making their Facebook pages accessible only to confirmed acquaintances, rather than the wider online electorate.

- The information disseminated by Scottish political actors on social media was frequently rather bland and superficial, and lacking any meaningful policy commentary. During both elections, many candidates appeared more interested in discussing the weather on the campaign trail, rather than the issues being raised by potential voters.
- With both campaigns, post-election analyses using the chi-square test and the phi measure of association revealed that there was a statistical association between social media use and electoral success. Victorious constituency candidates were more likely ( $p < 0.05$ ) than their defeated rivals to have used Facebook, Twitter or blogs during their campaigns, although these associations were relatively weak ( $\phi = 0.149$  in 2010;  $\phi = 0.138$  in 2011).

### ***User information behaviour study***

- The study of voters' online behaviour conducted during the 2011 campaign revealed a dichotomy between the information needs of the public (at least in North-east Scotland) and the nature and extent of the information actually provided online by parties and candidates. Citizens wanted to see concise policy information relating specifically to their local constituencies, up-to-date campaign news, and greater online engagement between politicians and voters — all of which was lacking in the sites visited by study participants.
- Participants were decidedly unimpressed with the social media sites examined, with 'trivial', 'puerile' and 'shallow' being amongst the terms used to describe the politicians' efforts.
- While online campaign sites were generally regarded as serving a useful purpose, as being easy to use and understand, relatively interesting, and likely to be visited again, there was very little evidence to indicate that they had any significant impact on the participants' voting intentions. Rather, many suggested that more traditional information sources, particularly print and broadcast media, coupled with long-established campaign techniques, such as leaflet deliveries and door knocking, would continue to be more influential in determining their democratic choice. Others indicated that they had a long-

established allegiance to a specific party, which was unlikely to be affected by receiving campaign information, either online or offline.

Throughout Outputs 10 to 18, the candidate and his various co-authors have been largely critical of Scottish parties' and candidates' online electioneering techniques, particularly in relation to the lack of: up-to-date campaign news; meaningful policy commentary; candidates' biographical and contact information; information in alternative languages and formats; and opportunities for interaction and engagement with citizens. The unwillingness to respond fully to questions on contentious policy issues has also been criticised. Such approaches, the candidate has argued, are unlikely to encourage an already apathetic and cynical electorate to participate more fully in the democratic process. In this last regard, Outputs 15 to 18 also challenged the SNP's assertion, following its unprecedented victory in the 2011 Scottish Parliamentary election, that its digital campaign had resulted in the 'first European election where online has swayed the vote' (Gordon, 2011). In those four papers, the candidate acknowledged that elements of the SNP's *internal* strategy (particularly the use of a bespoke voter database called Activate) will have played a vital role in informing and organising the party's activists, but he questioned the effects of the *public* face of its campaign, namely the websites and social media sites of the party and its candidates. Outputs 15, 16 and 18 further argued that a range of other factors were probably far more influential in the SNP's electoral success, including: the perceived charisma of its leader, Alex Salmond, the inept campaign of its main rival, the Labour Party, and the collapse of the Liberal Democrat vote, because of its coalition partnership with the Conservatives at the UK Government level.

Outputs 15 and 16, meanwhile, also considered the implications of the research findings for those candidates who were successfully elected to the Scottish Parliament in 2011. As was mentioned above, an early study of MSPs found them to be 'intensive and competent users of ICTs' (Smith and Webster, 2004). A subsequent study by the same authors (Smith and Webster, 2008) established that ICTs had become 'a cultural norm of contemporary parliamentary life'; while the potential value of new social media as information provision and communication tools has recently become recognised within the Scottish Parliament, where it is acknowledged that they 'can increase the accessibility of MSPs and offer new ways in which to engage constituents, stakeholders and the wider public' (Scottish Parliament Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, 2012). Given that those seeking to gain election to the Scottish Parliament frequently failed to provide up-to-date, local constituency information, or enter into any extensive online engagement with potential

constituents, Outputs 15 and 16 concluded that many of the successful candidates will have to significantly modify their information practices on entering the Parliament if they are to become fully integrated into its community of modern, online parliamentarians.

Despite the topic of online electioneering being one in which the broadcast and print press have shown considerable interest (particularly when political figures commit some form of online *faux pas*), the candidate's research in this area has received only minimal regional newspaper coverage.<sup>44</sup> This may be because the systematic nature of his approach to the data analysis (of which more is discussed later) has resulted in the research findings not being available until some considerable time after an election campaign has ended, when press interest has waned.

As with other elements of his work, however, the candidate's research on e-campaigning has created considerable interest amongst the international academic community, across both the information and political science disciplines. In some cases, the candidate's work has simply been cited in literature reviews, as an illustration of a previous study into e-campaigning. For instance, throughout a series of investigations of online campaigning during municipal, national and European Parliament elections in Greece (Yannas and Lappas, 2004 & 2005; Lappas, Chatzopoulos and Yannas, 2008; Lappas, Kleftodimos and Yannas, 2010), Output 10 is cited as an example from the UK political arena. When exploring the online social networks of South Korean National Assembly members, Hsu and Park (2012) include Output 11 as a case from the European political sphere. While Christensen (2013), reporting on the use of Twitter by 'third-party' candidates in the 2012 US presidential campaign, described Output 13 as part of a growing, global body of literature which explores the use of social media in election campaigns.

In some other cases, when discussing the ever-increasing adoption of online campaign tools by political actors worldwide, authors have drawn on the candidate's observations of the existing literature. For example, in a paper on how social networks influence young voters in Mexico, Alafita *et al.* (2012) consider the candidate's literature review in Output 12; in particular his account of the early optimism displayed by mobilisation theorists in the mid-1990s. Agboola (2013) did likewise with Output 11's literature review, in his study of the content and political orientation of 350 state, political and civic society websites in Nigeria.

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<sup>44</sup> Parties criticised for failing to use internet effectively during election campaign. *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 10 May 2007.

Have say on how politicians use internet. *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 26 April 2011.

Voters to cast opinion on net. *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 26 April 2011.

For a number of researchers, the predominantly one-way pattern of politician-to-citizen online communication reported in the candidate's outputs has been of particular interest. For example, Emmer and Bräuer (2010) cited this aspect of Outputs 10 and 11 when discussing the online communication of political actors in Germany; while Klinger (2013) did the same with Output 12 in her analysis of party websites and social media sites during the 2011 Swiss national election. Output 13 had identified that this largely one-way flow of information from Scottish politicians had continued during the 2010 UK General Election campaign, despite many of them having adopted more interactive Web 2.0 technologies; and this was highlighted by Quijano (2013) in her study of Twitter use by presidential candidates in Mexico in 2012, as well as by Parkes and Milton (2013) when reporting on an online survey of voters in the 2010 Australian federal election.

Cunliffe (2011) explored Welsh-language provision on the websites of parties fielding candidates in Wales during the 2010 UK General Election; and, in so doing, cited Output 11 as one of only two papers internationally to have previously reported on political parties' provision of electoral information in alternative or indigenous languages.<sup>45</sup> Cunliffe also discussed Output 11 in terms of it reporting the growth in Scottish party websites being used as resource generation tools, and proceeded to explore the bilingual provision of such facilities on Welsh party sites. The resource generation aspect of Output 11 was also cited by Jali *et al.* (2012) in their study of online political participation in the State of Johore, Malaysia.

One rather unusual reference to the candidate's research appears in a working paper by Mattes and Milazzo (2013, p.7). They discuss the contents of Table I in Output 12, which quantified the provision of candidate information (including portrait photographs) on the major Scottish party websites during the 2010 UK General Election. During the same campaign, Mattes and Milazzo used a computer-based survey where participants were asked to evaluate real UK parliamentary candidates based only on rapidly-determined first impressions of facial images. Using the participants' judgements of relative attractiveness and competence, the researchers successfully predicted the outcomes of around 60% of the constituencies included in their study.

As can be seen, then, the candidate's content analyses of campaign websites and social media sites in Scotland have received academic attention worldwide. Recently, his work in

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<sup>45</sup> Output 11 had reported on the provision of campaign information in Scottish Gaelic and (although Cunliffe does not acknowledge this) other minority languages, such as Cantonese, Polish and Urdu.

this area has also led to him being invited by two journals — *Aslib Proceedings* and *Scandinavian Political Studies* — to peer-review papers on online electioneering in Taiwan and Norway, respectively. With regard to the most recent methodological addition to his series of e-campaigning studies — the voter information behaviour study conducted in 2011 — the associated outputs which discuss its results (Outputs 14, 15, 17 and 18) were published throughout 2013, with Output 18 only appearing in December 2013.<sup>46</sup> As such, any academic impact, in terms of citations, has not yet materialised. Encouragingly, though, the publisher of Output 15, which provides the most comprehensive account of the qualitative voter study, reported recently that the paper had been downloaded from its website 35 times between its online publication and the end of October 2013.<sup>47</sup> It might be anticipated, therefore, that further academic recognition of the candidate's work will follow in due course.

While the scholarly impact of the candidate's research into digital election campaigns in Scotland is relatively clear, the effects (if any) on the online practices of Scottish political actors have been less obvious. During the decade in which the four studies have been conducted, the only public acknowledgements of the candidate's work by any figure in the Scottish political arena have come in the form of brief social media posts made by a consultant working for the SNP during the 2011 Scottish Parliament campaign.<sup>48</sup> On the whole, the political parties in Scotland appear to have paid little regard to Outputs 10 to 18, and the largely critical summaries contained within. They have also been reluctant to enter into any form of post-election correspondence with the current candidate regarding some of their more questionable online strategies. Following each of the four campaigns, the candidate has sent formal emails to specific Scottish parties requesting further information on the reasons for some of their approaches; for example, when they have failed to provide personal email addresses for their candidates. Perhaps unsurprisingly (given the lack of online public engagement demonstrated during the four campaigns), the vast majority of his questions have remained unanswered. The one exception was in 2007, when the SNP<sup>49</sup> argued that their candidates would have been inundated with spam, were the party to have

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<sup>46</sup> The blog and the Twitter account of the UK-based membership organisation, the Democratic Society (Demsoc), have already directed their readers towards Output 18 and the other best papers from the CeDEM13 conference. See [www.demsoc.org/2014/01/22/the-ejournal-of-edemocracy-and-open-government](http://www.demsoc.org/2014/01/22/the-ejournal-of-edemocracy-and-open-government) and <https://twitter.com/demsoc/status/426011591252127744> (Both accessed 23 January 2014)

<sup>47</sup> Personal communication received 25 November 2013.

<sup>48</sup> See <https://twitter.com/ewanmcintosh/statuses/83057506150125568> and <http://archive.feedblitz.com/14554/~4034086>, both from 20 June 2011, and last accessed 1 December 2013.

<sup>49</sup> Personal communication with the SNP campaign team, May 2007.

provided their individual email addresses (the logic of which was questioned by the candidate and his co-authors in Output 11).

Generally, though, the Scottish parties have appeared unwilling to acknowledge, or to attempt to defend, any perceived errors or weaknesses on their part. As was reported in Outputs 12 and 13, an internal commission established by the Scottish Conservatives immediately following the 2010 UK General Election did note ‘a widespread acceptance across the Party that the advantages of electronic communications and ‘new media’ are not being utilised in campaigning, communications and the Party’s operations overall’ (Scottish Conservatives 2010 Commission, p.35). Yet, as Outputs 16 to 18 pointed out, little change occurred within the party in the following twelve months — during the 2011 Scottish Parliament campaign, the Conservative candidates remained the most reluctant adopters of social media.

Outputs 12, 13 and 16 record that the candidate has also traced a catalogue of controversial and ill-judged online posts made by contestants from across the four major parties in Scotland, which have ultimately resulted in them being suspended or deselected, or ‘disappearing’ from the online political community (e.g., Lister, 2007; Barnes, 2009; BBC News, 2010; Rose, 2010; Whitaker, 2010). Even those individuals considered by the current candidate as potential exemplars of engaging online politicians have not been immune from such behaviours. For example, Output 13 highlighted the blog of the Labour candidate (and existing MP) Tom Harris. Harris’s blog during the 2010 UK General Election was so unlike that of other candidate bloggers, in that: he made almost 60 posts during the four-week campaign (around eight times the average output of the others); his readership clearly came from all parts of the political spectrum (as opposed to just party sympathisers); his posts led to significantly more online debate *amongst* his readers than that occurring on other candidate blogs; and he was eager to engage with his blog followers, making just as many posts again in response to their comments, both supportive and critical. However, shortly after retaining his seat in Westminster, Harris discontinued his blog, describing it as having a negative effect on his personal, family and political life. He believed that he had started posting controversial comments simply for the sake of being confrontational, thereby effectively provoking much of his readers’ responses.<sup>50</sup> This led the current author to suggest, in Output 13, that more of a balance needed to be struck by politicians, between an openness and a writing style that connects with readers, and an approach that is not

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<sup>50</sup> These comments were made in the final posts on Harris’s blog, which was entitled ‘And Another Thing ...’. This blog was last accessed by the candidate on 16 February 2011. The site is now a ‘traditional’ website at <http://www.tomharris.org.uk>.

unnecessarily provocative. In December 2011, the new Scottish Labour leader, Johann Lamont, asked Harris (who is also a keen user of Twitter and YouTube) to review the party's policy on technology and how it might use social media to re-engage with the public (Currie, 2011). Less than a month later, however, Harris stepped down from the role following negative reactions to him posting a spoof video on YouTube which portrayed the First Minister, Alex Salmond, as Adolf Hitler (BBC News, 2012a). Despite the obvious potential damage to their careers, then, it would appear that some Scottish political actors have simply been unable, or unwilling, to learn from the previous high-profile online errors of judgement of other politicians and public figures.

