The development of UK government policy on citizens' access to public sector information

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The development of UK government policy on citizens' access to

public sector information

by

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Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

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Dedicated to the memory of Lucy Gardiner Knevitt-Smith,

who left us the day this thesis was finished.

A light went out in the world.

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Abstract

The aim of the research was to investigate the development of United Kingdom government policy on citizens' access to public sector information (PSI) from 1996 to 2010. In addition to a mapping of UK policy documents, the main research method was the undertaking of open and semi-structured interviews with influential experts and the analysis of interview transcripts. These experts came from both inside and outside government, including: policy-makers and implementers; regulators and advisors; lobbyists and campaigners; academics; and the information profession.

Main findings were: lack of co-ordination of information policy across government; new skills required within government to provide information in the Web 2.0 environment; uneven progress in the development of citizen-centric services; lack of information literacy policy; and low involvement of the information profession in driving forward the developments in the provision of PSI.

A major gap identified was the lack of co-ordinated evaluation of information policy in general, and of the provision of PSI in particular. A framework for assessing implementation of policy was developed and tested against the Power of Information Taskforce recommendations, and suggestions were made for new measures.

The research also charted the increase in the opening up of government data for re-use during 2009 and 2010, both during the run-up to the general election and subsequently when plans for transparency were put in place by the new Coalition government. It is considered significant that this increase in transparency, by both main political parties, should come at a time when trust in government was low, citizens' expectations of electronic access to information were rising and the technology was enabling new channels for engagement. The influence of individuals was found to be considerable, not least as exerted by Sir Tim Berners-Lee, Professor Nigel Shadbolt, Tom Steinberg, Labour Digital Engagement Minister Tom Watson, and Natalie Ceeney at The National Archives.

Recommendations to government address: policy co-ordination mechanisms: the role of the Office of Public Sector Information; and support for intermediaries. Those aimed at the information profession cover: new skills needed; co-ordination for lobbying on specific issues; and support for developing information literacy.

This research has been the first within the information policy academic community in the UK to address how government is opening up its data in the wake of new technological innovations and is focussed on the needs of citizens.

Chapter 1   Introduction

1.1 *Overall aim*

The research aims to investigate United Kingdom government policy on citizens' access to public sector information.

As part of its day to day activities, government both generates public sector information (PSI) for its own use and proactively provides information to citizens that help them make decisions about their lives. The advent of the Internet has had an effect on how those with access to it communicate and share information, including governments. This research will investigate to what extent United Kingdom (UK) government policy on how it provides PSI to citizens has embraced the opportunities for new ways of communicating, and will make recommendations on how policy in this area might be improved.

1.2 *Research questions and objectives*

The questions that flow logically from the aim of this research are outlined and justified below, together with the research objectives to satisfy them.

Research question RQ1: What previous work has been done on the theory and practice of policy on citizens' access to PSI?

In order to develop the scope of this research, a starting point is to get an overview of current theory and practice in this field specifically, but also in the wider policy arena which provides the context for this research. It would both help build an understanding of the policy-making in this area as a whole and shed light on the issues that should be investigated further. It would also help to identify criticisms of previous research in order to address these in the research methodology.

> **Objective OB1**: **To understand the academic and practitioner research which informs the current context in which policy on citizens' access to PSI is formulated.**

Research question RQ2: What methodology would be suitable for investigating UK government policy on citizens' access to PSI?

Having decided the scope of the research, the next stage is to decide on the most suitable way of tackling it, from the broad theoretical approach, through the research strategy to the specific activities that will contribute to meeting the aim of the research.

> **Objective OB2: To decide which is or are the most suitable methodologies and specific methods that will best meet the aim of the research.**

Research question RQ3: What policies on citizens' access to public sector information has the UK government developed since 1996?

In order to investigate what improvements might be made in UK government policy, it is first necessary to get a baseline of what policies there have been to date. A start date of 1996 was selected as this was when the first relevant government policy document, *government.direct*,[1] was published.

> *Objective OB3: To identify and analyse the contents of UK government policies from 1996 which relate to citizens' access to PSI.*

Research question RQ4: How is policy on citizens' access to PSI developed and governed?

To gain a full understanding of the policies that have been promulgated, one needs to put them in the context of how policy is made and by whom, how it is enforced and co-ordinated in order to ensure implementation, and what the internal and external influences have been in the development of the policy.

> *Objective OB4: To assess how policy on PSI is developed and governed.*

Research question RQ5: How well are the policies working in practice, how could they be improved and what gaps in the policies need filling?

Building on a knowledge of what the relevant policies are and how they were and are being developed and governed, the next stage is to assess how well the policies are working in practice, how they could be improved and what gaps in the policies exist. To do this requires not just the perspectives of those inside government but also those outside government whose role is to comment on, and even act on, the policies.

> *Objective OB5: To examine how the policies are working in practice and identify gaps in the policies.*

Research question RQ6: What has changed in the policies in 2009-2010 in the light of a move to more open and transparent government and why?

During 2009-10, the last year of the research, the UK governments of both the Labour and Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition administrations significantly increased the quantity of datasets that they published as part of their transparency agendas. In order to fully meet the aim of the research, it is necessary to investigate the changes to government policy that were made during this period and to try and understand the reasons behind these changes. This is in order to make recommendations that reflect the situation at the end of 2010 rather than the end of 2009.

> *Objective OB6: To explore the opening up of government data since 2009.*

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[1] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Central IT Unit. *Government.direct: a prospectus for the electronic delivery of government services*, 1996.

Research question RQ7: How is implementation of UK policy on citizens' access to PSI evaluated and how could this evaluation be improved or extended?

Governments need to judge the on-going efficacy of their policies if they are to keep them relevant. An issue which emerged through the literature review and attendance at events was the lack of evaluation of implementation of government information policy. It was decided to investigate what measures already existed that could be used to evaluate implementation of policy on citizens' access to PSI. The next stage would be to identify other potential measures by devising and testing a framework that incorporated the various elements of evaluation of this information policy, and thereby expose gaps to be filled.

> *Objective OB7: To identify how implementation of policy on PSI is evaluated and investigate how this evaluation could be developed.*

Research question RQ8: What recommendations follow from meeting the overall aim of the research?

Finally, the findings of the research may suggest recommendations to government in addition to recommendations to the research community for further work that would be valuable. It may also prove to be helpful to make recommendations to the library and information profession about its role in government information policy. It is intended that the recommendations would be validated after the research is completed through discussions with the relevant constituencies.

> *Objective OB8: To make recommendations to government, the information profession and the research community in the light of the answers to the research questions.*

1.3   *Background*

> 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.[2]

This is the opening paragraph of the white paper *Open government* published in 1993 by the then Conservative Government. Both main political parties went into the 1997 election with similar policies on developing open government, improving access to PSI:

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[2] Great Britain. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. *Open government*, 1993, p.1.

We are pledged to a Freedom of Information Act, leading to more open government, and an independent National Statistical Service.[3]

Indeed, much of what was proposed to transform Britain into an "information society" in the Conservative Party manifesto was implemented in some form by the incoming Labour government, for example linking all schools to the "information superhighway" and using lottery funds for providing public libraries with Internet access:

We will also take advantage of information technology to transform the way government provides services to the public. … The future is "government direct". We will harness the latest information technology to place the public sector directly at the service of the citizen.[4]

The Introduction by Minister for the Cabinet Office Dr Jack Cunningham to the 1999 white paper *Modernising government* put forward this vision for citizen-centric services:

To improve the way we provide services, we need all parts of government to work together better. We need joined-up government. We need integrated government. And we need to make sure that government services are brought forward using the best and most modern techniques, to match the best of the private sector including one-stop shops, single contacts which link in to a range of government departments and especially electronic information-age services.[5]

At much the same time as government was developing its ideas on "the information society" a new pressure group was formed from within the library and information profession. Set up in 1996, the Coalition for Public Information (CoPI) was a membership organisation aiming to influence UK information-related policies and legislation. Its objective was:

to work to ensure that the developing information and communications infrastructure will empower commerce, communities and individuals so that they can participate fully in social, economic and democratic activity.[6]

The idea for the Coalition was first floated by Professor Charles Oppenheim at a meeting organised by the Institute of Information Scientists in May 1996. During its short lifetime,

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[3] Labour Party (Great Britain). *New Labour because Britain deserves better: Labour Party general election manifesto 1997*. <http://www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1997/1997-labour-manifesto.shtml>, 1997, [accessed 28.04.2008].

[4] Conservative Party (Great Britain). *You can only be sure with the Conservatives: Conservative Party general election manifesto 1997*. <http://www.conservative-party.net/manifestos/1997/1997-conservative-manifesto.shtml>, 1997, [accessed 28.04.2008].

[5] Cunningham, J. Introduction by the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Jack Cunningham. *In*: Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Modernising government*. p.5. <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm43/4310/4310-it.htm>, 1999, [accessed 28.04.08].

[6] Coalition for Public Information. *CoPI constitution*. <http://www.la-hq.org.uk/liaison/copi/copi3.html>, 1997, [accessed 27.06.2008].

COPI responded to various government and Parliamentary consultations, organised two influential conferences and had discussions with senior civil servants. Many of the issues it raised are still valid today, such as: the need for education in information literacy; the importance of organising information to meet the needs of citizens rather than reflect departmental structures; the potential for re-use of data; and the benefits of open licensing of datasets.