#### **6.1.4 The exchange of information between government and stakeholders during formal public consultation processes**

Despite long-standing government commitments to consultative processes in the UK (see Section 3.4 of this thesis), very little had been written on the information management and communication issues surrounding government consultations prior to the candidate's work in this area. While a number of commentators had referred to information provision *en passant* (e.g., Cook, 2002; Scottish Civic Forum, 2002; Jones and Gammell, 2004; Bartram, 2007; Consultation Institute, 2007), there had been no large-scale, systematic studies of UK consultation information issues. Indeed, little research had been conducted into the mechanisms of UK consultative processes more broadly, a fact bemoaned by Nicholson (2005, p.24) in a literature review conducted on behalf of the Scottish Executive:

'The rapid rise in use of this traditional and well established approach particularly by central government since devolution demands a body of evaluative critique in order to ensure that best practice is being identified and followed. However, such material appears not to exist...'

Outputs 19 and 20, which focused on consultations in the Scottish Government setting, were, therefore, particularly timely and significant. Output 19 examined information issues from the Scottish Government's perspective, and discussed the accessibility and communication of information at all stages of the consultation process, from the publication of the consultation paper at the beginning of the exercise, to the production of analysis and feedback at its conclusion. It was complemented by Output 20, which explored the process from the perspective of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Scotland that had previously



participated in public consultations. It discussed how NGOs find out about relevant consultations to which they might wish to contribute, how they go about gathering information in preparation for submitting a response, and how they find out about the results of consultations to which they have contributed.

Output 21, meanwhile, concentrates on the information provision and consultative processes surrounding two controversial coastal developments in North-east Scotland — the St. Fergus gas terminal, and Donald Trump's golf course at Menie. Both projects have been discussed relatively widely elsewhere: accounts of the gas terminal planning application appeared in a range of academic and professional publications in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Dunnet, 1974; Dean, 1981; Moore, 1982); while the golf resort application has been frequently described (usually, it has to be said, by Trump and his associates) as 'the most scrutinised application' in Scottish planning history.<sup>51</sup> The candidate would argue, however, that Output 21 is an important empirical addition to the literature, for two major reasons. Firstly, with regard to the gas terminal element of the paper, it has drawn on primary sources held by national, regional and local archives across the UK. As many of these documents have only recently become publicly accessible because of the UK Government's 30-year rule for historical records, Output 21 contains details of various secret meetings and confidential government correspondence that were unavailable to previous authors. Secondly, although some local observers have commented briefly on similarities between the St. Fergus and Menie developments,<sup>52</sup> Output 21 constitutes the first ever detailed comparative account of the two developments. At first glance, the paper may appear rather parochial in its subject matter, focusing as it does on two developments only a few miles apart in Aberdeenshire. However, the candidate would argue that the issues discussed in Output 21 are illustrative of the country-wide developments in public engagement and government openness and transparency that have taken place over the last 40 years.

In terms of the research results, Output 19 reported that:

- Although there had been a significant rise in the number of Scottish Office/Government consultation exercises conducted annually since devolution, in the majority of cases the

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<sup>51</sup> See, for example: *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 30 June 2008, p.1; *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 27 October 2009, p.2; and *The Herald*, 2 September 2010, p.32.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example: *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 27 January 2007, p.6; *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 2 May 2007, p.7; and *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 1 November 2007, p.30.

number of organisational responses made to each consultation had remained relatively constant, and modest (i.e. 50-60).

- Responses to these consultations were dominated in terms of numbers by public bodies, particularly local authorities. And while there had been a number of initiatives aimed at attracting 'new voices' into the policy arena, there was little evidence to suggest that these had had any great impact.
- While the Scottish Government had produced good practice guidance aimed at ensuring that consultation documentation was clear, accessible and responsive (see also Section 3.4 of this thesis), there were question marks over how closely individual government departments and civil servants followed this advice. In reality, consultation information was frequently missing, incomplete, or presented in inconsistent and often confusing ways.
- While the Scottish Government encouraged the use of the Web for facilitating the consultation process, the websites provided were often badly structured, and contained numerous broken links and duplicate entries, as well as information that had been incorrectly indexed and/or coded.
- The provision of post-consultation feedback to respondents varied widely, in terms of its style, extent and quality. In particular, feedback on what policy decisions had been made as a result of public consultation was frequently negligible or non-existent.

This rather bleak picture of the provision and communication of consultation information was affirmed in Output 20, where it was reported that:

- Less than half (25) of the 54 NGOs interviewed heard regularly about relevant consultations directly from the Scottish Government. The others expressed some doubts as the logic and consistency of government processes for identifying and selecting consultees. A number gave specific examples of idiosyncratic invitation practices.
- Fifteen of the sample organisations regularly monitored the Consultations pages on the Scottish Government website, looking for potential items of interest. And while 25 of the 54 NGOs subscribed to seConsult (the Scottish Government's email notification service for consultations), 27 were completely unaware of its existence.

- Thirty-two of the 54 NGOs recorded some dissatisfaction with the post-consultation feedback received from the Scottish Government, describing it variously as ‘random’, ‘sporadic’, ‘patchy’ or ‘hit-and-miss’. Just 13 had encountered what the Scottish Government define as a Consultation Report, which indicates and justifies what policy decisions have been made as a result of the consultation. Seven of the groups were adamant that they had never seen any form of feedback.
- While 32 of the sample groups believed that their responses were considered in post-consultation feedback, 39 suspected that feedback is weighted heavily towards reflecting the opinion of the ‘usual suspects’ — the larger, better-known organisations — and that their own submissions were treated as ‘second best’, regardless of substance and quality.

Output 20, of course, also considered the sample organisations’ information behaviour when they gathered data in preparation for a consultation response. Here, a range of behaviours was reported, from the wide seeking of views within the organisation’s membership, to cases where an individual responded based on their own understanding of members’ views. Many NGOs drew on a network of ‘like-minded’ organisations working in the same policy areas, in an effort to establish if there was a ‘common stance’ that they might all include in their respective responses.

Within the interest group sample, six of the 54 NGOs appeared to meet the criteria of ‘insider groups’, in that they were occasionally called upon by the Scottish Government to participate in a pre-consultation stage, and were also members of government- or parliament led- fora.<sup>53</sup> Output 20, therefore, also explored the relationship between political connection or insider status and what the candidate and his co-authors described as the ‘informedness’ of the sample NGOs (i.e. their level of awareness of consultations, their use of various sources to inform responses, and the regularity with which they obtain post-consultation feedback), hypothesising that there would be a relationship between the two. However, only a weak positive correlation ( $r = 0.25$ ) was found: insider groups did not always rate highly in terms of informedness; while many of the organisations most active in seeking information displayed few, if any, characteristics of insider groups. This, Output 20 concluded, was an avenue worthy of further investigation.

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<sup>53</sup> Grant (2004, p.408) defines insider groups as those interest groups who are recognised and granted ‘legitimacy’ by government, and who become involved in further, more informal levels of consultation than most organisations.

In Output 21, meanwhile, the main findings might be summarised as follows:

- In terms of the official provision of information about the two planned developments, and of opportunities for the public to respond to these plans, those with an interest in Trump's golf course have been better placed than those who wished to have their say on the gas terminal proposals 40 years earlier. However, in both cases, the information emanating from the developers had been peppered with misleading or questionable statements and data.
- While the regional press provided a reasonably balanced and objective account of the gas terminal proposals back in the 1970s, the same newspapers have displayed a lack of impartiality during the golf resort development, adopting an obvious pro-Trump bias throughout. Consequently, those citizens who currently rely on the regional press as their main information source have been less well-informed than their 1970s counterparts.
- In the 1970s, many of the meetings involving politicians, civil servants and the developers took place behind closed doors, with the associated documentation being kept hidden from the public eye for the next 30 years. While similar meetings have taken place during the golf course development, FOI legislation has ensured that at least some of the details of these meetings have become publicly available. Yet, not all government officials, political figures and public bodies have fully embraced the spirit of openness: much of the potentially controversial information has been released almost under duress, and a significant proportion of the material has been censored.<sup>54</sup>

At the time of writing, Output 21 is still in press and not yet in the public domain. Outputs 19 and 20, meanwhile, appear to have had only limited academic impact to date, in terms of being cited by others, perhaps also reflecting the lack of research that has taken place into consultative procedures. Harvey (2013), in a discussion of constitutional consultation exercises conducted by the Scottish and Welsh Assembly Governments, cites Output 19; in particular its observation that the written consultation exercise remains the mainstay of the British policy formulation process. And in Case's now standard textbook on information

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<sup>54</sup> Indeed, at the time of writing, the candidate is currently involved in a freedom of information 'dispute' with the Scottish Government, over access to representations made to the 2008 public inquiry on the Trump planning application. The Scottish Government believes that all 'third party representations' (i.e. from individual citizens, rather than from businesses and organisations) made to the public inquiry should remain private. The candidate is unconvinced by the Scottish Government's argument and has requested an internal review of the decision, before potentially pursuing the request further via the SIC.

seeking, needs and behaviour research, a summary of the key results in Output 20 is presented to illustrate an example of a study examining the 'social role' of the 'public/citizen/voter' (Case, 2012, pp.327-329).<sup>55</sup>

Table 1 in Output 19 presented a list of the top ten Scottish Office/Government consultations conducted between 1982 and May 2007, in terms of the number of responses received.<sup>56</sup> The table showed that a 2004 consultation on smoking in public places had been by far the most popular over the 25-year period, with 53,474 responses. This aspect of Output 19 certainly proved of interest to the Scottish Government, for, in February 2012, its Cabinet Communications Division, via the Scottish Government Library, requested a copy of the paper.<sup>57</sup> Just a few days later, on 23 February 2012, BBC Scotland's evening TV news programme, *Reporting Scotland*, ran a brief item on the number of responses to the Scottish Government's current consultation on same sex marriage, indicating that it was second only to that received in the 2004 smoking consultation. Later that year, it was announced that the same sex marriage consultation had, in fact, attained 'a record 77,508 responses' (BBC News, 2012b). In May 2012, on the final day of the Scottish Government's independence referendum consultation period, it announced that 'with now over 21,000 responses,<sup>58</sup> this is the third highest consultation in the history of devolution – behind only the same sex marriage and smoking in public places consultation' (Scottish Government, 2012c). Clearly, then, in the absence of any internally compiled data, the Scottish Government has been using Table 1 in Output 19 as a reference point for its more recent news releases on consultation responses, although this has never been publicly acknowledged.

Beyond this use of consultation response figures, have Outputs 19 and 20 had any impact within the Scottish Government? Output 19 (pp.34-35) was particularly critical of various features on the Scottish Government's website, which at times made the process of finding consultation information incredibly difficult. For example, its Consultations section had its own search engine, which was far from effective in that: it did not permit multiple keyword searches; phrase searching required the inclusion of normally excluded characters, such as

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<sup>55</sup> Case (2012, p.223 & p.245) also cites Output 20 as an example of an information behaviour study using telephone interviews as its main data collection method.

<sup>56</sup> An earlier version of this table was a focal point in an article in *The Herald* newspaper (Gordon, 2008) which featured the ESRC-funded, interest group mobilisation research.

<sup>57</sup> Personal communication with the Scottish Government Library, who reported that it no longer records consultation response numbers, 20 February 2012.

<sup>58</sup> It eventually received 26,219 responses.

commas and colons; it did not search the Archived Consultations pages; and the associated 'Search Tips' gave advice which simply did not work. Meanwhile, in the website's main source of post-consultation information — the Publications section — its search boxes implied that multiple keyword searches were possible, while the engine in fact automatically searched for phrases; it was impossible to search or filter by publication type; and the civil servants who had uploaded consultation material to the website clearly had inconsistent approaches to using metadata tags. It was interesting to note, then, that the dedicated Consultations section search engine had been removed from the Scottish Government website by February 2011; and recent visits by the candidate to the Consultations pages have revealed that other structural changes have taken place since the publication of Output 19. Similarly, changes to the Publications section search options have also been made; and the public display of 'document type' metadata tags (e.g., 'Consultation Responses', 'Guidance', 'Report', 'Research Findings') has ceased. This may, of course, be purely coincidental. It should also be noted, though, that the June 2009 conference presentation on which Output 19 was based was attended by the Scottish Government's Head of Information Services, who shared some of the key results with his followers (including other government officials) on Twitter.<sup>59</sup> Key Scottish Government personnel were, therefore, fully aware of the candidate's work in this area.

Efforts by the candidate to obtain some form of direct acknowledgment of the impact of Output 19 have, however, proved unfruitful. The Scottish Government's Digital Communications team suggested that 'it would be very difficult to attribute the changes' in the presentation of consultation information to that paper; instead noting that 'many of the changes' to the Scottish Government's website have been made as a result of its triennial evaluation exercises.<sup>60</sup> Yet, while the two most recent website evaluation studies conducted on behalf of the Scottish Government (Bell *et al.*, 2010; Bell and Carat, 2013) have touched on some of these deficiencies, they have not covered the very specific search engine weaknesses reported in Output 19. The candidate can only surmise, then, that his work has had some influence on decisions relating to the structure of the Scottish Government website.

Output 20, meanwhile, had aimed three key recommendations at the Scottish Government. Firstly, having identified that many NGOs believed that government processes for identifying

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<sup>59</sup> See, for example: <https://twitter.com/BenPlouviez/status/2309297815>

<sup>60</sup> Personal communication with the Scottish Government's Digital Communications team, 10 December 2013.

potential consultees were idiosyncratic and flawed, the candidate and his co-authors had noted with interest the proposed development of a central stakeholder database which had ‘the potential to become a vital part of increasing the professionalism of the way in which we ensure joined up working with stakeholders’ (Scottish Government, 2010b, p.23). To prevent this database merely becoming an amalgam of existing departmental lists of stakeholders, and thereby inheriting their deficiencies, Output 20 had recommended that it be modelled on the Small Firms Consultation Database maintained by the UK Government’s Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS), where precise details are gathered on small businesses’ areas of regulatory interest and on their preferred methods of participation in the consultative process. The current situation with this stakeholder database is, however, unclear: the report of the most recent Scottish Government stakeholder survey (Scottish Government, 2011a) implied that it was still under development in 2011, but the candidate can find no more recent references to the database on the Scottish Government website.<sup>61</sup>

The other two main recommendations of Output 20 related to post-consultation feedback. Given the dissatisfaction expressed by NGOs about the feedback they receive, as well as the variability in feedback provision reported in Output 19, the candidate had recommended that the Scottish Government make the dissemination of post-consultation feedback mandatory, rather than rely on the non-prescriptive approach suggested in its good practice guidelines. Also, to allay (or perhaps confirm) consultees’ suspicions that feedback is dominated by the opinions of the ‘usual suspects’, Output 20 recommended that quotes and comments from consultation respondents should not be anonymised in any post-consultation feedback reports.

A systematic analysis of all feedback documents produced since the publication of Outputs 19 and 20 was beyond the scope of this part of the thesis. The candidate has, however, examined a small random sample of 20 Scottish Government consultations conducted during 2012. This revealed that, while feedback had been made publicly available on the Scottish Government website for 18 of the 20 consultations, most (13) took the form of what the Scottish Government describes as Analysis Reports, which simply analyse and summarise the views expressed in consultation responses. Just five were Consultation Reports,

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<sup>61</sup> Indeed, it is also unclear if the BIS Small Firms Consultation Database still exists. The most recent reference to it appears in an archived ‘snapshot’, from 17 July 2012, on the UK Government Web Archive at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/enterprise-and-business-support/business-environment/small-firms-consultation-database>. The UK Government’s current guidance on the better regulation of business (Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2013) makes no mention of the database.

providing details of the post-consultation policy decisions. Meanwhile, eleven of the 18 feedback documents had been anonymised, whereby any direct quotes from consultees were not attributed to specific organisations or individuals. These findings, coupled with the fact that the Scottish Government's consultation good practice guidance appears to have remained unchanged since 2008 (see Scottish Government, 2008b), would suggest that, unfortunately, Outputs 19 and 20 have had little or no impact on internal Scottish Government practice: the provision of post-consultation feedback remains frustratingly inconsistent.

## **6.2 Methodological contribution**

From the earliest days of his research career, the candidate has played a key role in the design of the data collection methods and analytical frameworks used in the studies with which he has been involved. Perhaps the most significant example from the period prior to that covered by the Portfolio of Public Output is his work with the random walk sample method, used in 1998 in a UK-wide doorstep interview survey of 898 citizens as part of the BLRIC-funded citizenship information needs study. Used primarily in market research, it was believed at the time that this was the first application of the random walk method in LIS research. However, it was discovered subsequently that a similar approach — described simply as a 'household survey' — had been used by Dewdney and Harris (1992) in interviewing over 500 women in six communities in southwestern Ontario, Canada, when investigating information needs in connection with domestic abuse.

As only the barest details of the method could be found in the literature, the candidate had to devise a unique and extensive set of guidelines for the student interviewers employed to conduct the survey (see, in particular, Marcella and Baxter, 2000c & 2001a). The candidate's version of the random walk method has since been replicated in a survey of the citizens of Leuven, Belgium, as part of an investigation into public information provision about government policy formulation (Gelders, 2005), as well as in a study of the information environment in a low-income neighbourhood in Dublin, Ireland (Bates, 2004). It has been adapted in a university campus-based exploration of young Italians' perceptions of HIV/AIDS risks (Graffigna, Bosio and Olson, 2010); and has also been cited elsewhere in the LIS literature, most notably in Case's textbook on information seeking, needs and behaviour research, where the candidate's random walk sampling guidelines are described as using a 'detailed decision algorithm' (Case, 2012, p.241).



During the subsequent research work encompassed by his Portfolio of Public Output the candidate has continued to play a significant part in its methodological direction. As was outlined in Section 5 of this thesis, much of this research has been interview-based. In those projects that have resulted in co-authored Portfolio outputs, the candidate has played a full part in designing the data collection instruments — the interview schedules — along with his colleagues. For the research on which his sole-authored Portfolio outputs are based, the candidate has had sole responsibility for interview schedule design.

Table 4 summarises the number of interviews (309) conducted during these research projects, including those (249) carried out specifically by the candidate. The interviewees themselves have ranged from elected members and senior civil servants in the European Parliament in Brussels, to citizens residing in some of the most socially and economically deprived areas in the UK. In terms of his interpersonal skills, then, the candidate believes that this has required a high degree of approachability, and an ability to adjust his communications style to that of the individual interviewees.

**Table 4: Number of interviews conducted during the research encompassed by the candidate's Portfolio of Public Output**

Research Project	Related Output(s) in Portfolio	Type of Interviewees	Total No. Conducted	No. Conducted by Candidate
Impact of new technology on the communication of parliamentary information	2, 4, 6, 7	Civil servants	20	20
Impact of new technology on the communication of parliamentary information	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	Citizens	79	79
PDC customer knowledge study	9	PDC users (MEPs and their staff, Observers, Civil servants) and staff	83	43
Online electioneering: 2011 Scottish Parliament campaign	14, 15, 16, 17, 18	Citizens	64	53
Provision of government consultation information	19	Civil servants	6	6
Organisational information behaviour in the public consultation process	20	Interest group representatives	54	45
Historical, comparative study of two controversial coastal developments	21	Interest group representatives	3 (to date)	3 (to date)
<b>Totals</b>			<b>309</b>	<b>249</b>

### **6.2.1 Development of the interactive, electronically-assisted interview method**

Just over half (166; 53.7%) of the 309 interviews have been typical, semi-structured interviews, conducted either face-to-face or by telephone. The remaining 143 (46.3%) have used the interactive, electronically-assisted interview method, co-devised by the candidate. Indeed, it might be argued that it is with the development of the interactive, electronically-assisted approach, that he has made his most significant methodological contribution to LIS research during the Portfolio period. The method has been used during two separate research projects. As an innovative new tool, it was tested in 2001 during the ESRC-funded project that explored the online communication of parliamentary information, and was discussed in varying degrees of detail in Outputs 1 to 7. More recently, it was used in the voter information behaviour study conducted during the 2011 Scottish Parliament election campaign, and was reported in Outputs 14 to 18.

Output 5, in particular, consists of an extensive evaluation of the pilot methodology, which was developed in an attempt to gather data from all groups in the community, and which sought to get as close as possible to participants' everyday lives. In order to do this, the method was tested in a series of 'roadshows', where the candidate, aboard a minibus equipped with a laptop and mobile data transmission equipment, assisted members of the public in exploring and responding to parliamentary websites. In allowing real-time searching of parliamentary sites, it was anticipated that the method would elicit more extensive and illuminating data than that produced in CAPI-based surveys, such as that conducted by BMRB International (Cabinet Office, 1998b). Roadshows took place across the UK, at locations such as public libraries, community centres, sheltered accommodation and universities. These were targeted at a sample of groups deemed to be representative of those in danger of social exclusion, those with little or no experience of using computers, or those already in a position to make fuller use of new technologies, namely:

- older people;
- single mothers;
- ethnic minorities;
- people in rural communities;
- the business community; and
- academics.

Understandably, given the experimental nature of the method, while the broad approach was developed in conjunction with his colleagues in advance of the data collection, the candidate had to adjust and 'fine-tune' the method 'in the field' as the roadshow events progressed. For example, it quickly became apparent that the planned interview time of 25-30 minutes acted as a disincentive to respondent participation; therefore the candidate modified the process so that it might last just 15-20 minutes.<sup>62</sup> This included the abandonment of an element in which participants were asked to compare paper-based parliamentary publications with those available online. A lack of parking facilities suitable for the minibus also meant that many of the roadshow events had to be moved indoors at short notice. However, as Output 5 argued, the roadshow was believed to be as significant and as effective when held within a host organisation's premises as when it took place within the more visually prominent minibus environment. Indeed, when the method was next used by the candidate, during the 2011 voter information behaviour study, the use of a specially adapted vehicle was not considered, and all interviews were conducted indoors. This confirmed the conclusion of Output 5, that it is the mobility of the roadshow concept, rather than its physical manifestation, that is significant: in both studies, the approach was successful in getting out into communities, close to participants' individual, everyday lives.

The 2001 roadshows were made possible through the emergence of mobile telecommunications equipment offering data transmission speeds of up to 28.8 kilobits per second. While document download times were noticeably slower than with the traditional, land-line based alternative, these tended to be acceptable to the majority of study participants. The exceptions were with those interviewees who wished to view Official Report (Hansard) extracts and other lengthy parliamentary documents in portable document format, and those who participated in the one roadshow that took place during the evening, when connection and download times proved embarrassingly slow. In these cases, pre-prepared back-up copies of sample documents and website pages on CD proved valuable. By 2011, mobile data transmission speeds up to 3.6 megabits per second were possible, yet interviews in the voter behaviour study were still occasionally hampered by weak signals and slow download times, particularly when participants wished to view lengthy party manifestos or video clips of election broadcasts. Again, though, the candidate had attempted to prepare for such eventualities by having already downloaded copies of potentially popular items to the laptop.

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<sup>62</sup> Although some interviews did, in fact, last over 45 minutes.

Throughout the 2001 roadshows, over 460 people were approached as potential interviewees by the candidate, and, of these, 79 were eventually interviewed — an overall response rate of 17%. While, at first glance, this response rate might appear disappointing, it was better than the 13% achieved in the candidate's 1998 UK-wide survey of citizenship information needs, conducted by extended doorstep interview (Marcella and Baxter, 2000c & 2001a). The final sample size also compared favourably with that in others' published, qualitative studies of citizens' online information behaviour, such as Toms' (1999) examination of digital newspaper use by 50 people 'solicited' from coffee shops, public libraries, etc., and Light's (2001) study of 14 'target users' as they explored websites concerned with the 1997 UK General Election. Ten years later, in the 2011 voter study, while the candidate and his student placement assistants did not systematically record the number of people approached for possible interview, a total of 64 citizens agreed to take part in the research. The demographic profiles of the candidate's two study samples can be found, respectively, in Table 1 of Output 3, and in Table 1 of both Outputs 14 and 15, and they indicate that the roadshow approach was successful in reaching a broad cross-section of the population.

In both studies, the interviews enabled an illuminating dialogue to take place between the candidate and the participants, and elicited a wealth of rich, evaluative and thoughtful comment from the interviewees on their need for, and use of, parliamentary or election campaign information, and on their actual and potential online behaviour. This, together with the participation levels and demographic reach of the two studies, would suggest that the interactive, electronically-assisted interview, conducted in a flexible, mobile, roadshow environment, has real merit for those engaged in qualitative information behaviour research of this kind.

Despite this, the methodology has received relatively little attention in the academic literature, and, it would appear, has not yet been adopted, or adapted, by others in the LIS field. Certainly, Ward, Gibson and Lusoli (2005) discussed some of the results of the 2001 roadshow interviews (taken from Marcella, Baxter and Moore, 2002), and, citing Output 4, noted that the method resulted in a 'relatively unbiased' sample. Output 4 was also cited briefly by van den Haak, de Jong and Schellens (2009), who included it as one of a small number of studies of municipal website evaluation studies using 'think-aloud' techniques; although these authors were critical of the studies they listed, for 'focusing on the merits and drawbacks of the websites rather than on the working of the usability methods' (p.193). It would appear that van den Haak and her colleagues had never read Output 5, for it provided

a thorough, and candid, critique of the interactive, electronically-assisted interview method. Indeed, it is perhaps the candour of Output 5 that has deterred other researchers from using the method themselves; for, as well as the advantages described above, it gave full details of the problems encountered and lessons learned during the piloting of the roadshow approach. These ranged from the logistical difficulties in finding willing host organisations, to gender issues and safety concerns (on the part of both interviewee and interviewer) when conducting one-to-one interviews, particularly when aboard the minibus. In this last respect, Output 5 had recommended that future use of the method involve the concurrent presence of two or more researchers, ideally both male and female. When the method was next used, in 2011, the candidate, with the aid of his student placement assistants, ensured that this was done wherever possible. Indeed, perhaps that subsequent, successful use of the method in a non-vehicular setting only, and reported recently in Outputs 14 and 15, might encourage others in the LIS field to explore the technique. As will be discussed in Section 7 of this thesis, the candidate himself certainly plans to use the method again in the near future, during a study of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum campaign online. The time may also be ripe for the candidate to further raise awareness of the method amongst the academic community by writing a new methodological paper, highlighting its particular applicability in an era of high-speed mobile broadband technologies.