In the 11 years since the publication of the *Modernising government* white paper, there have been many government initiatives aimed at making the information society and open government a reality, for example:

- work of the Office of the e-Envoy in making government services available electronically, including developing guidelines for eAccessibility of government websites – taken forward through the *Transformational government implementation plan,*[7] which addressed citizen-centric government services
- developing the *Framework for National Statistics*,[8] which led to the formation of the Statistics Commission, and subsequently the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007,[9] under which the successor body, the UK Statistics Authority, was set up with the intention of making the production of statistics more independent of government and thereby improving public trust in official figures[10]
- enacting freedom of information legislation in 2000 to provide the right of access to recorded information held by public authorities, create exemptions and establish the arrangements for enforcement and appeal by expanding the roles of the Data Protection Registrar and Data Protection Tribunal into the Information Commissioner and Information Tribunal.[11] This legislation superseded the *Open government code of practice on access to government information*[12]
- channelling government websites aimed at the citizen through the Directgov website to make it easier for citizens to find the services and information they need [13] and reviewing other government websites for closure[14]

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[7] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Transformational government implementation plan.* <http://www.cio.gov.uk/documents/ pdf/transgov/transgovt.pdf>, [n.d.], [accessed 17.06.2008].

[8] Great Britain. Office for National Statistics. *Framework for national statistics.* <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/uk-statistical-system/history/key-historical-documents/index.html>, 2000, [accessed 26.06.2008].

[9] Great Britain. Office for National Statistics. *A brief guide to the new Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.* <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/independence/downloads/BriefGuidetotheSRSA2007.pdf>, 2007, [accessed 04.07.2008].

[10] Great Britain. UK Statistics Authority. *Statistics free of politics: New UK Statistics Authority launches today.* Press release 1 April 2008. <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/index.html>, 2008, [accessed 26.06.2008].

[11] Great Britain. Ministry of Justice. *Freedom of information.* <http://www.justice.gov.uk/whatwedo/freedomof information.htm>, 2008, [accessed 26.06.2008].

[12] Great Britain. HM Government. *Open government: code of practice on access to government information*, 2nd ed., 1997.

[13] Great Britain. Department for Work and Pensions. *Directgov: public services all in one place.* Press release 1 April 2008. <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/pressreleases/2008/apr/emp071-010408.asp>, [accessed 26.06.2008].

[14] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Clamp down on government websites to save millions.* Press release 24 June 2010. CAB 104-10. <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100624-websites.aspx>, 2010 [accessed 11.08.2010].

- incorporating HMSO into the Office for Public Sector Information (OPSI), set up within the Cabinet Office to provide a range of services to the public, information industry, government and the wider public sector relating to finding, using, sharing and trading public information. OSPI has now been subsumed within The National Archives (TNA) to provide greater synergy in supporting government information policy[15]

- transposing into UK law the EU directive on *Re-use of public sector information*, [16] which came into force in 2005 and has been reviewed[17]

- reviewing trading funds[18,19] in response to a report from the Office of Fair Trading on the commercial use of public sector information[20]

- commissioning of the *Power of information review[21]* in 2007 to advise government how to work with social networking tools to engage more fully with citizens, followed by the appointment of a Taskforce[22] to take the recommendations further

- setting up a Digital Engagement Team within the Cabinet Office to stimulate and encourage activity across government to improve how it engages with citizens through digital media – a recommendation of the Taskforce[23]

- tasking Ofcom with co-ordinating work on media literacy in the *Digital Britain* report[24]

- appointing influential inventor of the World Wide Web Sir Tim Berners-Lee to advise government on how to open up its datasets to third parties[25]

- publishing *Putting the frontline first: smarter government*[26] and *Building Britain's digital future*[27] which addressed how public sector information should be opened up as part of the overall eGovernment strategy

- launching the data.gov.uk website in 2010 to provide a single point of access to government datasets[28]

- opening up Ordnance Survey data for re-use[29]

[15] Great Britain. The National Archives. *Public sector information.* <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/services/opsi.htm?homepage=im-opsi-b>, [n.d.], [accessed 26.06.2008].

[16] Great Britain. *Re-use of public sector information regulations 2005.* SI 2005/1515, 2005.

[17] Commission of the European Communities. *Re-use of public sector information: review of Directive 2003/98/EC.* SEC(2009)597, 2009.

[18] Great Britain. Department of Trade and Industry. *The commercial use of public information (CUPI): the government response to the Office of Fair Trading study*, 2007.

[19] Newbery, D., Bently, L. & Pollock, R. *Models of public sector information provision via trading funds*, 2008.

[20] Great Britain. Office of Fair Trading. *The commercial use of public information (CUPI)*, 2006.

[21] Mayo, E. & Steinberg, T. *The power of information: an independent review by Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg.* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ strategy/power_information.pdf>, 2007, [accessed 25.02.2008].

[22] Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce. *Power of Information Taskforce report.* <http://poit.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/poit/>, 2009, [accessed 09.04.2009].

[23] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Digital engagement: update on Power of Information* <http://blogs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digitalengagement/file.axd?file=2009%2f5%2fDigital+Engagement+-+final+-+pdf.pdf>, 2009, [accessed 17.06.2009].

[24] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport. *Digital Britain: final report.* Cm 7650, 2009.

[25] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Pioneer of the World Wide Web to advise the government on using data.* Press release 10 June 2009. <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_resleases/2009/090610_web.aspx>, 2009, [accessed 17.06.2009].

[26] Great Britain. HM Government. *Putting the frontline first: smarter government.* Cm 7753, 2009.

[27] Brown, G. *Speech on building Britain's digital future.* <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page22897>, 2010, [accessed 17.05.2010].

[28] Great Britain. HM Government. *Public launch.* [Data.gov.uk blog of 19.01.2010]. <http://data.gov.uk/blog/public-site-launch>, 2010, [accessed 03.08.2010].

- committing the new Coalition government to opening up a range of datasets[30]
- appointing Martha Lane Fox as Digital Champion to take forward Race Online 2012 initiatives to improve digital inclusion[31]
- and appointing a Public Sector Transparency Board, including Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Professor Nigel Shadbolt and chaired by the Minister for the Cabinet Office, to drive the cross-government initiatives to open up data.[32]

1.3.1 Why now?

In 2007, at the start of this research, many UK government initiatives were coming to fruition and Web 2.0,[33] third (and even fourth) generation mobile phone, and digital television technologies were enabling new ways of engaging with citizens. Since then there has been a step change in the nature and amount of data that the government has published and in 2010 the Coalition government is committed to continuing the push to make government data more accessible.[34] Now is therefore a good time to review progress and make recommendations.

1.4 *Scope of the research*

1.4.1 Policy-making in central government

This research looks to gain an understanding of how top-level information policy on the provision of public sector information to citizens has been developed by ministers and senior civil servants in the UK since 1996 and co-ordinated across departments. It focuses on those policies which have an influence government-wide, the over-arching policies, rather than those more specific policies promulgated by individual government departments, or local government, or those relating to specific sets of information. For simplicity, policies are described as UK policies, although strictly speaking, many are English policies with similar initiatives being undertaken in the devolved administrations.

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[29] Great Britain. Ordnance Survey. *Ordnance Survey launches OS OpenData in groundbreaking national initiative.* Press release 1 April 2010. <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/media/news/2010/April/OpenData.html>, 2010, [accessed11.08.2010].

[30] Cameron, D. *Letter to government departments on opening up new data*, 31 May 2010. <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/statements-and-articles/2010/05/letter-to-government-departments-on-opening-up-data-51204>, 2010, [accessed 11.08.2010].

[31] Race Online 2012. *Manifesto for a wired nation.* London: Race Online 2012, 2010. <http://raceonline2012.org/sites/default/files/resources/manifesto_for_a_networked_nation_-_race_online_2012.pdf>, [accessed 04.09.2010], p.2.

[32] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Cabinet Office minister opens up corridors of power*. Press release 31 May 2010. <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100531-open.aspx>, 2010, [accessed 11.08.2010].

[33] Tim O-Reilly, a pioneer of the Web 2.0 concept, considered that, as opposed to Web.1.0, Web 2.0 was seen as a platform with the user controlling their own data and harnessing collective intelligence, for example through social media. *See:* O'Reilly, T. *What is Web 2.0: design patterns and business models for the next generation of software.* <http://oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html?page=1>, 2005, [accessed 11.12.2010].

[34] Cameron, ref. 30.

Issues that were found to be adequately covered by other research are referred to but were not researched further, for example freedom of information and eParticipation. The focus centres on how the UK government makes and promulgates information policy, rather than how the information is used by citizens, and most particularly on policy relating to the provision of public sector information to citizens. Only policies relating to non-personal data are considered, therefore issues of confidentiality and data privacy are not included.

As can be seen from the next section, the core Whitehall government departments with a cross-government information policy role are the Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Justice and it is their work that informs the bulk of the analysis. The work of other central government departments is considered where it has wide relevance or where it has a major information policy remit, for example the work of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in training the population in information-handling skills; the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for the Directgov portal; and support for the Library and Information Commission and the People's Network by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS). Individual initiatives that are specific to one department, and where the information aspect is only one element of a wider policy, are not addressed. Table 1.1 (*see* page 19) shows how information policy was distributed amongst UK government departments in 2010.