### **6.2.2 Development of protocol analysis codes for the interactive, electronically-assisted interview method**

Another methodological contribution worthy of mention is the candidate's development of a protocol analysis coding scheme for the results of the interactive, electronically-assisted interviews. In their original proposal for the ESRC-funded project, the researchers had indicated a desire to use verbal protocols, or the analysis of think-aloud techniques, to provide a record of citizens' online search processes when using parliamentary websites. At the time, previous studies of information seeking that had utilised protocol analysis had tended to focus on measuring the *frequencies* of particular types of verbal statements or behaviours, where each statement or behaviour, regardless of its duration, was treated as an individual 'segment' and coded accordingly (e.g., Blackshaw and Fischhoff, 1988; Nahl and Tenopir, 1996). Other authors, however, had suggested that recording the *time* spent by participants on particular protocols might be a more meaningful measure (e.g., Gilhooly and Green, 1996). In considering the first option, the candidate believed that transcribing and coding every individual statement would be exceptionally time-consuming and, in many

cases, would be of little practical value (e.g., when participants had simply read aloud the contents of a particular website page). It was felt, therefore, that measuring the time spent by participants on particular types of verbal statements or behaviours, complemented by the transcription of meaningful, illustrative examples of these statements and behaviours, would be a more manageable yet equally illuminating method. With this in mind, as the transcription of the 2001 roadshow interviews progressed, the candidate devised a unique series of 19 codes which reflected the nature of the comments made and the behaviour exhibited during the online sessions, by both the interviewee and the interviewer. These codes appeared in Output 3 (Appendix A, pp.388-389) and in Output 5 (pp.157-158), and are reproduced below, beginning with 12 interviewee codes with an IE prefix:

**IE Search.** When the interviewee had structured a search, with little or no assistance or guidance from the interviewer.

**IE Browse.** The interviewee had no specific search outcome in mind, but simply browsed the website.

**IE Navigate.** The interviewee asked navigational questions or questions about the website's design.

**IE Read aloud.** The interviewee read aloud the contents of a particular page of the website.

**IE Read internal.** The interviewee read the contents of a particular page of the website 'internally'.

**IE Positive.** The interviewee made a positive qualitative comment about the content or particular design features of the website.

**IE Negative.** The interviewee made a negative qualitative comment about the content or particular design features of the website.

**IE Parliament.** The interviewee made comments on, or asked questions about, parliamentary procedure or terminology.

**IE IT.** The interviewee made comments on, or asked questions about, the software and hardware being used, or computers and the Internet in general.

**IE Project.** The interviewee asked questions about, or commented on, the research project.

**IE Political.** The interviewee voiced his/her opinions on particular political and current issues.

**IE Personal.** The interviewee gave personal information, relating to work or study experiences, previous use of computers, or to a specific life incident.

Six interviewer codes with an IR prefix were also assigned:

**IR Search.** The interviewer provided the interviewee with specific instructions or advice on formulating a search.

**IR Navigate.** The interviewer provided specific navigational instructions or advice, or answered questions on website design.

**IR Question.** The interviewer asked questions when the interviewee failed to maintain a constant verbal report of their thoughts and actions, or when a specific matter of interest arose during the search.

**IR Parliament.** The interviewer provided an explanation of parliamentary procedure or terminology.

**IR IT.** The interviewer provided an explanation of, or answered questions on, the technology used in the project, or on computers and the Internet in general.

**IR Project.** The interviewer provided further details of the research project.

The last of the 19 codes was **Interruptions**, indicating that the interview was interrupted. These may have been verbal, by the interviewee's family or friends or other individuals; or they may have been for technical reasons.

While the coding scheme relates specifically to citizens' online behaviour on parliamentary websites, the candidate believes that most of the 19 codes might be applied equally to information seeking on any type of online resource; and that, with minimal effort, they might be adapted to meet the needs of other LIS researchers.

The coding resulted in a significant amount of quantitative data, which was presented in full in Appendices XII to XVII of the final report to the ESRC (Marcella, Baxter and Moore, 2002), and which was discussed briefly in Outputs 3, 4 and 6. In particular, Figure 1 of Output 3 provided a summary of the protocol analysis of the search sessions, and clearly demonstrated the participants' need for support in the navigation of parliamentary websites, with 23% of the search time consisting of the interviewer providing navigational instructions and advice, compared with just 12% of the time being occupied by unassisted search formulation on the part of the interviewees.

While this protocol coding approach was analytically valuable, it did remain relatively time-intensive. With this in mind, when the candidate decided to reprise the interactive, electronically-assisted interview method, in the 2011 voter information behaviour study, a

lack of time and other resources unfortunately precluded the inclusion of this additional analytical layer.<sup>63</sup>

### **6.2.3 Development of a framework for the analysis of election campaign websites**

As Gibson (2012) points out, much of the earliest literature on online campaigning was based on the content analyses of political parties' websites, with many researchers using quantitative indices that mapped and measured the presence of particular features, such as policy statements, candidate biographies, chat rooms and online donation facilities. Amongst the most influential coding schemes have been those developed by Foot and Schneider (2002 & 2006) and by Gibson and Ward (Gibson and Ward, 2000b), which have subsequently been adopted, or adapted, by various researchers worldwide. The candidate's four online electioneering studies to date have, of course, also mapped the existence and functionality of campaign website features. And while his analyses have certainly been influenced by other authors (including the above), his precise approach has developed independently, and has been based on the use of basic symbols rather than numerical scores. This was done in the belief that presenting the analyses in a more graphical form might render them more accessible to readers.

In Output 10, the first of his papers on online electioneering, the symbol ● was used in a dichotomous manner in Tables 1 and 2, to indicate that the campaign website included a particular feature (e.g., election manifesto, e-news service, search facility). This was similar to Ward and Gibson's earliest website content analysis (1998), where the symbol 'x' was used. On reflection, however, the candidate realised that this dichotomous approach was too simplistic, in that it did not take into account website features and facilities that were incomplete (e.g., when not all candidates' contact details were provided), were not updated *regularly* throughout the election (e.g., news pages and campaign events calendars), or were not fully available online (e.g., where a user could download a party membership form online, but had to physically return it offline, by post). With these points in mind, the candidate's subsequent papers on the content analyses of campaign websites (i.e. Outputs 11 and 12) introduced the additional symbol ◎ to their tabular appendices, to represent a feature that was incomplete, not updated regularly, and/or not fully online.

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<sup>63</sup> Although, as all interviews were audio recorded digitally, and the software package IE History View was used to log invisibly all web pages and social media sites visited during the interviews, this analysis could still be carried out retrospectively.



Similarly, Tables 1 and 2 in Output 10 presented the party and candidate website features in a single, uncategorised list; which, interestingly, was subsequently adopted by Nurhadryani, Maslow and Yamamoto (2009) in their analysis of the websites of the 'big nine' parties participating in the 2009 Indonesian parliamentary election. In the subsequent campaigns, however, as political actors increasingly adopted new and emerging technologies, and as the list of website features and facilities grew accordingly, the current candidate began to group these into categories that reflected their broad nature. In the most recently published representation, Output 12 (see Figure A1, pp.482-483), the website features are arranged under five broad headings: information provision; communication and interactivity; membership, donations, etc.; audiovisual features; and other interactive features.

#### ***6.2.4 Use of covert research in the online electioneering studies***

Another key, and unusual, methodological contribution to the LIS field has been the use of covert research<sup>64</sup> to measure political parties' and electoral candidates' online responsiveness during parliamentary election campaigns, which is discussed more fully in Outputs 10 to 12 and 16 to 18. Here, the current PhD candidate and his placement student assistants have created special email accounts, to disguise the fact that they are academics; and have given no indication of their geographic location, to conceal the fact that they may not have been based in the individual candidates' potential parliamentary constituencies. Such an approach was felt essential in order to ensure that the political actors' behaviour, in terms of responding to enquiries from the electorate, remained normal and consistent. In the 2010 and 2011 studies of online electioneering, this enquiry responsiveness test was expanded to include the by now popular social media applications, Facebook and Twitter. A covert approach was again used, whereby new Twitter accounts were created, and existing personal Facebook pages were modified, to conceal the researchers' geographic and professional backgrounds.

The vast majority of the email questions have been compiled by the current author. Those directed at political parties have often asked for clarification of vague manifesto statements, or have asked about their election strategies, such as the use of celebrity endorsements or negative campaigning techniques. The questions to electoral candidates, meanwhile, have

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<sup>64</sup> While covert research, in the form of participant observation, has long been a mainstay of anthropological studies, the approach described here has more in common with the 'mystery shopper' method, originally used in the commercial sector to measure the quality of services provided by businesses to their customers, but subsequently used also to evaluate the delivery of public services (e.g., Wilson, 1998; Jesson, 2005)

been more targeted and tailored, often relating to contemporary events or developments in their prospective constituencies, or to their personal backgrounds, qualifications and circumstances. For example, one of the most interesting reactions from candidates (see Outputs 12 and 18) came during the 2010 UK General Election campaign, when the current author sent questions to those contestants who, as Members of the previous Parliament, had been forced to repay expenses, asking what steps they would take, if re-elected, to ensure correct and proper claims in the future.<sup>65</sup>

As was noted earlier, prior to the candidate's work in this area, only two published studies — Stromer-Galley (2000), and Bowers-Brown and Gunter (2002) — had reported having tested political actors' responsiveness to email enquiries during election campaigns. Bowers-Brown and Gunter's questions 'were presented as if sent by an ordinary member of the electorate' (p.170), and this had some influence on the covert method adopted by the candidate in his first online election campaign study, conducted in 2003 (see Output 10). Equally, though, the decision to use this 'mystery shopper' type approach has its origins in two studies conducted in the 1990s in the then School of Librarianship and Information Studies at Robert Gordon University, in which undergraduate LIS students (including the current candidate) were involved in the unobtrusive testing of the quality of reference services (Head and Marcella, 1993) and business information provision (Head, Marcella and Smith, 1995) in Scottish public libraries. Here, the LIS students posed as Open University foundation course students and jobseekers, respectively, and asked questions of library staff in order to measure the extent and the quality of their response.

The use of covert, unobtrusive techniques raises some interesting ethical questions; and it should perhaps be noted that the candidate's first electioneering study, in 2003, took place prior to Robert Gordon University having introduced a formal research ethics policy. However, in the subsequent studies (in 2007, 2010 and 2011), approval was obtained from the University's Research Ethics Sub-Committee, specifically in terms of waiving the requirement to obtain informed consent from the research participants (i.e. the political parties and constituency candidates). In seeking approval, the candidate has argued that the research subjects were in the process of attempting to gain public office, and that, as such, the information sought by means of the email and social media enquiries should be regarded as being in the public interest. He has also maintained that the only 'harm' that might come to

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<sup>65</sup> Readers may be aware that, in 2009, the UK Parliament was hit by an expenses controversy, resulting in over 300 MPs being asked to repay incorrectly claimed expenses (see BBC News, 2009).

the research subjects would be in the form of some mild, post-election embarrassment caused to those political parties<sup>66</sup> that have failed to respond to online questions.

To support his argument, the candidate has cited a number of international research bodies and associations that, in their ethical guidelines, have questioned the need for informed consent, or have defended the use of covert research when the subjects of the research are organisations or individuals in the public sphere, including those in elected office or seeking election to public office. For example, the Canadian research Tri-Council suggests that:

‘Where social sciences or humanities researchers seek knowledge that critiques or challenges the policies and practices of institutions, governments, interest groups or corporations, researchers do not need to seek the organization’s permission to proceed with the proposed research.’ (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010, p.35)

The American Political Science Association (2008, p.27) notes, in its *Principles Governing Research on Human Subjects*, that the US has a Common Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects. Amongst the exemptions from this policy are individuals who are ‘elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office’ (United States Department of Health & Human Services, 2009, p.3). The UK’s Social Research Association (2003, p.33), meanwhile, highlights the differences between public and private space when considering covert research:

‘Cultural variations as to what constitutes “public” and what “private” space must be acknowledged in covert, unobtrusive observational studies. Once established, there can be no reasonable guarantee of privacy in “public” settings since anyone from journalists to ordinary members of the public may constitute “observers” of such human behaviour...’

The candidate would certainly argue that political parties’ and candidates’ online thoughts on key policy issues during a major election campaign should very much be in the ‘public

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<sup>66</sup> Individual candidates have rarely been named in the research results. On the few occasions when names have been revealed, these candidates have been used as exemplars of good practice, or they have simply been those individuals with the largest social media followings.

space', and that the informed consent of the political actors studied during his research has been unnecessary.