The original intention of the research was to also to look at policy on citizens' access to PSI in *circa* six other countries, possibly including South Korea, Estonia, Australia, the United States of America and a Nordic country, in order to assess what lessons they may have for UK practice, however the extra time required for the increased focus on re-use of government data in the UK meant that this area of comparative research, whilst still a valuable exercise, would have to be left for other investigation in due course.

1.4.2 eGovernment

It is the information policy implications of new technologies rather than the technologies themselves that are considered in the research. Whilst the literature review identified the majority of recent research in eGovernment information policy as revolving around technology-based issues, this research is not limited to electronic channels of communication. It is important not to forget that there are still many individuals who do not have the skills, the opportunity or the desire to use these channels, points made by Selwyn[35] and Chadwick.[36] However, eGovernment information-based initiatives play a part in ensuring that those who act as intermediaries for the information "have nots" have efficient electronic information sources on which to draw.

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[35] Selwyn, N. Reconsidering political and popular understandings of the digital divide. *New Media & Society*, 2004, 6(3), 341-362.
[36] Chadwick, A. *Internet politics: states, citizens, and new communication technologies*, 2006.

When looking at eGovernment policies, this research concentrates on government providing information to the citizen/consumer: G2C. The term "iGovernment" has been coined[37] and this is a helpful shorthand for these activities. iGovernment could be considered the first stage of eGovernment services, those that are the most highly developed and therefore where there has been considerable progress to assess.

The next stage of eGov initiatives, interactive services where the communication is two-way, such as filing tax returns or applying for driving licences, are not the main focus as they are not primarily about the provision of information by government but rather the provision of information to government as part of business transactions. Various research projects have addressed these individual initiatives,[38] but they are not deemed to fall within the scope of this research.

The third stage of eGovernment developments, building a dialogue between citizens and government to inform policy-making, has been variously dubbed eDemocracy, eVoting or eParticipation. This has not been addressed here as considerable academic research has already been carried out, for example that co-ordinated by the EU DEMO_net,[39] Politech Institute: European Center of Political Technologies[40] and in the UK by the Hansard Society.[41] Related to this, but again outside the scope of this research, is the use of communication technologies by political parties and individual politicians. Blogs by MPs have become a ripe area for research and indeed a 2008 edition of *Information Polity*[42] was devoted to the subject. The use of Twitter in eParticipation is also growing and has been addressed by the Hansard Society,[43] amongst others.

1.4.3 Time frame

As already explained, the starting point of 1996 for government information policy initiatives was chosen as it was in this year that the (then Conservative) government published *Government direct: a prospectus for the electronic delivery of government services,*[44] which paved the way for an expansion in government's provision of information to businesses and citizens. However, owing to the large number of policy initiatives and developments in the late 2000s, it was decided to put most effort into the mapping of policies from 2005 onwards,

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[37] Lucas, E. The electronic bureaucrat. *Economist*, 2008, 386(8567), special report pp. 3-4.
[38] For example Barnes, S.J. & Vidgen, R. Interactive e-government: evaluating the web site of the UK Inland Revenue. *International Journal of Electronic Government Research*, 2007, 3(1), 19-37.
[39] DEMO_net. *Joint research programme.* <http://www.demo-net.org/about-the-epn/information-on-activities/joint-research-programme/joint-research-programme/?searchterm=None>, [n.d.], [accessed 27.06.2008].
[40] European Politech Institute. *Innovation.* <http://www.politech-institute.org/projects.asp>, 2008, [accessed 03.07.2008].
[41] Hansard Society. *eDemocracy.* <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/edemocracy/>, [n.d.], [accessed 03.07.2008].
[42] [Blogs of MPs special issue], *Information Polity*, 2008, 13(1-2).
[43] Williamson, A. *MPs online: connecting with constituents.* London: Hansard Society, 2009.
[44] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Central IT Unit. *Government.direct: a prospectus for the electronic delivery of government services*, 1996.

when the *EU Directive on the re-use of public sector information*[45] came into effect. The May 2010 general election formed the cut-off point for the documentary analysis and literature review, although a few references have been included on the plans of the subsequent Coalition government where appropriate. The literature review did also address earlier research that significantly influenced later thinking.

1.4.4 Users

Analysing policies on the provision of public information services to *individuals* is the core of the research, however policies on services to companies and other organisations are considered where the purpose of the business is to repackage the information for the benefit of the citizen, for example activities falling within the remit of the EU *Directive on re-use of public sector information.*[46]

1.5   Current players in UK national information policy

This section explains which departments within the UK government are responsible for which aspects of information policy, summed up in Table 1.1 on page 19.

1.5.1 The main players

Two departments within Whitehall have the main loci for information policy-making that affects the rest of government: the Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Justice.

The Cabinet Office generally has a central co-ordinating role within government and the Minister for the Cabinet Office (Rt Hon Francis Maude MP at the time of writing in 2010) is the senior minister in the department (with the exception of the Deputy Prime Minister from 11 May 2010).[47] It was the then Minister for the Cabinet Office Hilary Armstrong, who in 2007 commissioned the *Power of information review* [48] into future forms of access to public information.

The Cabinet Office itself has many subordinate units with a government-wide information function. The Transformational Government Unit no longer exists as such but its duties were subsumed within the new Efficiency and Reform Group after the 2010 general election. This

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[45] European Parliament & Council of Europe, 2003. Directive 2003/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the re-use of public sector information. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 345/90-96.
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Cabinet Office ministers.* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/about-cabinet-office/cabinet-office-ministers.aspx>, 2010, [accessed 11.08.2010].
[48] Mayo & Steinberg, ref. 21.

new group includes the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Government Communication Group, which is responsible for the Digital Engagement Team.[49]

In the previous Labour administration, Tom Watson MP was Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office from 2008 until his resignation in June 2009, with responsibility for taking forward the work of the Power of Information agenda, the Transformational Government Unit and Government Communications. He was not replaced although Stephen Timms MP took an interest in some of the issues through his responsibility for implementation of the *Digital Britain* report recommendations for BIS, in addition to his other duties as Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

The Government Chief Information Officer Council (COIC) was set up in January 2005 and brings together Chief Information Officers from across all parts of the public sector to address common issues.[50] Amongst other responsibilities, the Council oversaw the Transformational Government agenda: "…the strategy for using IT to transform government and to deliver modern public services more effectively."[51] The focus of the Council is very much on "technology" rather than information and the government's Chief Information Officer is head of profession for IT within government, with a remit to develop the profession within the civil service.[52]

The Central Office of Information (COI) is a non-ministerial body reporting to the Cabinet Office Minister: [53,54]

> COI's Contact Centres and Strategy, Live Events and Interactive services enable citizens to directly interact with government departments for information, help or advice. COI also links closely with Directgov (http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm) [responsible for the government's website aimed at services to the citizen] and advises on the delivery of services to meet citizens' needs.[55]

The Directgov service itself moved to the DWP on 1 April 2008 in order to be closer to citizens and to draw on the expertise of DWP staff in handling large datasets[56] but moved back to the

[49] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Cabinet Office structure charts.* <http://www.number10.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Cabinet-Office-Org-Chart.pdf>, 2010, [accessed 18.10.2010].
[50] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Chief Information Officer Council.* <http://www.cio.gov.uk/>, 2008, [accessed 03.07.2008].
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Information about the Cabinet Office and its agencies and non-departmental public bodies.* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/publicationscheme/published_information/2.aspx>, 2008, [accessed 03.07.2008].
[54] Great Britain. Central Office of Information. *About COI.* <http://coi.gov.uk/aboutcoi.php>, [n.d.], [accessed 11.08.2010].
[55] Great Britain. Central Office of Information. *Services: interactive.* <http://www.coi.gov.uk/services.php>, [n.d.], [accessed 03.07.2008].
[56] Great Britain. Department for Work and Pensions, ref. 13.

Cabinet Office Efficiency and Reform Group in July 2010.[57] Within the COI, the Digital Policy Team has led work on government website policy and linked data.[58]

The Government Communication Group works with government departments to encourage "genuine engagement with the public as part of policy formation and delivery"[59] – a recommendation from the 2004 *Phillis report*.[60]

The Strategy Unit[61] within the Cabinet Office had a major cross-government remit in developing new thinking in a wide range of areas. Its stated main roles were:

- to provide strategy and policy advice to the Prime Minister
- to support government departments in developing effective strategies and policies – including helping them to build their strategic capability
- to identify and effectively disseminate emerging issues and policy challenges.[62]

An example of its involvement in information policy issues is that staff of the Unit provided the support for the Power of Information review.[63] The strategy function remains within the Cabinet Office under the new Coalition government.[64]

As a result of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, which saw the setting-up of the new UK Statistics Authority on 1 April 2008 to replace the Office for National Statistics and the Statistics Commission,[65] the Cabinet Office would:

> take over HM Treasury's responsibilities in those circumstances where the Board still needs a route in to Parliament, e.g. for progressing secondary legislation and answering PQs.[66]

The Authority has the status of a non-ministerial department reporting directly to Parliament, rather than working through the Treasury as in the previous arrangements. A key impetus for the Act was to strengthen the integrity of the official statistical system,[67] which produces the figures that provide the basis of much public information; research had shown that over two-

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[57] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Machinery of government changes following the general election 2010: an explanatory document.* <http://www.parliament.uk/deposits/depositedpapers/2010/DEP2010-1576.pdf>, 2010, [accessed 05.08.2010], p.2.

[58] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.

[59] Great Britain. Civil Service. *Role of communication in government.* <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/about/comms/role.asp>, 2007, [accessed 03.07.2008].

[60] Phillis, B. *An independent review of government communications*, 2004.

[61] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Strategy Unit. *The Strategy Unit.* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy.aspx>, 2008, [accessed 04.07.2008].

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Strategy Unit. *Current work areas.* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas.aspx>, 2008, [accessed 04.07.2008].

[64] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 49.

[65] Great Britain. UK Statistics Authority, ref. 10.

[66] Great Britain. Office for National Statistics, ref. 9, p.4.

[67] Great Britain. HM Treasury. *Independence for statistics: a consultation document*, 2006.

thirds of the general public believed that official statistics were changed to support a particular argument.[68]

The main government department responsible for the *regulatory* aspects of information policy is the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). Minister Lord McNally[69] has responsibility in 2010 for data sharing, data protection, freedom of information, democratic engagement and TNA, whilst the department sponsors the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)[70] and the First-Tier Tribunal (Information Rights), which hears appeals against decisions of the Information Commissioner.[71]

The ICO[72] is an independent public body set up to promote access to official information and protect personal information. To do this it enforces and oversees the Data Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act, the Environmental Information Regulations, and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations. It sees its main functions as:

> educating and influencing (we promote good practice and give information and advice), resolving problems (we resolve eligible complaints from people who think their rights have been breached) and enforcing (we use legal sanctions against those who ignore or refuse to accept their obligations).[73]

The Office also commissions research into data protection and freedom of information issues to get a better understanding of how the policies are working in practice.

TNA acts as the government archive and also has an overarching role in promoting good practice in records management across both central and local government.[74] In October 2006 the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI, previously within the Cabinet Office) merged with TNA to enable:

> the combined organisation to provide strong and coherent leadership for the development of information policy across government and the wider public sector.[75]

OPSI sees itself:

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[68] Jones, F. & Kelly, M. *Omnibus survey: initial findings on public confidence in official statistics*, 2004, p.4.
[69] Great Britain. Ministry of Justice. *Lord McNally.* <http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/lord-mcNally.htm>, 2010, [accessed 11.08.2010].
[70] Great Britain. Ministry of Justice. *Organisations we sponsor.* <http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/organisationswesponsor.htm>, 2008, [accessed 04.07.2008].
[71] Great Britain. Tribunals Service. *Information rights.* <http://www.informationtribunal.gov.uk/>, 2010, [accessed 26.10.2010].
[72] Great Britain. Information Commissioner's Office. *About the ICO.* <http://www.ico.gov.uk/about_us.aspx>, [n.d.], [accessed 04.07.2008].
[73] *Ibid.*
[74] Great Britain. The National Archives. *Who we are, what we do and how we operate.* <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/whowhathow.htm?source=ddmenu_about1>, [n.d.], [accessed 04.07.2008].
[75] Great Britain. The National Archives, ref.15.

at the heart of information policy, setting standards, delivering access and encouraging the re-use of public sector information. OPSI provides a wide range of services to the public, information industry, government and the wider public sector relating to finding, using, sharing and trading information.[76]

It has a range of responsibilities which are central to providing good access to public information[77]:

- incorporating Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO), it manages Crown copyright and publishes all legislation. The *Report on Public Access Scheme funding 2006/07*[78] shows how it has improved access to UK legislation, including setting up RSS feeds for new legislation by subject and Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) to reference particular sections of legislation
- it provides the licences for use of Crown and Parliamentary copyright material
- it is responsible for the Information Asset Register (IAR) that lists information assets held by the UK Government, with a focus on unpublished material
- it provides the secretariat for the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information (APPSI), which advises Ministers on how best to encourage the re-use of public sector information
- it runs the Information Fair Trader Scheme which sets standards and assesses public bodies' levels of fairness and transparency in trading public sector information
- and it investigates complaints against public sector information holders made under the *Re-use of public sector information regulations*, which came into effect in July 2005 in response to the EU *Directive on public sector information.*[79]

It should be noted that at the time of the interviews OPSI had a separate identity from TNA and is therefore referred to as "OPSI" in this research. However TNA is now the preferred title rather than OPSI to avoid confusion, except for investigation of complaints as the term "OPSI" is used in this context in the governing regulations.[80]

The work of the Cabinet Office, MoJ and their related bodies is the focus of this research, however there are other government departments that have a significant input into various aspects of information policy.

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[76] Great Britain. Office of Public Sector Information. *About OPSI.* <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/about/index.htm>, 2006, [accessed 04.07.2008].
[77] *Ibid.*
[78] Great Britain. Office of Public Sector Information. *Report on Public Access Scheme funding 2006/07*, 2007.
[79] Great Britain, ref. 16.
[80] Email correspondence with Jim Wretham, 27 July 2010.

1.5.2 Library and information services policy

DCMS has policy responsibility for public libraries and broadcasting amongst its wide-ranging brief.[81] It sponsors the British Library and also advises ministers on statutory and other library issues.[82] In 1995 it set up the Library and Information Commission (LIC) as:

> a national source of expertise, advising Government on all issues relating to the library and information sector.[83]

Amongst the LIC's successes was obtaining National Lottery funding to set up the People's Network, which enabled all public libraries in the UK to provide computers, with free Internet access, and to train library staff to support the public in their use. This work was continued, together with work on digital content, under the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), a new body formed in 2000 by the merger of the LIC and the Museums and Galleries Commission.[84]

The LIC had a definite focus on libraries in a wide sense, and on information services. The remit of MLA was narrower as regards information services. The organisation restructured during 2008/09 to have "an emphasis on local government engagement".[85] Its 2008 *Corporate plan* did not refer specifically to information services as such but they may be considered as part of individual initiatives.[86] However it was a member of the Digital Inclusion Panel.[87]

In July 2010 it was announced that MLA would be wound down by April 2012 as a result of the public spending cuts.[88] Although its functions will be dispersed, it was not clear at the time of writing where its statutory and other functions as regards libraries would be re-allocated.

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[81] Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport. *About us.* <http://www.culture.gov.uk/about_us/default.aspx>, [n.d.], [accessed 09.08.2010].

[82] Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport. *Libraries.* <http://www.culture.gov.uk/3093.aspx>,[n.d.], [accessed 07.07.2008].

[83] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission. *Home page.* <http://web.archive.org/web/20001205190000/http://www.lic.gov.uk/>, [n.d.], [accessed 26.06.2008].

84 Levitt, R; Steele, J. & Thompson, H. *The Library and Information Commission: an evaluation of its policy work and underpinning research*, 2000.

[85] Great Britain. Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. *Best practice at heart of new dawn for MLA.* <http://www.mla.gov.uk/news/press_releases/new_dawn>, 2008, [accessed 13.07.2008].

[86] Great Britain. Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. *Museums, Libraries and Archives corporate plan 2008 to 2011.* <http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//C/corporate_plan_2008_13176.pdf>, 2008, [accessed 13.07.2008].

[87] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Enabling a digitally United Kingdom: a framework for action,* 2004.

[88] Great Britain. Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. *MLA pledge a smooth transition.* Press release 26 July 2010. <http://www.mla.gov.uk/news_and_views/press_releases/2010/mla_gov_announcement>, 2010, [accessed 09.08.2010].

1.5.3 Local government information policy

The Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG)[89] is the government department which has ongoing responsibility for the local eGovernment policy agenda, although the Local e-Government Programme closed in April 2006:

> … having succeeded in: delivering part of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's March 2000 vision of all local councils offering all local services online by December 2005; achieving the SR2004 Public Service Agreement objective of: "assisting local government to achieve 100 per cent capability in electronic delivery of priority services by 2005, in ways that customers will use".[90]

As part of its role in support of local government CLG provides funding and direction, in conjunction with DCMS, for public libraries and encourages local authorities to improve information to citizens on local services.[91] Its Connect to your Council Take-up Campaign was designed to encourage the public to use councils' online services.[92]

1.5.4 Information literacy skills policy

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) defines information literacy as:

> … knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner.[93]

This is one of a number of useful definitions on the Information Literacy website.

BIS[94] and the Department for Children, Schools and Families[95] (re-named the Department for Education on 11 May 2010[96]) both have a role in developing the skills of the nation. In England, they have worked in partnership to reform education and training for 14-19 year olds to help young people to develop the skills they need for work and higher level study, including

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[89] Great Britain. Communities and Local Government. *About us.* <http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/about/>, [n.d.], [accessed 09.08.2010].

[90] Great Britain. Communities and Local Government. *Local e-government.* <http://www.communities.gov.uk/local government/efficiencybetter/localegovernment>, [n.d.], [accessed 13.07.2008].

[91] Great Britain. Communities and Local Government. *Community empowerment commitments in the local government white paper.* <http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/communityempowerment/community empowermentcommitments>, 2008, [accessed 13.07.2008].