### **6.2.5 Development of a coding scheme for political parties' and candidates' social media posts**

Since blogging became a relatively well-established political communication tool in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a substantial body of academic work has grown around the content analysis of political actors' blogs. Accordingly, a wide range of coding schemata has been developed to reflect, for example, the subject, tone or communicative nature of politicians' blog posts. A number of authors have modified the Webstyle coding scheme, originally developed by Banwart (2002) to analyse candidates' self-presentation on the Internet during the United States 2000 election campaign cycle. An extensive scheme, Webstyle originally consisted of 212 variables in 58 categories (Banwart, 2002, pp.297-308). Trammell *et al.* (2006) used an 'expanded' version of Webstyle to analyse the content of the blogs of six individuals vying to be the Democratic candidate for the 2004 US presidential election; exploring, for example, the topics under discussion, hyperlink destinations, and the inclusion of appeal or attack strategies. Williams *et al.* (2005) adapted the scheme in their study of the policy posts and hyperlinking practices on the blogs of the two US presidential candidates, George W. Bush and John Kerry, in 2004. Trammell (2007) also used the Webstyle approach to explore youth-targeted posts on the Bush and Kerry campaign blogs. While Wang (2010) modified the scheme for her study of candidates' blogs during Taiwan's 2008 general election, amongst other things quantifying the functions of the blogs and the ways in which they were used to portray the contestants' personality traits.

The scope and extent of the other blog content analysis frameworks presented in the literature varies dramatically. For example, Bichard (2006), who also studied the 2004 Bush and Kerry blogs, proposed a four-dimensional approach, analysing posts in terms of their time, space, tone and topic attributes; Gibson *et al.* (2012), exploring the unofficial blog sites of UK political parties, analysed the tone of posts using five basic codes ('supportive', 'neutral', 'critical/challenging', 'opponent-focused' and 'other'); Jackson (2008a) categorised UK MPs' blog posts in relation to their impact on the scrutiny, partisan and constituency roles of the Members; while Jackson (2008b) also analysed the nature of the comments posted by readers of UK MPs' blogs, in terms of whether or not they were supportive, critical, neutral, etc.

More recently, as an ever-increasing number of political actors worldwide have adopted Facebook and Twitter as campaign tools, the academic community has turned its attention to devising analytical frameworks for Facebook wall posts and tweets. With Facebook, for example, Sweetser and Lariscy (2008) analysed the wall posts of US House and Senate candidates during the 2006 midterm elections, coding each one in terms of its subject, tone and depth/quality (i.e. from 'shallow' to 'complex/well-developed'); Lappas, Kleftodimos and Yannas (2010) provided a basic analysis of 'types' of posts (i.e. simple text, video clips, links to other social media, etc.) on the Facebook sites of the two leading parties in the 2009 Greek elections; while, during the 2011 Swiss national election, Klinger (2013) assigned the wall posts of ten political parties to one of four thematic clusters — information, mobilization, participation and 'other'. With Twitter, meanwhile, Golbeck, Grimes and Rogers (2010) analysed the content of over 6,000 tweets made by US Congresspeople during two separate periods in 2009, creating a taxonomy that included 'official business', 'personal message' and 'fundraising'; Grant, Moon and Grant (2010) categorised Australian politicians' tweets into four basic types, namely 'broadcast',<sup>67</sup> 'broadcast mention', 'reply', and 'retweet'; while Tumasjan *et al.* (2011) used LIWC text analysis software to conduct a sentiment analysis of over 100,000 tweets containing a reference to a party or politician during the 2009 German federal election, with the coded sentiments including 'anger', 'anxiety' and 'certainty'.

As was explained earlier in this thesis, the current author first explored Scottish political actors' use of social media during the 2010 UK General Election campaign. As well as measuring the extent of the adoption and use of social media by parties and candidates, he sought to explore the broad topics being discussed on these sites, and the nature of the communication taking place (i.e. one-way broadcast by politicians to voters, or two-way interaction with and/or between the electorate). The focus was on those social media — blogs, Facebook and Twitter — where the content was largely textual, rather than on video or photo sharing applications such as YouTube and Flickr. His immediate aims were, therefore, to capture all traffic on Scottish parties' and candidates' social media sites during the four-week purdah period, and to identify or devise a single coding framework that might then be used in analysing these posts.

As Output 13 mentioned, the candidate initially explored the increasing number of online sites and packages designed to archive and analyse social media traffic (e.g., Tweetdoc,

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<sup>67</sup> Since the late 1990s, the term 'broadcast' has been used widely in the literature, to describe the one-way flow of online information, from political actors to the electorate, during election campaigns (e.g., Auty and Nicholas, 1998; Ward and Gibson, 1998).

then located at [www.tweetdoc.org](http://www.tweetdoc.org); and The Archivist, then at [archivist.visitmix.com](http://archivist.visitmix.com)), but established that none met his specific needs. In order to capture the campaign posts, then, he resorted to a simple 'copy and paste' method, where all posts (blog posts, Facebook wall posts and tweets) were copied and pasted into Word documents for subsequent analysis. This content was then read systematically by the candidate, and a new analytical framework was developed independently in an open coding approach. At the broadest level, four codes were developed to indicate the nature of the communication taking place on the social media sites:

***Primary Broadcast.*** Where posts comprised the political actors' original thoughts and comments, on policy issues, campaign events, media coverage of the election, their political opponents, etc.

***Secondary Broadcast.*** Where the posts primarily consisted of hyperlinks to other online political or news sites, or where (on Twitter) the political actors had re-tweeted others' comments or links. The original posts tended to be from local, regional and national news sources, other political parties, candidates and activists, journalists and political commentators, opinion pollsters, or think tanks.

***Engagement and Dialogue.*** Where genuine two-way engagement was taking place; for example, where parties and candidates answered policy questions posed online by the electorate, or where they responded to supportive or critical comments.

***Unreciprocated Engagement.*** A code devised for Twitter traffic only. During the 2010 UK General Election, it became apparent that many of the political actors in Scotland followed various well-known journalists, political commentators, satirical comedians, and other 'celebrities' on Twitter, and would occasionally respond to these individuals' tweets in an apparent (and usually unsuccessful) effort to begin a dialogue.

At a more detailed level, the candidate's new coding scheme reflected the subject matter of the posts. With Primary Broadcast posts, for example, it indicated if these discussed national or local policy issues, or perhaps personal or nationwide campaign activities and events; if they were critical comments on constituency or national opponents, or declarations of support for the leader of, or other leading figures in, their own party; if they spoke of other political and current affairs issues not directly related to the election campaign; if they

covered non-political topics, such as sport or the arts and entertainment; or if they focused more on the posters' personal, domestic lives. And with Engagement and Dialogue posts, the coding scheme indicated if the political actors were responding to questions, policy comments, supportive remarks and other pleasantries, personal attacks, or criticisms of the politicians' parties. An example of the coding scheme for candidate Twitter traffic can be seen in the appendix of Output 13.

Beyond the basic quantitative analysis of these social media posts, the candidate also sought to represent the patterns of information exchange in graphical form. An example (originally appearing as Figure 2 in Output 13) is reproduced below, as Figure 3, which illustrates the information flow in Scottish constituency candidates' Twitter accounts during the 2010 UK General Election. It indicates clearly that Twitter was used primarily for the one-way provision of information to the electorate; that throughout the campaign Scottish political actors remained very much in broadcast mode, with relatively little two-way interaction with voters. Such figures, the candidate believes, provide a helpful way of illustrating, understanding and evaluating the nature of the communication process in online electioneering.

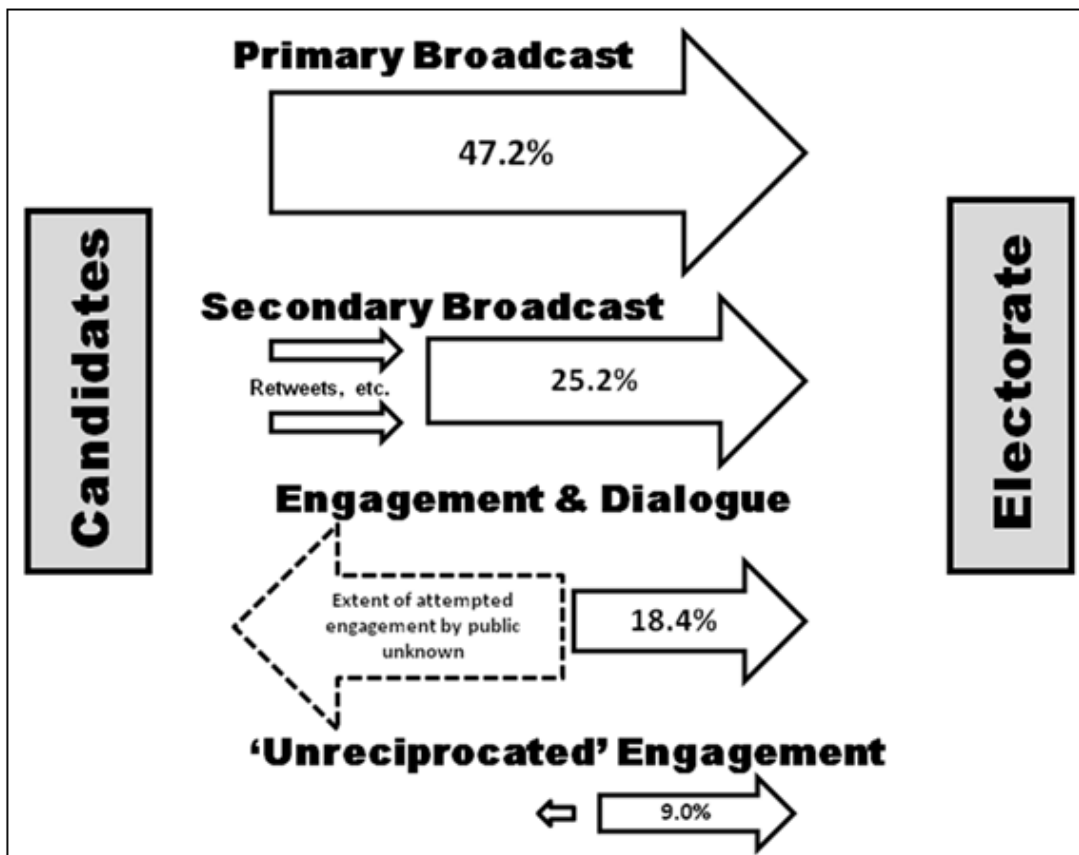


Figure 3: Information exchange on Scottish constituency candidates' Twitter sites during the 2010 UK General Election ( $n = 6,181$  posts)

Following his 2010 campaign study, the current author was of the opinion that his framework provided a sound basis for analysing and presenting the patterns of information provision and exchange on parties' and election candidates' social media sites. With this in mind, the same approach was used the following year, during his study of the 2011 Scottish Parliament campaign. This, of course, also meant that direct comparisons between the two campaigns could be made. As analysis was done at the individual, constituency candidate level, this also allowed him to look more closely at the body of 145 individuals who had competed in both campaigns, with a view to establishing if election failure in 2010 had had any obvious impact on the extent and nature of their social media use twelve months later.<sup>68</sup> Indeed,

<sup>68</sup> As Output 16 reported, the picture was mixed. Twenty-one candidates who had social media accounts in 2010 had abandoned these by 2011. In contrast, 42 candidates who had no accounts in 2010 had chosen to adopt one or more types of social media in 2011. Amongst the 27 candidates using social media in both 2010 and 2011, there were few notable differences in the nature of their information dissemination and exchange during the two elections. The remaining 55 candidates did not use social media in either campaign.



should blogs, Facebook and Twitter remain an integral part of future election campaigns (they may, of course, be replaced by other, emerging, online tools and technologies), then the candidate would envisage the same analytical framework being used in his future research, thus enabling the longitudinal, comparative analysis of data on social media use by Scottish political actors.

While, as Section 6.1.3 of this thesis discussed, the candidate's work in the field of e-campaigning research has been cited widely by the international academic community, there is little evidence so far to suggest that his methodological approach has been copied or adapted by others. Perhaps this is because it includes such a comprehensive, systematic, largely manual (and, therefore, relatively time-consuming) coding technique. Output 16 highlighted the fact that the number of social media posts captured during the 2011 Scottish Parliament campaign (over 23,000) was effectively double that in the 2010 UK General Election campaign (11,700), thereby taking twice as long to analyse. This led the current author to speculate that, should social media become more widely adopted by election contestants in future campaigns, he might have to abandon his census approach and instead focus on a representative (and more manageable) sample of candidate sites.<sup>69</sup>

### **6.3 Theoretical contribution**

In Output 2 (written in 2001, just as the roadshow element of their research into the impact of ICTs on the communication of parliamentary information was about to commence), the candidate and his co-authors presented a concise review of the theoretical and methodological approaches in LIS that had most influenced their work to date. A key text discussed here was Wilson's (1994) summary of the most significant research into information needs and uses conducted during the previous 50 years. In his paper, Wilson described an early emphasis on system-centred research:

'...it would be true to say that most 'user studies' have been about how people use systems, rather than about the users themselves and other aspects of their information-seeking behaviour' (p.17).

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<sup>69</sup> Although the candidate has recently discovered the existence of a new software package, Twitonomy ([www.twitonomy.com](http://www.twitonomy.com)), that might go some way to aiding the analysis process, of Twitter traffic at least.