[92] Great Britain. Communities and Local Government. *Connect to your council takeup campaign: campaign review and recommendations for future local authority campaigns (Burst 1-3).* <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/ localgovernment/connecttocouncil>, 2007, [accessed 13.07.2008].

[93] Information Literacy. *Definitions of IL.* <http://www.informationliteracy.org.uk/Information_literacy/Definitions.aspx>, 2008, [accessed 14.07.2008].

[94] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. *Further education and skills.* <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/further-education-skills>, 2010, [accessed 09.08.2010].

[95] Great Britain. Department for Children, Schools and Families. *About us: departmental information.* <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/aboutus/>, 2007, [accessed 14.07.2008].

[96] *Ibid.*, [accessed 09.08.2010].

basic English, mathematics and ICT skills.[97] This is in response to the 2006 *Leitch review of skills.*[98] Whilst information and communication technology (ICT) skills and information literacy skills are not, or should not be considered, the same thing, there is a degree of overlap.

Again, media literacy is related to information literacy but is not the same, and Ofcom has a duty to promote media literacy, arising from Section 11 of the Communications Act 2003.[99] Ofcom, the Office for Communications,[100] is the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries, with responsibilities across television, radio, telecommunications and wireless communications services. Ofcom defines media literacy as: "the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts".[101] It considers that media literacy ranges from the ability to recognise and comprehend information:

> to the higher order critical thinking skills such as questioning, analysing and evaluating that information. This aspect of media literacy is sometimes referred to as "critical viewing" or "critical analysis".[102]

The *Digital Britain* report[103] from BIS and DCMS also tasked Ofcom with managing the Consortium for the encouragement of Digital Participation, which was formally launched on 15 October 2009,[104] and announced the appointment of Martha Lane Fox as the Champion for Digital Engagement.

To complement skills developed through the National Curriculum, the Royal Society for encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) has been working with the Open Minds Curriculum Network to develop a curriculum based around the life skills pupils will need in the 21st century[105]. Amongst the five competencies are Competences for Managing Information:

> Students would: have developed a range of techniques for accessing, evaluating and differentiating information and have learned how to analyse, synthesise and apply it;

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[97]Great Britain. Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. *World class skills: implementing the Leitch review of skills in England,* 2007.

[98] Leitch, S. *Leitch review of skills: Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills. Final report*, 2006.

[99] Great Britain. Ofcom. *Annex B: Supporting document: Section 11 Communications Act 2003.* <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/strategymedialit/ml_statement/annexb/?a=87101>, 2003, [accessed 14.07.2008].

[100] Great Britain. Ofcom. *Statutory duties and regulatory principles.* <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/about/sdrp/>, [n.d.], [accessed 14.07.2008].

[101] Great Britain. Ofcom. *Ofcom's strategy and priorities for the promotion of media literacy: a statement,* 2004, p.2.

[102] *Ibid.*, p.5.

[103] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, ref. 24.

[104] Great Britain. Ofcom. *Consortium launch.* <http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/2009/10/consortium-launch/>, [2009], [accessed 09.08.2010].

[105] Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. *Opening minds.* <http://www.thersa.org/projects/education/opening-minds>, 2008, [accessed 14.07.2008].

understand the importance of reflecting and applying critical judgement, and have learned how to do so.[106]

The RSA is not a public body, however it works with government and is influential, so it will be helpful in due course to see what impact the success of this project has on national information literacy skills policy.

1.5.5 Information industry policy

BIS succeeded the old Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR) and its predecessor the Department of Trade and Industry (Dti) in 2009 [107] and took over its role in developing the information industries and economic aspects of the provision of public sector information. It has specific sections looking at digital content, international ICT policy (especially EU policy), broadcasting, electronics and IT services.[108] To deliver on the latter, it works with the Information Age Partnership, "a forum to provide leadership in the UK, and take maximum global advantage of the technological, economic and political developments that characterise the Information Age" [109] and the e-Skills UK Sector Skills Council.[110,111] As part of BIS's role in fostering competitive markets, it followed up the government's response to the Office of Fair Trading 2006 report on public sector information(PSI)[112,113] by jointly commissioning with HM Treasury a review of the trading funds that supply PSI.[114] It also co-sponsored the *Digital Britain* report[115]with DCMS.

Table 1.1 on the next page provides an overview of which main information policies were the responsibility of the various UK government departments in 2010.

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[106] Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. *Opening minds framework.* <http://www.thersa.org/projects/education/opening-minds/opening-minds-framework>, 2008, [accessed 14.07.2008].

[107] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. *New Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.berr.gov.uk/aboutus/pressroom/page51711.html>, 2009, [accessed 09.08.2010].

[108] Great Britain. Department for Business Innovation and Skills. *Business sectors.* <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/by/themes/business%20sectors>, 2010, [accessed 09.08.2010].

[109] Information Age Partnership. *Home.* <http://www.iapuk.org/>, [n.d.], [accessed 14.07.2008].

[110] Great Britain. e-Skills UK Sector Skills Council. *Home.* <http://www.e-skills.com/>, [n.d.], [accessed 09.08.2010].

[111] It is worth noting that the e-Skills UK's skills assessment strategy, in response to D*igital Britain* does not identify what the skills are, and certainly makes no mention of information literacy as opposed to IT skills. *See*: Great Britain. e-Skills UK Sector Skills Council. *Strategic skills assessment for the digital economy.* London: Great Britain. e-Skills UK Sector Skills Council, 2009. <http://www.e-skills.com/Research-and-policy/2687>, [accessed 09.08.2010].

[112] Great Britain. Department of Trade and Industry, ref. 18.

[113] Great Britain. Office of Fair Trading, ref. 20.

[114] Newbery, Bently & Pollock, R.*,* ref. 19.

[115] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, ref. 24.

Table 1.1: Departmental breakdown of government policies with an information policy component 2010

	BIS	CO	DCLG	DCMS	DfE	DEFRA	DH	HMT	MoJ
Digital engagement, incl. Power of Information		✓							
Government websites, incl quality & standards		✓							
Transformational Government		✓							
PSI re-use: EU PSI directive									✓
PSI re-use: Trading funds	✓							✓	✓
PSI re-use: Data unlocking		✓							✓
Official statistics policy		✓							
Geographic Information: EU Inspire directive						✓			
Environmental information: EU directive						✓			✓
Health information							✓		
Freedom of Information									✓
Data Protection									✓
Intellectual property	✓	✓							
Knowledge economy	✓								
Digital broadcasting	✓			✓					
Digital inclusion			✓						
Public libraries			✓	✓					
School libraries				✓	✓				

Key:
BIS   Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CO   Cabinet Office
DCLG   Department of Communities and Local Government
DCMS   Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DfE   Department for Education
DEFRA   Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DH   Department of Health
HMT   Her Majesty's Treasury
MoJ   Ministry of Justice

1.6   Summary of Chapter 1

Chapter 1 has introduced the aim of the research and outlined what it is trying to achieve: to investigate how United Kingdom government policy on citizens' access to public sector information might be improved. Having identified the individual research questions and concomitant objectives, it defined the scope of the research and put it in the context of eGovernment and current initiatives. Finally, it provided an overview of relevant information policy across the various UK government departments.

1.7   Structure of the rest of the thesis

Chapters 2 and 3 of the thesis address the review of the literature and the methods adopted within the overall theoretical framework of the research. The main findings chapters 4 to 8 directly relate to the objectives and research questions, as shown in Table 1.2 below. Relevant UK policy documents dating back to 1996 are mapped in Chapter 4 and analysis of the interviews of policy leaders and opinion-formers constitutes the main basis of Chapters 5 to 7. These look at policy development, access to public sector information progress and gaps, and the opening-up of UK government data. Chapter 8 considers evaluation of implementation of policy on citizens' access to PSI, including an assessment of measures that are already available and gaps that could be filled, as well as a framework to assist with evaluation. This framework is tested against the recommendations of the Power of Information Taskforce in Annex G although results of the testing are also in Chapter 8. Discussion on the research findings in Chapter 9 is presented in terms of the research objectives, as are the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 10. An important element of any PhD is the lessons learned from the research process, therefore these are also addressed in Chapter 10.

Table 1.2: Structure of the main text

Chapter	Research Question	Objective
Chapter 1: Introduction		
Chapter 2: Context and literature review	**RQ1:** What previous work has been done on the theory and practice of policy on citizens' access to PSI?	**OB1:** To understand the academic and practitioner research which informs the current context in which policy on citizens' access to PSI is formulated.
Chapter 3: Methodology	**RQ2:** What methodology would be suitable for investigating UK government policy on citizens' access to PSI?	**OB2:** To decide which is or are the most suitable methodologies and methods that will best meet the aim of the research.
Chapter 4: UK policies 1996-2009	**RQ3:** What policies has the UK government developed since 1996 on citizens' access to public sector information?	**OB3:** To identify and analyse the contents of UK government policies from 1996 which relate to citizens' access to PSI.
Chapter 5: Findings: Policy development	**RQ4:** How is policy on citizens' access to PSI developed and governed?	**OB4:** To assess how policy on citizens' access to PSI is developed and governed.
Chapter 6: Findings: Access to public sector information	**RQ5:** How well are the policies working in practice, how could they be improved and what gaps in the policies need filling?	**OB5:** To examine how the policies are working in practice and identify any gaps in the policies.
Chapter 7: Findings: Opening up UK government data	**RQ6:** What has changed in the policies in 2009-2010 in the light of a move to more open and transparent government & why?	**OB6:** To explore the opening up of government data since 2009.
Chapter 8: Findings: Evaluation of government policy on citizens' access to public sector information	**RQ7:** How is implementation of UK policy on citizens' access to PSI evaluated and how could this evaluation be improved or extended?	**OB7:** To identify how implementation of policy on PSI is evaluated and investigate how this evaluation could be developed.
Chapter 9: Discussion		
Chapter 10: Conclusions and recommendations	**RQ8:** What recommendations follow from meeting the overall aim of the research?	**OB8:** To make recommendations to government, the information profession and the research community in the light of the answers to the research questions.

Chapter 2: Context and literature review

2.1 *Introduction*

This chapter considers the review of literature on the specific policy focus of the research and therefore addresses Objective OB1: to understand the academic and practitioner research which informs the current context in which policy on citizens' access to public sector information (PSI) is formulated. It also develops the themes that will be taken forward through the interviews. The findings will be discussed in later chapters, but this chapter is structured as follows:

A review of the literature addressing how government policy has been developed to provide citizens with access to the information they need to run their lives has identified a wealth of writing that is tangential, but little specific research is evident. It has proved valuable in confirming the need for research in this area but has also uncovered much on the various impetuses which have led governments to reinvent the way they do business in the digital age. Amongst the most influential writers have been Osborne and Gaebler[116] (credited with being the inspiration for "transformational government" within the context of New Public Management theory, although they use the phrase "entrepreneurial government"); Manuel Castells,[117] with his comprehensive writing on the network society; and Richard Heeks,[118] Christine Bellamy and James A. Taylor,[119] early researchers on the impact of digital technology on governance in the UK. On the information policy side, Hernon, McClure,

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[116] Osborne, D. & Gaebler, T. *Reinventing government: how the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector*, 1993.

[117] For example Castells, M. *The rise of the networked society*. 2nd ed, 2000 & Castells, M. Communication, power and counter-power in the network society. *International Journal of Communication*, 2007, (1), 238-266.

[118] For example Heeks, R., ed. *Reinventing government in the information age*, 1999 and Heeks, R. *Implementing and managing eGovernment: an international text*, 2006.

[119] For example Bellamy, C. & Taylor, J.A. *Governing in the information age*, 1998 and Bellamy, C. & Taylor, J.A. Understanding *government.direct. Information Infrastructure and Policy,* 1998, 6(1), 1-16.

Relyea and Braman in the United States, and Rowlands in the United Kingdom, have had the most impact.

It should be noted that the search was limited to English language publications, although many leading academics in the area publish in English, particularly those from Scandinavia.

This research is firmly rooted in the academic sphere but it is hoped that it will also influence policy-makers. Born,[120] Ang[121] and particularly Braman[122] caution on the difficulties of achieving this, however the 2010 UK government's support for the recommendations of the Power of information review *[123]* and the follow-up Taskforce report,[124] the most significant drivers of policy initiatives for this research in the last ten years, shows that public sector information is on the policy agenda again. The review recognised the value of social networking in the realm of the provision of public sector information, the importance of which has been highlighted by Castells[125] and Mulgan.[126]

The implementation of the recommendations and the work of the Power of Information Taskforce was tracked throughout this research and is the focus for assessing the framework for evaluating implementation of UK government policy on citizens' access to public sector information. The Taskforce to carry forward the work on the original recommendations was announced by Tom Watson MP,[127] Minister for Transformational Government, on 31 March 2008 and was chaired by Richard Allan, who at the time worked for Cisco and has subsequently moved to Facebook. A very useful blog[128] was set up which provided links to related work, both in the UK and overseas, and this was succeeded by the Digital Engagement blog.[129] The Taskforce recommended a new post of Director of Digital Engagement and Andrew Stott was appointed in May 2009.[130] The Digital Engagement blog has charted the work of his team and related teams within government which are implementing digital engagement policy within the Cabinet Office.

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[120] Born, G. Trying to intervene: British media research and the framing of policy debate. *International Journal of Communication*, 2008, (2), 691-698.

[121] Ang, P.H. The academic and the policy maker. *International Journal of Communication,* 2008, (2), 450-453.

[122] Braman, S. Policy research in an evidence-averse environment. *International Journal of Communication*, 2008, (2), 433-449.

[123] Mayo & Steinberg, ref. 21.

[124] Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce, ref. 22.

[125] Castells, ref. 117.

[126] Mulgan, G. *The art of public strategy: mobilizing power and knowledge for the common good*, 2009.

[127] Watson, T. *Power of information: new taskforce. Speech by Tom Watson MP, Minister for Transformational Government, 31 March 2008.* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/about_the_cabinet_office/speeches/watson/080331watson.aspx>, 2008, [accessed 18.06.2008].

[128] Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce, ref. 22.

[129] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Digigov* [blog]. <http://coi.gov.uk/blogs/digigov/feed/atom/>, 2010, [accessed 20.08.2010].

[130] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Cabinet Office names Director of Digital Engagement*. <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2009/090513_digital.aspx> 13.05.2009, [accessed 06.17.2009].

Tom Watson's own words go some way to showing why the *Power of information* agenda is so important for this research:

> I've brought this taskforce together because we're about making a difference for people. Some have said that the Power of Information is just for geeks. It isn't. The report does not mention technology once. It's about using information to make people's lives better.[131]

The Power of Information review was a policy exercise, not an academic one, and should be seen in this light, however it is noteworthy that the main methodology was the use of interviews with a range of (unnamed) key stakeholders, both within and outside government. This research has drawn on similar groupings to get the necessary range of insights to gain a balanced picture.

The story of access to public sector information in the UK rapidly unfolded during the second half of 2009 and the beginning of 2010. A key figure in the next stage of development was Professor Sir Tim Berners-Lee, appointed in June 2009[132] to take forward the Taskforce recommendations relating to making government data more available and accessible. With the weight of his authority he had a significant impact on the thinking of the [then] Prime Minister Gordon Brown, leading to a change of attitude towards making more public sector information available and in formats designed to assist developers in mashing the data to produce new services.[133] The outcome was the open data service data.gov.uk launched in January 2010,[134] similar to the pioneering US data.gov service.[135]

As can be judged from the above section, there were more significant developments in the UK relating to policy on citizens' access to public sector information after the research began than in the previous 10 years. This brought with it challenges: much information about the new developments appeared in the national media and in a wide variety of blogs and email alerts, both those coming from inside Whitehall[136] – itself a huge departure from previous attitudes to engaging with the public – and from interested parties such as the Open Knowledge Foundation (OKF), MySociety and Tom Watson MP. (He continued to take an interest in this area after he resigned from his post as Minister for Digital Engagement.) (*See* Annex C, Journal alerts, feeds and blogs.) The published academic research literature has yet to catch up because of the long lead time to publication and the fast changing nature of

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[131] Watson, ref.127.

[132] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 25.

[133] Crabtree, J. & Chatfield, T. Mash the state. *Prospect,* 2010, (167), 42-46.

[134] Great Britain. Number 10. *One-stop shop for government data launched.*
<http://.www.number10.gov.uk/Page22218>, 21.01.2010, [accessed 25.01.2010].

[135] Kirkpatrick, M. Open government: Berners-Lee and the UK show Obama how it's done. *New York Times,*
<http://www.nytimes.com/external/readwriteweb/2009/06/10/10readwriteweb-open-governemnt-berners-lee-and-the-uk-to-s-19521.html>, 10.06.2009, [accessed 09.07.2009].

[136] For example blogs of John Suffolk, Chief Information Officer, Steph Gray, Business, Innovation and Skills, (Helpful Technology) and the Digital engagement blog. *See* Journal alerts, feeds and blogs, Annex C.

the subject area, however it is worth noting that many of those involved in the OKF are academics. Also, in mid-2010, as this thesis was being completed, four new relevant publications were published, two about open government data,[137,138] one on public sector information economic indicators[139] and a global review of public sector information activity[140] (edited by an academic involved in the Australian equivalent of the Power of Information Taskforce), which shows that the issues are beginning to rise up the research agenda.

2.2 Policy development and analysis

Before looking at the literature on the specific areas of eGovernment and information policy, it is perhaps helpful to look at the general literature on policy analysis, as well as comment on UK government policy-making, to inform the approaches taken in this research.

2.2.1 Review of general literature on policy development and analysis

Various authors of the policy analysis literature re-quote the "much quoted" 1972 comment by Dye that public policy is "whatever a government chooses to do or not to do."[141] This is an attempt to simplify the policy process, but the policy process is far from simple. The title of Dye's 1976 book, quoted by Parsons,[142] is rather more helpful in the context of this research: *Policy analysis: what governments do, why they do it, and what difference it makes.[143]* Just focussing on the "what" of government decisions does not convey the influences that have brought the decisions about, the greater context within which they are made, and what changes have happened as a result of the decisions – which this research seeks to address.