However, Wilson did also note the existence of a group of investigations that lay 'midway between' system-oriented projects and person-centred studies, where the researchers had explored the role of information in users' everyday work or personal lives. Perhaps the most significant of these was the major study into the information needs of the ordinary, urban citizens of Baltimore, USA (Warner, Murray and Palmour, 1973), where residents were not asked directly to state their information needs, but rather were asked to cite recent examples of their own problems which required information. More than twenty years later, Wilson (1994, p.22) still regarded the Baltimore study as a 'bench-mark for large-scale investigations of this kind'. Its methodology formed the basis for a major household interview survey of the information needs of residents of Sheffield, UK, carried out in 1977 by the Centre for Research on User Studies (Beal, 1979); and both the Baltimore and Sheffield studies were highly influential in the development of the survey instruments used in the candidate's study of the citizenship information needs of the UK public (Marcella and Baxter, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d, 1999e, 2000a, 2000c, 2000d & 2001a).

Wilson's 1994 review recorded a more recent shift towards person-oriented investigations, which, he believed, had been initiated more or less independently in the early 1980s by a number of researchers, including Belkin, Dervin, and himself.<sup>70</sup> Belkin (e.g., Belkin, 1980; Belkin, Oddy and Brooks, 1982a & 1982b; Belkin, 1984) had sought to develop more effective information retrieval systems based on the consideration of a user's information need as an 'anomalous state of knowledge' (ASK), where the success of the system was dependent upon the extent to which this anomaly could be resolved based on the information retrieved. Dervin (1983) used 'sense-making' as a label to describe 'a coherent set of concepts and methods used...to study how people construct sense of their worlds and, in particular, how they construct information needs and uses for information in the process of sense-making'. While Wilson (1981) called for 'more truly user-oriented, innovative, experimental' approaches which might lead to an information science 'firmly founded upon an understanding of information users in the context of their work or social life'. The person-centred approach was continued by the likes of Kuhlthau (1991), who examined the information seeking process from the perspective of the user, incorporating three realms of activity: the affective (i.e. feelings experienced), the cognitive (thoughts concerning both process and content), and the physical (actions taken).

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<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, in a more recent review of 50 years of information behaviour research, Wilson foresees a new move towards policy-related, large-scale studies of information access and use that might guide government action relating to the use of ICTs. He suggests that this might result in a decline in academic research in the field, with government and other public bodies instead commissioning consultancy groups to undertake such work (Wilson, 2010).

Wilson (1994) believes that Dervin's sense-making approach, Kuhlthau's association of feelings, thoughts and actions, as well as his own views on information needs and information seeking behaviour, are largely phenomenological in character. Derived from the work of the Austrian social scientist and philosopher, Alfred Schutz (1967), the phenomenological perspective seeks to interpret how people make sense of the world around them, and acknowledges that different persons in different situations may possess different world views. In Output 2, the candidate and his co-authors observed that, broadly speaking, their own research had moved from a positivist to a phenomenological theoretical perspective. It noted that their earlier work — including the citizenship information research mentioned above, and their study of the European information needs of the Scottish public (Marcella and Baxter, 1997a) — had focused upon the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in large-scale surveys of the public, where the collection of empirical data had allowed the researchers to make objective generalisations about citizens' information behaviour. From the beginning of the new millennium, however, the research team's work began to move towards a phenomenological view, with an increasing emphasis on the genuinely open-ended exploration and questioning of their research subjects, where the results would not be biased by the researchers' predetermined agenda. With regard to the candidate's Portfolio of Public Output, this more user-centred approach is most apparent in his papers on: the parliamentary information roadshow events (Outputs 1 to 7); the PDC customer knowledge study (Output 9); the information behaviour within Scottish NGOs when responding to public consultations (Output 20); and voters' online information behaviour during the 2011 Scottish Parliament election campaign (Outputs 14 to 18).

The theoretical aspect of Output 2 has been cited occasionally in the LIS literature (e.g., Thornley, 2005; Alzougool, Chang and Gray, 2007 & 2008), largely in relation to the authors' observation that, although many writers had commented on the lack of theory in studies of information seeking, the problem may in fact be the 'lack of a good road map guiding us through the theory' (p.192). Although, since Output 2 was written, the appearance of successive editions of Case's *Looking for Information* textbook has gone some considerable way to providing the LIS research community with an appropriate theoretical road map (see, for example, Chapter 7 of Case, 2012).

### **6.3.1 The theory of Information Interchange**

As was noted in the introduction to this thesis, the candidate's most significant theoretical contribution to LIS is his co-development of the theory of Information Interchange, presented in Output 8. Published in 2005, that book chapter explained that the theory had evolved over a number of years from the authors' research into government and parliamentary information provision, and citizens' information behaviour, at the devolved, national and European levels. Indeed, in 1998, and based largely upon the results of their BLRIC-funded citizenship information research, Professor Marcella and the candidate presented a prototype model of 'government/citizen interchange', which sought to consider the complex patterns of the provision and use of information by government and the citizen in a holistic manner (Marcella and Baxter, 1998a). That model is reproduced here as Figure 4. Drawing on Ranganathan's analytico-synthetic (or faceted) theory of classification (see Maltby, 1978, pp.34-41), the outer circles of the model were designed to be interpreted as wheels that might revolve to illustrate the multiple potential combinations (or facets) of information need and use. It sought to indicate that, for each individual instance of information need, the seeker may demonstrate a number of characteristics. For example, the information seeker might be a socially-excluded female undertaking an educational course and requiring information from a local council; or perhaps an included, wealthy businessman wishing to obtain information from a central government department. In that paper, the authors acknowledged that the model required further development, particularly in illustrating that information might flow from government to the citizen, or from citizen to government.

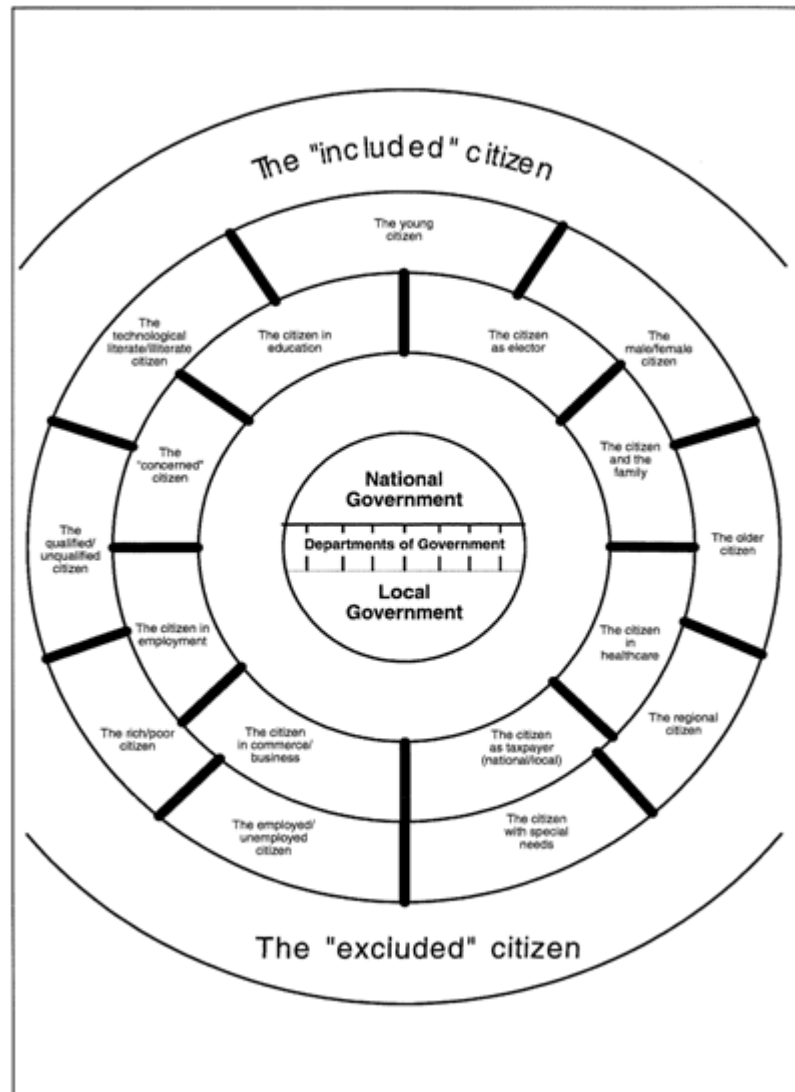


Figure 4: Candidate's government/citizen interchange model (from Marcella and Baxter, 1998a)

Bearing these points in mind, Output 8 emphasised that the theory of Information Interchange focused on considering the roles and aims of both the information provider *and* the information user in assessing the effectiveness of the information communication process. It built upon the dichotomy that appeared to exist between the view of the provider and that of the user. As the authors' research had established, government and parliamentary information providers seek to generalise and work towards a standard baseline state of citizens' informedness, where each user has relatively stable and predictable information needs. In complete contrast, the user can, in fact, act in a variety of contextualised roles, and can vary widely in his or her level of knowledge and informedness prior to the interchange of information. The citizen's view can be rich and complex, and their

motivation to become well informed will vary depending upon the context, urgency and significance of their information need.

Table 5 (adapted from Table 33.1 of Output 8) presents the two-way relationships and roles of the information actors involved in this interchange. This illustrates the theory's recognition of the significance of the different roles, agendas and objectives of these actors in holding, providing, withholding, accessing and using information, in what might be a complex interaction between two or more parties with potentially conflicting conceptions of the purpose of the interchange process.

<b>Table 5: The two-way information interchange in relationships and roles of government information providers and information users (Adapted from Output 8, Table 33.1)</b>		
<b>Government Information Provider</b>		<b>Information User</b>
Seeks to create the 'well-informed citizen'.	← →	Seeks information of interest, practical use and benefit.
Seeks to promote positive response to certain messages.	← →	Has little intrinsic desire to be informed as a citizen.  Requires objective, unbiased information to enable sound decisions to be made.
Conceives of the user as a general stable and predictable citizen with standard requirements.	← →	Displays complexity in individual level of informedness required.  Shares some but few general stable characteristics with other users.
Values information about user response to information about government, in order to test public opinion.	← →	Sees limited value in providing information to government if there is no perceived benefit or response.
Demonstrates tension between desire to inform and mould opinion and desire to create well-informed citizens capable of formulating thoughtful opinions.	← →	Increasingly finds much about government difficult to understand and is unconvinced about the benefits of increased understanding.
Is frequently issue-focused and message-focused.	← →	Is frequently issue-focused but increasingly cynical about messages.
Information provision seen as proactive and purposive.	← →	Information use tends to be highly reactive, ad hoc and unpredictable.

Output 8 called for the development of more, highly qualitative, person-centred methods that might allow the LIS research community to explore the complexity of individuals' information

needs and information-seeking behaviour. In so doing, it mentioned the authors' move towards a phenomenological perspective, and highlighted their innovative interactive electronically-assisted interview technique. This, the paper argued, enabled the collection of valid data about information behaviour while allowing users to discuss freely, and expand upon, the relationship between information and their individual experiences as 'citizens'. Output 8 also presented three generalisable conclusions concerning citizens' information behaviour drawn from their previous research, namely that:

- Young people were less convinced of the importance of being able to access reliable, high-quality information.
- Better educated individuals tended to be more critical of their own capacity to locate high-quality information, and were more discerning about the limitations of the sources that were available to them.
- It was highly questionable that information users (whether apparently expert or not) were consistently able to judge the extent and quality of their own informedness.

Output 8 concluded by stating that, although the most direct application of the theory of Information Interchange was in the study of government information,<sup>71</sup> it was believed that it could also be used to explore other sectors, and might also be applied in studies of various types of information service,<sup>72</sup> to explore any misalignments between service ethos and the user experience.

Output 8 and the theory of Information Interchange have subsequently been cited relatively widely in the LIS literature. For some authors, it is the chapter's reference to the influence of Schutz that has proved of interest, with both Bawden (2006) and Case (2012) including Output 8 as an example of LIS research adopting a phenomenological approach. Bawden

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<sup>71</sup> Indeed, the theory has effectively been applied in much of the subsequent research encompassed in the candidate's Portfolio of Public Output, particularly in Outputs 9, 14-18, and 20. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, the information needs of the users studied (i.e. MEPs and European Parliament staff, NGOs, and voters) are frequently diverse and unpredictable, and are not always met effectively by the respective information providers (i.e. the European Parliament's PDC, Scottish Government departments, and political parties and electoral candidates).

<sup>72</sup> The theory was applied in a well received, but ultimately unsuccessful, research proposal to the ESRC in 2012, which aimed to explore the accessibility, provision and communication of consultation information in the UK, from the specific perspective of small and medium-sized enterprises and their representative bodies. In 2014, the candidate aims to further apply the theory of Information Interchange when preparing another research proposal, this time on the extent to which existing business information and advice agencies meet the information needs of entrepreneurs with a disability.

(2006, pp.673-674), in a 25-year perspective of the influence and impact of Tom Wilson's seminal 1981 paper *On User Studies and Information Needs*, also discusses Wilson's use of the term 'information exchange' in his associated model, describing it as a 'considerable break from the linear "information provider – information user" picture' which used to dominate the perceptions of the LIS community. He continues by citing the theory of Information Interchange as an example of the now commonly accepted recognition that information flow is rarely one-way. That particular aspect of Information Interchange was also discussed by De Oliveira (2008), when attempting to create a theoretical model for seeking and using information on sustainable development within the Bank of Brazil.