The "classical" stages heuristic policy frameworks, common until the mid-1980s, have been described by Hogwood and Gunn,[144] amongst others, as a logical process, with government developing policy to answer a policy problem, formulating the response and publishing policy documents to show how that response will be implemented. As Sabatier[145] points out, these were designed for large, top-down, self-contained policy initiatives, but most policy is not like

[137] Access Info Europe & Open Knowledge Foundation. *Beyond access: open government data and the 'right to reuse': draft for consultation.* <http://www.access-info.org/documents/Beyond_Access_10_Aug_2010_consultation.pdf>, 2010, [accessed 07.09.2010].

[138] Hogge, B. *Open data study: commissioned by the Transparency and Accountability Initiative.* Soros Foundation, 2010. <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/information/focus/communication/articles_publications/publications/open-data-study-20100519/open-data-study-100519.pdf>, [accessed 04.09.2010].

[139] Corbin, C. *Public sector information economic indicators & economic case study on charging models.* INFSO/E4 JP (2009)D/141680. European Commission, 2010. <http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/psi/docs/pdfs/economic_study_report_final.pdf>, [accessed 10.09.2010].

[140] Fitzgerald, B., ed. *Access to public sector information: law, technology and policy*, 2010.

[141] For example Colebatch, H.K. What work makes policy? *Policy Sciences,* 2006, 39(4), 309-321. p.313.

[142] Parsons, W. *Public policy: an introduction to the theory and practice of policy analysis.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1995, p.xv.

[143] Dye, T.R. *Policy analysis: what governments do, why they do it, and what difference it makes*, 1976.

[144] Hogwood, B.W. & Gunn, L.A. *Policy analysis for the real world*, 1984, p.24.

[145] Sabatier, P.A. The need for better theories. *In:* Sabatier, P.A., ed. *Theories of the policy process.* 2nd ed., 2007, pp.3-17.

that. Hill and Hupe[146] suggest that a stagist approach is useful for policy analysis but that this does not match reality. They prefer a split into policy formation and policy implementation. Lindblom and Woodhouse see the stages version of policy-making as artificial, in their phrase, a "primeval soup":[147]

> Deliberate, orderly steps therefore are not an accurate portrayal of how the policy process actually works. Policy making is, instead, a complexly interactive process without beginning or end. To make sense of it certainly requires attention to conventional governmental-political topics such as elections, elected functionaries, bureaucrats, and interested groups. But equally or more important are the deeper forces structuring and often distorting governmental behaviour: business influence, inequality, and impaired capacities for probing social problems.[148]

Frequently cited pioneers of policy research are Lasswell, Wildavsky and Kingdon, all American. Colebatch[149] and Baumgartner *et al*[150] make the point that much of the literature on policy analysis relates to the United States and is not so relevant to other political systems. Examples of particular theories are the Advocacy Coalition Framework devised by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith[151] and the Punctuated-Equilibrium Theory of Baumgartner and Jones.[152] These two theories refer to the incremental nature of most policy development, with occasional dramatic changes or even cessation. Their US bias is seen through the importance they place on the influence of advocacy groups on policy-making, which is much more prominent in the US than in the UK. That is not to say that less formal groupings and the media cannot have a significant impact on UK policy, and Baumgartner and Jones stress the role of media attention to an issue in tipping it from the level of a policy sub-system to high on the government's agenda.[153]

In developing the Advocacy Coalition Framework, Sabatier[154] states that he is attempting to mesh the top-down approach – characterised by a focus on the individual policies and policy-makers at the centre – with a bottom-up approach, which looks at the overall "policy problem" and the various actors with common beliefs about the problem, the advocates for particular courses of action. This is to address the criticisms of the top-down analysis that it does not consider the wider influences and influencers on policy and the criticism of the bottom-up theory that it lacks attention to the indirect influences of the centre on the participants, as well

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[146] Hill, M. & Hupe, P. *Implementing public policy: an introduction to the study of operational governance.* 2nd ed., 2009.

[147] Lindblom, C.E. & Woodhouse, E.J. *The policy-making process.* 3rd ed., 1993, p.10.

[148] *Ibid.*, pp.11-12.

[149] Colebatch, ref. 141.

[150] Baumgartner, F.R., Green-Pedersen, C. & Jones. *Comparative studies of policy agendas In:* Baumgartner, F.R., Green-Pedersen, C. & Jones, eds, *Comparative studies of policy agendas*, 2008, pp.1-16.

[151] Sabatier, P.A. & Weible, M. The Advocacy Coalition Framework: innovations and clarifications. *In*: Sabatier, P.A., ed. *Theories of the policy process.* 2nd ed., 2007, pp.189-220.

[152] True, J.L., Jones, B.D. & Baumgartner, F.R., Punctuated equilibrium theory: explaining stability and change in policymaking. *In*: Sabatier, P.A., ed. *Theories of the policy process.* 2nd ed., 2007, pp.155-187.

[153] Parsons, ref. 142, p.204.

[154] Sabatier, P.A. Top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation research. *In*: (Hill 1997), pp.272-295.

as the social, economic and legal factors which affect the behaviour of the participants. Another feature of the Advocacy Coalition Framework is that it is designed to apply to a time-frame of 10 to 20 years, so it is considering not just policy implementation, but policy change.

Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework[155,156]also considers the role of policy advocates, but as one of three streams: the political stream – government and political parties; the national mood and consensus-building; and the problem stream – an issue is identified as needing attention, whether as the result of some event, indicators or other feedback on performance. Change happens when these three streams come together – the problem, solution and policy community coalesce.

Colebatch[157] describes the mapping of policy falling into two images of the policy process, the first the "sacred" map which focuses on the rational decisions taken by government in answer to a problem, and secondly the "profane" map which describes the "partisan struggle" in arriving at decisions. This could be interpreted as the "sacred" official version in policy documents and the "profane" version of what happened in reality as seen from the point of view of the various players, both inside and outside government and its agencies. Colebatch[158] develops the idea of three different maps of the policy process: the central decision process – "authoritative choice"; the actual experience of all the multiple participants – "structured interaction"; and how issues have become worth addressing – "social construction", akin to Kingdon's Multiple Policy Streams above. All the maps have their value and this research is designed to look at the "authoritative choice" through mapping the relevant policy documents in Chapter 4 and investigating the "structured interaction" and, to a lesser extent, "social construction" through the interviews, as reported in Chapters 5-7.

2.2.2 Policy development and analysis in the UK

Turning to the specific circumstances of policy development in the United Kingdom, *Professional policy making for the twenty first century*[159] from the Strategic Policy Making Team of the Cabinet Office in 1999 provides a background to how UK government policy was being developed at the time of *Modernising government.*[160] Perri 6,[161] Bourgon[162] and Parsons[163] characterise this as the influence of New Public Management theory on the Blair government, promoted by Osborne and Gaebler and others in the early 1990s. The

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[155] Parsons, ref. 142, pp.192-194.

[156] Sabatier, ref. 145.

[157] Colebatch, ref. 141, p.313.

[158] *Ibid.*, pp.313-314.

[159] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Strategic Policy Making Team. *Professional policy making for the twenty first century,* 1999.

[160] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Modernising government.* Cm 4310, 1999.

[161] 6, P. Joined-up government in the western world in comparative perspective: a preliminary literature review and exploration. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 2004, 14(1), 103-138.

[162] Bourgon, J. Responsive, responsible and respected government: towards a New Public Administration theory. *International Review of Administrative Sciences,* 2007, 73(1), 7-26.

[163] Parsons, W. Not just steering but weaving: relevant knowledge and the craft of building policy capacity and coherence. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 2004, 63(1), 43-57.

philosophy was to adopt private sector models of accountability, targets and performance measures, with an emphasis on budget-driven "delivery." The Cabinet Office team suggested how policy-making should be done, but a recent study by the Constitution Unit of University College London[164] did not find evidence of any systematic attempt to follow the advice and considered that few in Whitehall would even be aware of *Modernising government*.

Parsons[165] describes policy development in the UK, and particularly under the New Labour administration of the late 1990s and 2000s, as centralist and therefore tending to uniformity and discouragement of innovation. Drawing on the work of Dror, Schön, Mulgan and others, he suggests that empowering citizens to become more involved in policy design will mean that policies will become more diverse and less uniform.

A key component of the centralist approach is control through co-ordination of policy. For Perri 6: "coordination is an eternal and ubiquitous problem in public administration."[166] Dr Geoff Mulgan, founder of think tank Demos and chief strategist for the Blair administration, claimed to coin the term "joined-up government" in 1997 in a speech for Tony Blair to launch the Social Exclusion Unit:[167] "Joined-up government is about more than structure. It also depends on relationships."[168] For Mulgan, the most successful systems are ones that are: "structured in ways that make it easy for people to collaborate."[169] This echoes Wildavsky: "policy analysis is about relationships between people"[170] and highlights the importance to this research of not only considering the various policies that impact on citizens' access to public sector information, but how those policies are co-ordinated, how the people making and implementing the policies are formally co-ordinated and also the informal relationships that exist, not only within government but with outside agencies and individuals.