For some other observers, it has been the candidate's identification of the lack of alignment between the government information provider and the user that has been of greatest significance. For example, Freund and her colleagues cite this element of Output 8 when reporting on their own efforts to improve the communication of online government information in Canada (Freund and Nilsen, 2008; Freund, Berzowska and Hopton, 2011). Moosa (2010) does the same when considering how the socio-cultural context of communities in developing countries (in Moosa's case, the Maldives) impacts upon the information seeking behaviour of rural businesses. While Aspray and Hayes (2011), editors of a monograph on the evolution of information seeking in everyday American life, compare the contents of a chapter on access to government information in the US (by Chapman and Newell) with the work of Marcella and Baxter in the UK, including their identification of the dichotomy between the provider and user perspectives (although Chapman and Newell themselves fail to make this connection).

Other academics have focused on Output 8's observation that, depending on their individual life contexts and specific information needs, each citizen engaged in the information exchange process might demonstrate varying levels of motivation and informedness, as well as varying degrees of activity or passivity in their information behaviour. This was cited by Tirado (2008), when discussing his implementation of an online information literacy programme at a Colombian university; by Capel (2009), in her exploration of the information behaviour of older people living in rural communities in North-west England; and by Frion (2009) in his review of literature relating to competitive intelligence and information behaviour.

Meanwhile, Moody's (2011) study of the ways in which Australian citizens find out about socio-political issues found a correlation between university education and a reliance on



broadsheet newspapers as sources, leading her to relate this to Output 8's conclusion that better educated citizens are generally more discerning about the strengths and weaknesses of the information sources available to them.

#### **6.4 Summary of contribution to library and information science**

As this section of the thesis has demonstrated, the 21 peer-reviewed items in the candidate's Portfolio of Public Output have largely been unique, relevant and timely additions to the literature that have been written in a conscious effort to address empirical gaps in our knowledge of: parliamentary information services and the ways in which citizens, elected members and officials engage with parliamentary information; the provision and exchange of information online by political actors during parliamentary election campaigns, as well as the online behaviour of voters when attempting to determine their democratic choice; and the accessibility and communication of information during government consultative processes.

The papers in the candidate's Portfolio have also illustrated his key role in the design of innovative and effective data collection and analytical techniques, including: the series of protocol analysis codes to record citizens' use of parliamentary websites; frameworks and schemata for the content analyses of political actors' election campaign websites and social media sites; the use of covert research to measure politicians' responsiveness online; and, perhaps most significantly, the interactive, electronically-assisted interview in the roadshow setting. In methodological terms, the Portfolio has also traced the candidate's move from a largely quantitative, systems- and service-centred approach, to one that is more qualitative and user-oriented; effectively reflecting, in microcosm, developments within the wider field of information needs and information behaviour research.

Portfolio Outputs 2 and 8, meanwhile, have a more theoretical slant. Output 2 relates the candidate's broad shift from a positivist to a phenomenological theoretical perspective. Output 8 presents the theory of Information Interchange, which, the candidate believes, constitutes an important conceptual contribution to the LIS discipline. The theory's acknowledgement of the two-way relationships and roles of the information actors involved in Information Interchange has also played a key role in driving the candidate's empirical and methodological contribution to knowledge.

As this section of the thesis has also demonstrated, the candidate's Portfolio outputs have created considerable academic interest internationally, being cited in numerous text books, journal articles, conference papers, research reports and doctoral theses. While it is acknowledged that some of these references to his work have been made almost in passing, as part of brief literature reviews or bibliographies, many more have consisted of accounts

and critiques of the candidate's research findings, or of his methodological or theoretical approaches (although there is only minimal evidence of others adopting, or adapting, his data collection and analytical techniques). And while the majority of those referring to the candidate's outputs have, themselves, been LIS academics or practitioners, the multidisciplinary relevance of his work is evident from it having been cited by authors from a wide range of other subject areas, including business administration and management, computing, engineering, health studies, marketing, media and communication studies, political science, public administration, and public relations.

In terms of the more practical impact of the candidate's work, on government and parliamentary information services and practices, the picture is decidedly mixed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the customer knowledge study commissioned by the European Parliament's PDC, and reported in Output 9, has had the clearest and most significant impact, with PDC practitioners having subsequently acknowledged publicly that it had influenced their marketing and service strategies. With regard to his study of parliamentary public information services in the UK, while a number of the recommendations appearing in his associated outputs were subsequently addressed by the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales, the publication of these outputs coincided with, or immediately preceded, a body of similar work conducted or commissioned by the legislatures themselves, and so no direct causal relationship can be established.

Similarly, the Portfolio outputs relating to his work on Scottish Government consultative processes highlighted a number of deficiencies in the Scottish Government's website which were addressed subsequently. While the candidate believes that his work has had some influence on these actions, the Scottish Government appears unable, or unwilling, to acknowledge any connection (the Scottish Government has certainly been reluctant to credit the candidate as the source of the consultation response data used in some of its more recent press releases). What can be said, however, is that the candidate's recommendations concerning consultative processes (relating to the identification of potential consultees, and to the provision of post-consultation feedback) have been ignored completely: the Scottish Government's practices remain inconsistent and idiosyncratic. The same might be said about the Portfolio outputs that discuss the online behaviour of Scottish political actors' during parliamentary election campaigns. Despite the current author's pleas for greater levels of genuine interaction and engagement with voters, and for the provision of more meaningful policy commentary, the nature of politicians' online communication has remained largely one-way, and the content rather bland and superficial.

On a more personal level, the candidate would argue that his Portfolio has enhanced what was an already burgeoning reputation in LIS research, particularly relating to the provision and use of 'official' information. For example, the publication of individual outputs within the Portfolio, coupled with some of his earlier work discussed in Section 4 of this thesis, has led directly to the candidate being invited to: tender for specific pieces of related research or consultancy work; contribute extended papers and critical book reviews to peer-reviewed journals; referee other academic papers on similar topics; and join professional groups with special interests in freedom of information and parliamentary research.

To conclude, with his Portfolio of Public Output, the candidate believes that he has contributed significantly towards developing a better understanding of the information behaviour of stakeholders when engaging with the state, and a greater awareness of the ways in which government and parliamentary information systems and services might be more responsive to their stakeholders' information needs, thus theoretically enabling a more informed, engaged and participatory body politic.

## 7. Postscript: future research plans and opportunities

As this thesis has noted, the need for, and the provision and use of, information emanating from the state, has been the candidate's prime research interest since he began his academic career in 1995. The 21 papers that constitute his Portfolio of Public Output are based on work conducted between late 2000 and the summer of 2013, and therefore might be considered as only part (albeit a 13-year-long part) of a wider 'research continuum'. In this final section of the thesis, the candidate outlines his most recent work, and some of his future research plans and opportunities, in the specific field of state-stakeholder information provision and exchange.

The candidate's work on Sub-theme 3 has continued recently with a paper presented at the 2014 MeCCSA Annual Conference in Bournemouth (Baxter, 2014). That conference had an overarching theme based around the engagement of marginalised and minority groups with the media. Building on elements of Output 21, the candidate's presentation looked more extensively at press portrayal of the environmental opponents of the plans to build a gas terminal next to the Loch of Strathbeg in the 1970s, and of opponents of Donald Trump's current golf resort development. It expanded upon the dramatic shift in the editorial direction of the regional press, from providing a balanced and objective account of the gas terminal proposals in the 1970s, to the adoption of a pro-development, anti-environmentalist stance during the golf course saga. It also provided details of the local and national press coverage not reported in Output 21, namely that:

- In the 1970s, the local papers were fierce opponents of the oil and gas industry and its potential impact on the local landscape and on the traditional North-east industries of farming and fishing. They regularly carried pieces written by local churchmen, thus articles on the gas terminal (and on oil and gas developments more broadly) frequently contained Biblical references, usually regarding the worship of Mammon. In complete contrast, the local papers have lacked any outspoken or potentially controversial editorial comment on the Trump development; at times going out of their way to appear even-handed and impartial to their readers. Perhaps reflecting an increasingly secular Scottish society, they have also remained largely devoid of any comment on the golf resort from churchmen or other religious figures.

- In the Scottish national press, coverage of the golf resort has been more extensive than that of the gas terminal 40 years ago, perhaps reflecting the perceived national importance of the resort and the high profile of the developer. The national newspapers have also made extensive use of the *FOISA* in compiling stories relating to the Trump project, acquiring information that might otherwise have remained hidden from the public eye. Throughout both developments, though, the national papers have adopted a vocal yet generally objective approach, often reserving particular criticism for unnecessarily bureaucratic planning processes and for perceived political machinations and petty point scoring.

At the time of writing, the candidate has just completed a full written paper based on his MeCCSA presentation and will be submitting this work to an appropriate peer-reviewed journal in the very near future.

The candidate's MeCCSA conference paper was based on his initial observations on the extent, accuracy and objectivity of the information presented by the newspapers. Further public outputs are anticipated, and will be based on more thorough content analyses using critical discourse techniques. However, as Section 5.3 of this thesis noted, data collection relating to Trump's golf resort is still in progress, because of his ongoing legal challenge to the proposed development of a nearby offshore windfarm.

Also in relation to Sub-theme 3, and again demonstrating the multidisciplinary nature of much of his research work, the candidate will present a paper at the Annual Conference of the Socio-Legal Studies Association, to be held in Aberdeen in April 2014. This will form part of a specific conference stream on access to environmental justice,<sup>73</sup> and will discuss the relationship between information access and environmental justice through an historical comparison of the two coastal developments discussed above, both of which have had potential or actual impacts on SSSIs. The paper will pay particular attention to the impact of the *FOISA* and the *Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004*, and will explore whether or not the concept of environmental justice is now more readily attainable in this current era of supposed openness and transparency than in the more secretive 1970s.

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<sup>73</sup> The Aarhus Convention asserts that 'every person has the right to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well-being, and the duty...to protect and improve the environment for the benefit of present and future generations'. It considers that, in order to be able to assert this right and observe this duty, 'citizens must have access to information, be entitled to participate in decision-making and have access to justice in environmental matters' (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 1998, p.2)

The candidate is also currently co-authoring a paper, with Dr David McQueen of Bournemouth University, UK, to be presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Barcelona International PR Meeting, in June 2014. This paper will discuss the public relations efforts of the developers, and the opponents, of two current, controversial coastal projects: Trump's golf resort at Menie; and the proposed building of a gas pipeline, by the global petrochemical company Shell, around the coastal village of Rossport in County Mayo on the west coast of Ireland. These two projects have much in common: both developers have been in a position to undertake extensive, and expensive, public relations campaigns; both have enjoyed favourable regional press coverage; and, in each case, activist opposition has harnessed the power of social media and documentary film to reach a wider audience and garner support for their cause.

With regard to Sub-theme 2, the candidate plans to continue, and expand upon, his research into the extent and impact of digital campaigning in Scotland. The monitoring and content analysis of political actors' online offerings will certainly continue during future parliamentary elections,<sup>74</sup> as will the more recent focus on qualitative, voter information behaviour research. Perhaps these studies will see the emergence of an entirely new range of online tools and technologies, eagerly seized upon by parties and election candidates for campaign purposes. In addition, the candidate plans to play a part in addressing the empirical gap highlighted by Gibson and Ward (2009, pp.95-96), who observed that research has concentrated extensively on election campaigns, but rarely on 'peacetime developments or the long campaign'. With this in mind, the candidate will pay greater attention to Scottish political actors' use of ICTs outwith the intensive purdah period; exploring, for example, the ways in which Scottish parliamentarians use their personal websites and social media sites to not only support their day-to-day constituency work, but also to attempt to shape public opinion on wider political and policy issues.

Of more significance in the immediate future, though, is the Scottish independence referendum on 18 September 2014. It will provide a rare opportunity to explore politicians' use of ICTs, and voters' information behaviour, in a completely different campaign setting: one where traditional political opponents have joined forces to either support or oppose the independence argument; and where much of the debate will be based around unknowns and imponderables, where the true impact of an independent Scotland will only emerge following

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<sup>74</sup> The next UK General Election will take place on 7 May 2015, while the next scheduled Scottish Parliamentary election (potentially for an independent Scottish Parliament) is due to be held on 5 May 2016. Although the candidate has never previously conducted research during European Parliament election campaigns, the 2014 polling day (22 May) occurs slightly earlier than usual, meaning that, with placement student assistance, he might also be in a position to undertake some research on the use of online campaign tools by those striving to become one of Scotland's six MEPs.

post-Yes-vote negotiations with the Westminster Government, the EU, and other international partners, such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. Two formal campaign groups have already been established: the SNP-led, pro-independence *Yes Scotland* group, which has support from the Scottish Green Party; and the pro-Union *Better Together* group, with broad support from the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, and the Conservatives. Each campaign group already has its own website (see [www.yesscotland.net](http://www.yesscotland.net) and [www.bettertogether.net](http://www.bettertogether.net)) and associated social media sites. In addition, it is anticipated that each of the major parties will be running its own pro- or anti-independence campaign, and will make extensive use of ICTs in the process. An added dimension to the independence referendum is the extension of the voting franchise to 16- and 17-year-olds throughout Scotland. The Electoral Commission (2013) has already acknowledged that social media will play an important role in encouraging these young people to register to vote, and it is perhaps safe to assume that both the Yes and the No campaigns will be using social media extensively in an effort to attract these new voters. With this in mind, the candidate proposes to use many of the methodologies discussed in this thesis to investigate the nature and the impact of the use of online technologies, by the cross-party campaign groups, by individual political parties, and by prominent politicians and political commentators, during what will be a key episode in Scottish constitutional history.

As Section 3.1 of this thesis explained, the devolution of power from Westminster to the three new devolved legislatures in the late 1990s played an important part in the direction of the candidate's research into state-stakeholder information provision and interchange. Should Scotland vote for independence in September 2014, might this have an equally significant impact on his future research plans? As was noted above, the Scottish Government's white paper on an independent Scotland (Scottish Government, 2013b) makes no mention of any proposed, overarching information strategy. However, other brief references to the provision and communication of information to the Scottish public are made throughout the 670-page document. It suggests, for example, that a new, post-independence, publicly funded, public service broadcaster would be a 'trusted, reliable, impartial source of information' (p.19). It also proposes the 'improved' provision of information and advice on consumer issues (pp.399-400), pensions (p.434-435), and equality and human rights legislation (p.568). As was indicated earlier, the white paper states that all FOI and data protection responsibilities in an independent Scotland will be assumed by the SIC (p.403). And the proposed introduction of a written constitution — to be based on 'extensive engagement with the people of Scotland, as well as civic groups and organisations' (p.46) — will, the Scottish Government claims, 'make information about government structures more accessible to the



people of Scotland' (p.559-560). It would appear, then, that the information landscape in a post-independence Scotland — and, of course, in the remainder of the UK — will be of considerable research interest. In short, there may be much still to do.

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## Appendix 1: Other academic papers citing outputs in the candidate's Portfolio

Many of the academic papers that cite outputs in the candidate's Portfolio are discussed in the main body of the thesis and are listed in the References section above. This appendix provides a list of other papers that cite one or more of the candidate's Portfolio outputs (i.e. excluding self-citation by the candidate and his co-authors). The output(s) cited appear in square brackets after each entry.

Abdelkader, O.A. (2013). Trust in Facebook ads: a cross-national prospective. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 5 (31), pp.98-110. Available at <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/EJBM/article/view/9469> (Accessed 5 January 2014) [Output 12]

Abdullah, S. and Hussin, H. (2012). The information needs and information use of Malaysia's Members of Parliament. Paper presented at the 78<sup>th</sup> IFLA General Conference and Assembly, Helsinki, Finland, 11-17 August. Available at <http://conference.ifla.org/past/2012/106-abdullah-en.pdf> (Accessed 3 February 2014) [Outputs 9 & 12]

Acton, Q.A. (2012). *Issues in Information Science Research 2011 Edition*. Atlanta, GA: ScholarlyEditions. [Output 19]

Acton, Q.A. (2013). *Issues in Information Science Research 2013 Edition*. Atlanta, GA: ScholarlyEditions. [Output 13]

Alhaji, T. (2012). *Exploring the relationship between research in information retrieval and information seeking behavior, 1979-2008*. PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, Canada. Available at <https://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/42224> (Accessed 3 February 2014). **Note:** Alhaji's thesis does not cite any of the candidate's Portfolio outputs individually; rather it considers his overall contribution to information retrieval and information seeking behaviour literature, in terms of the number of his papers appearing in Web of Science databases (see, in particular, Table 4.83 on p.166)

Al-Musleh, A.M. (2010). *Development of a framework for total quality management principles in the construction companies with special reference to the construction companies in the State of Qatar*. PhD thesis, University of London, UK. Available at <https://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/jspui/bitstream/123456789/2321/1/AL-MUSLEHDevelopmentOf2011.pdf> (Accessed 14 January 2014) [Output 5]

Bishop-Rowe, V. (2013). @MP\_communication. An investigation into the use of communication tools by Members of Parliament when corresponding with constituents in the United Kingdom. Masters thesis, Leiden University, Netherlands. Available at <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/23350> (Accessed 7 March 2014) [Outputs 10, 11 & 12]

- Bitso, C.M.L. (2011). *The information needs and information-seeking patterns of secondary level geography teachers in Lesotho: implications for information service*. PhD thesis, University of Pretoria, South Africa. Available at <http://www.repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/24644> (Accessed 7 March 2014) [Output 9]
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## **Appendix II: Summary of citations of outputs in the candidate's Portfolio**

Table 6 overleaf indicates the number of times the papers in the candidate's Portfolio of Public Output have been cited by other authors. This data has been compiled from the Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar and other Google searches, and was correct at 7 March 2014.

As another, perhaps cruder, measure of academic impact, Table 6 also includes the number of times the five Portfolio outputs that are available on Robert Gordon University's open access institutional repository, OpenAIR, have been viewed and downloaded. These figures relate only to the period from 26 June 2011 (when the collation of statistics via Google Analytics began) to 7 March 2014.

It should be noted that there are two entries each for Output 6 (a & b) and for Output 10 (a & b). This reflects the fact that identical versions of these papers were co-published simultaneously in two different locations.

**Table 6: Summary of citations of candidate's Portfolio outputs, together with views and downloads from OpenAIR institutional repository**

<b>Output (and year of publication)</b>	<b>Number of Citations</b>	<b>OpenAIR Views</b>	<b>OpenAIR Downloads</b>
Output 1 (2001)	1	15	2
Output 2 (2002)	17	52	30
Output 3 (2002)	11		
Output 4 (2003)	12	76	37
Output 5 (2003)	6	30	9
Output 6a (2005)	0		
Output 6b (2006)	1		
Output 7 (2006)	0		
Output 8 (2005)	11		
Output 9 (2007)	20		
Output 10a (2003)	0		
Output 10b (2004)	11		
Output 11 (2008)	9		
Output 12 (2011)	12	44	28
Output 13 (2012)	7		
Output 14 (2013)	2		
Output 15 (2013)	0		
Output 16 (2013)	0		
Output 17 (2013)	0		
Output 18 (2013)	0		
Output 19 (2010)	3		
Output 20 (2010)	1		
Output 21 (2014, in press)			
<b>Totals</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>106</b>



**THE COMMUNICATION AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION  
BETWEEN STATE AND STAKEHOLDERS**

**VOLUME II: THE CANDIDATE'S PORTFOLIO OF PUBLIC  
OUTPUT**

**GRAEME BAXTER**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
the Robert Gordon University for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy**

**August 2014**

## Portfolio of Public Output

### Sub-theme 1: the provision and communication of information by, and within, parliaments

1. Marcella, R. and Baxter, G. (2001). Citizenship information research at the School of Information and Media. Paper presented at the Information for Scotland VII conference, Edinburgh, 16 November 2000. Published in *Library Review*, 50 (2), pp.65-72.

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/130>

2. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Moore, N. (2002). Theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of information need in the context of the impact of new information and communications technologies on the communication of parliamentary information. *Journal of Documentation*, 58 (2), pp.185-210.

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/128>

3. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Moore, N. (2002). An exploration of the effectiveness for the citizen of Web-based systems of communicating UK parliamentary and devolved assembly information. *Journal of Government Information*, 29 (6), pp.371-391.

4. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Moore, N. (2003). The effectiveness of parliamentary information services in the United Kingdom. *Government Information Quarterly*, 20 (1), pp.29-46.

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/125>

5. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Moore, N. (2003). Data collection using electronically assisted interviews in a roadshow — a methodological evaluation. *Journal of Documentation*, 59 (2), pp.143-167.

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6. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Moore, N. (2005 & 2006). The impact of new technology on the communication of parliamentary information. A paper presented at the Political Studies Association 53rd Annual Conference, Leicester, 15-17 April 2003. Published in the *Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing*, 2005, 14 (1/2), pp.185-203. Also published in: Wymer, W.W. and Lees-Marshment, J. (Eds.). *Current issues in political marketing*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press Inc., 2006. ISBN: 0-7890-2437-3.

7. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Moore, N. (2006). The impact of information and communication technologies on the communication of parliamentary information in the United Kingdom. Paper presented at the European Communication Association Congress, Munich, 24-26 March 2003. Published in: Schorr, A. and Seltmann, S., (Eds.). *Changing media markets in Europe and abroad: new ways of handling information and entertainment content*. New York/Lengerich: Pabst Science Publishers, pp.63-77. ISBN: 3-89967-179-1.

8. Marcella, R. and Baxter, G. (2005). Information interchange. *In: Fisher, K.E., Erdelez, S., and McKechnie, E.F. (Eds.). Theories of information behavior.* Medford, NJ: Information Today, pp.204-209. ISBN: 1-57387-230-X.

9. Marcella, R., Baxter, G., Davies, S. and Toornstra, D. (2007). The information needs and information-seeking behaviour of the users of the European Parliamentary Documentation Centre: a customer knowledge study. *Journal of Documentation*, 63 (6), pp.920-934.

**Sub-theme 2: the use of the Internet for information provision and exchange by political parties and candidates during parliamentary election campaigns**

10. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Smith, S. (2003 & 2004). The use of the Internet by candidates as part of their campaign for election to the Scottish Parliament in 2003. *In: Carrasquero, J.V., Welsch, F., Urrea, C., and Tso, C. (Eds.). Proceedings of the international conference on politics and information systems: technologies and applications, 31 July – 2 August 2003, Orlando.* Orlando: International Institute of Informatics and Systemics, 2003, pp.246-251. ISBN: 980-6560-10-8. Also published in the *Journal of Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics*, 2004, 2 (2), pp.54-59. Available at [www.iiisci.org/journal/CV\\$/sci/pdfs/P108958.pdf](http://www.iiisci.org/journal/CV$/sci/pdfs/P108958.pdf).

11. Marcella, R., Baxter, G. and Cheah, S. (2008). The use of the Internet by political parties and candidates as part of their campaign for election to the Scottish Parliament in 2007. Paper presented at the first Information: Interactions and Impact (i3) conference, Aberdeen, 25-28 June 2007. Published in *Libri*, 2008, 58 (4), pp.294-305. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/954>

12. Baxter, G., Marcella, R. and Varfis, E. (2011). The use of the Internet by political parties and candidates in Scotland during the 2010 UK General Election campaign. *Aslib Proceedings*, 63 (5), pp.464-483. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/774>

13. Baxter, G. and Marcella, R. (2012). Does Scotland like this? The use of social media by political parties and candidates in Scotland during the 2010 UK General Election campaign. Paper presented at the third Information: Interactions and Impact (i3) conference, Aberdeen, 20-23 June 2011. Published in *Libri*, 2012, 62 (2), pp.109-124. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/952>

14. Baxter, G., Marcella, R., Chapman, D. and Fraser, A. (2013). Goin' Holyrood? A study of voters' online information behaviour when using parties' and candidates' websites during the 2011 Scottish Parliament election campaign.

Paper presented at the second International Conference on Integrated Information, Budapest, 30 August to 3 September 2012. Short version of paper published in *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2013, 73, pp.209-216. Available at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042813003364>.

15. Baxter, G., Marcella, R., Chapman, D. and Fraser, A. (2013). Voters' information behaviour when using political actors' websites during the 2011 Scottish Parliament election campaign. A full version of the paper presented at the second International Conference on Integrated Information, Budapest, 30 August to 3 September 2012. Published in *Aslib Proceedings*, 2013, 65 (5), pp.515-533. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/958>

16. Baxter, G. and Marcella, R. (2013). Do online election campaigns sway the vote? A study of the 2011 Scottish Parliamentary election. *Libri*, 63 (3), pp.190-205. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/1050>

17. Baxter, G. and Marcella, R. (2013). Bravehearts or tim'rous beasties? A decade of research into online election campaigns in Scotland. Paper presented at the Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government 2013, Krems, Austria, 21- 25 May 2013. Published in: Parycek, P. and Edelmann, N. (Eds.). *CeDEM 13: Proceedings of the International Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government*. Krems: Edition Donau-Universität, 2013, pp.75-87. ISBN: 978-3-902505-30-9.

18. Baxter, G. and Marcella, R. (2013). Online parliamentary election campaigns in Scotland: a decade of research. An updated and extended version of the paper presented at the Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government 2013, Krems, Austria, 21-25 May 2013. Published in *eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government*, 2013, 5 (2), pp.107-127. Available at <http://www.jedem.org/article/view/210>. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/957>

### **Sub-theme 3: the exchange of information between government and stakeholders during formal public consultation processes**

19. Baxter, G. (2010). The best-laid schemes? The provision and accessibility of government consultation information in the UK. Paper presented at the second Information: Interactions and Impact (i3) conference, Aberdeen, 22-25 June 2009. Published in *Libri*, 2010, 60 (3), pp.253-267. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/953>

20. Baxter, G., Marcella, R. and Illingworth, L. (2010). Organizational information behaviour in the public consultation process in Scotland. Paper presented at the eighth Information Seeking in Context conference, Murcia,

Spain, 28 September to 2 October 2010. Published in *Information Research*, 15 (4), paper 442. Available at <http://informationr.net/ir/15-4/paper442.html>. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/955>

21. Baxter, G. (2014). Open for business? An historical, comparative study of public access to information about two controversial coastal developments in North-east Scotland. Paper presented at the fourth Information: Interactions and Impact (i3) conference, Aberdeen, 25-28 June 2013. Published in *Information Research*, 19 (1), paper 603. Available at <http://www.informationr.net/ir/19-1/paper603.html>. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10059/956>