Lack of co-ordination was identified early on in the literature review as an inhibitor to progress in the development and implementation of government policy. Most recently, the Institute for Government,[171] a think tank led by ex-permanent secretary Sir Michael Bichard, devoted a third of its recommendations on how government could improve its strategic capability to suggestions for a more joined-up approach. In his foreword Bichard stated:

> Mechanisms for coordinating policy and delivery between departments are still dominated by siloed thinking, making it difficult to manage cross-cutting policy issues. … without effective coordination between departments, government will remain ill-

[164] Waller, P., Morris, R.M. & Simpson, D. *Understanding the formulation and development of government policy in the context of FOI. Prepared for the Information Commissioner's Office by The Constitution Unit*, 2009.
[165] Parsons, ref. 163.
[166] 6, ref.161, p.131.
[167] Mulgan, ref 126.
[168] *Ibid.*, p.193.
[169] *Ibid.*, p.182.
[170] Wildavsky, A. *The art and craft of policy analysis*, 1980, p.17.
[171] Parker, S. *et al. Shaping up: a Whitehall for the future*. <http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/pdfs/shaping-up-a-whitehall-for-the-future.pdf>, 2010, [accessed 18.01.2010].

equipped to realise the effectiveness, efficiency and innovation that can flow from "joining up".[172]

Based on the results of interviews with 30 senior civil servants, the report recommended that collaboration be encouraged through the appraisal system and line management, and appointing of a few Secretaries of State responsible for cross-cutting issues.[173] Information policy could be such an area as it is the responsibility of all and none – no one has overall responsibility.

An alternative approach could be a minister being appointed to serve in two departments at the same time,[174] for example Stephen Timms reported into both the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Treasury as the minister for Digital Britain. Duggett[175] reported that cross-departmental working groups to take forward joint Public Service Agreements (PSAs) was another mechanism to facilitate joined-up government. The importance of leadership was discussed by Mulgan[176] and also has relevance for this research: the investment of time and political capital by ministers was necessary for inter-departmental working or taskforces to succeed and strong "ownership" from the top to override vested interests.

Chapman and O'Toole[177] took up the theme of leadership, although in their polemic they are very critical of the sort of leadership now required of the civil service. They consider that the influence of private sector thinking has meant that top civil servants no longer have the role to inspire and engage but are instead charged with being responsible for "delivery" against targets. Mulgan[178] felt that the role of officials was to provide advice on how to implement policies and to deliver the implementation – again the emphasis on "delivery." He does not suggest that they have a role in policy development, unlike Chapman and O'Toole. It is notable that he worked in Number 10 at a time when much of the policy development was undertaken by political special advisers.

Duggett,[179] an ex-civil servant, was more supportive than Chapman and O'Toole of the targets regime to ensure accountability and suggested, wrongly as it turns out, that a future government of whichever persuasion, would probably keep the PSA targets, even if by another name. The Coalition government used the 2010 Spending Review to abandon the

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[172] Parker, S. *et al. Shaping up: a Whitehall for the future*. <http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/pdfs/shaping-up-a-whitehall-for-the-future.pdf>, 2010, [accessed 18.01.2010], p.7.

[173] *Ibid.* p.9.

[174] Waller, Morris & Simpson. ref. 164, p.35.

[175] Duggett, M. The state of UK governance: Whitehall structures and functions under Brown. *Public Policy and Administration*, 2009, 24(1), 103-111.

[176] Mulgan, ref. 126.

[177] Chapman, R.A. & O'Toole, B.J. Leadership in the British Civil Service: an interpretation. *Public Policy and Administration,* 2009, 25(2), 123-136.

[178] Mulgan, ref. 126.

[179] Duggett, ref. 175.

Public Service Agreement targets.[180] It remains to be seen to what extent there will be a move away from this focus on "delivery" and centrist approach of New Public Management.[181] The PSA targets were an embodiment of the Labour government's high-level priorities:

- sustainable growth and prosperity
- fairness and opportunity for all
- stronger communities and a better quality of life
- a more secure, fair and environmentally sustainable world.[182]

A recent study of policy-making across government was undertaken for the Information Commissioner's Office by the Constitution Unit of University College London.[183] The research was undertaken by three ex-civil servants, in conjunction with the UCL team, interviewing 25 ex-ministers, current and ex-civil servants and advisers. They found no set pattern to the way that policy was made, or even any common agreement as to what constituted "policy" – the concept however was well-understood. Neither did the various overlapping processes of policy formulation and implementation fit with the various theoretical models that they identified, although there was more of a tendency to think in terms of a continuous policy loop. Indeed they did not find the academic literature useful and quoted one interviewee who commented:

> to the effect that when academics engage with the policy making process they tend to regard it as something that should adapt to conform with the theory rather than the opposite, which he found unhelpful.[184]

Looking at who develops policy and how, the researchers found that ideas for new policies came from the political parties and "wider political debate",[185] which ties in with other findings that the policy process is becoming more open with greater consultation. Ministers were responsible for deciding what policy objectives to pursue, although sometimes these were in response to outside events, be it a crisis or even a negative newspaper comment, whilst civil servants worked up the policy objectives into proposals for action.

The UCL research was in the context of the impact of freedom of information (FoI) legislation on policy-making. Ministers and civil servants expressed concern that the decision-making process would be open to scrutiny, inhibiting what could be reported for the record, although they did not feel that any decisions taken would have been different. However it is worth

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[180] Great Britain. HM Treasury. *Spending Review 2010 - the government's approach.* <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/press_10_10.htm>, 2010, [accessed 26.08.2010].

[181] Homburg, V. & Bekkers, V. E-Government and NPM: a perfect marriage? *In*: Bekkers, V.J.J.M. & Homburg, V. *The information ecology of e-government: e-government as institutional and technological innovation in public administration*, 2005.

[182] Duggett, ref. 175.

[183] Waller, Morris & Simpson, ref. 164.

[184] *Ibid.*, p.52.

[185] Waller, Morris & Simpson, ref. 164. p.5.

noting that related research from UCL[186] found that there were few actual FoI requests that related to decision-making, so perhaps the fears were unnecessary. Another finding, that might at first sight seem counter-intuitive, was that FoI had not increased public trust in government. Could this be because the messages coming through from the media about FoI tend to highlight attempts to block access to information rather than the increased openness? Also media coverage of FoI tends to emphasise scandals.

2.3   Themes from information policy and eGovernment research literature

The literatures of information policy and eGovernment have been the most relevant to focus on, as issues around access to information, and the skills to make best use of that access, fall at the overlap between the two spheres. Similar criticisms have been levelled at the research in both areas, reflecting to some extent the relative youth of the disciplines. eGovernment research draws on public administration, public policy, business studies, political science and information systems, but there are now a number of dedicated peer review journals and it is becoming a discipline in its own right.[187] The majority of information policy scholarship is drawn from the information studies domain; this has been noted by Nilsen[188] and Browne,[189] amongst others, in the past and still seems to be the case. There is recognition that a more interdisciplinary approach is desirable.[190]

Information policy does not fit into neat segments for analysis. The literature on policy analysis suggests that research focuses on policy units such as health, environment, education but information policy cuts across these.[191,192] Jones, Wilkerson and Baumgartner's Policy Agendas Project[193] developed coding for specific policy areas to facilitate comparative studies of government policy across agencies and countries, as well as over time. It does not include eGovernment or information literacy, and public library policy comes under Education Excellence. It does include access to government information but under Civil Liberties, which is only part of the picture, and this reflects the US bias of the coding.

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[186] Hazell, R. & Worthy, B. *Impact of FOI on central government: Constitution Unit end of award report to ESRC, RES 062 23 0164,* 2009.

[187] Heeks, R. & Bailur, S. Analyzing e-government research: perspectives, philosophies, theories, methods, and practice. *Government Information Quarterly,* 2007, 24(2), 243-265.

[188] Nilsen, K. *The impact of information policy: measuring the effects of the commercialization of Canadian government statistics*, 2001.

[189] Browne, M. The field of information policy: 2. Redefining the boundaries and methodologies. *Journal of Information Science,* 1997, 23(5), 339-351.

[190] *Ibid.*, p.349.

[191] For example Parsons, ref. 142, p.31 & Sabatier and Weible's list of policy studies using the Advocacy Coalition Framework in Sabatier & Weible, ref. 151, pp.217-219.

[192] Cornelius, I. *Information policies and strategies*, 2010.

[193] Jones, B., Wilkerson, J. & Baumgartner, F.R. *Policy Agendas Project: topics codebook.* <http://www.policyagendas.org/codebooks/topicindex.html#coding>, 2008, [accessed 07.09.2010].

The literature of eGovernment is now considerable and too wide to comment on in detail here, however many texts have been identified which have provided a useful background to the subject and informed the direction of interview questions and data analysis, for example the work of Bellamy and Taylor[194], Heeks,[195] Mayer-Schönberger & Lazer,[196] Fountain, [197] Chadwick[198] and Aichholzer.[199] Possibly because it is such a new field, eGovernment (using the narrower term as this was the one used by the researchers) has attracted various of the senior academics in public information systems to analyse published research in this area – a useful place to start when undertaking one's own review of such a large subject area, both for the findings and the methodology employed. Papers analysing information policy research identified many of the same issues. It was therefore felt that it would be helpful to draw out common themes from those who have assessed the literatures of eGovernment.

2.3.1 Definitions

It soon became clear whilst reading the literature surrounding the subject area of electronic government that terminology was being used to mean different things by different people, or that different terms were being used to refer to the same concepts. The only agreement seemed to be that there was no agreement on terminology – this is still an emerging field of activity.

The most confusing were the uses of the terms eGovernment and eGovernance. Here, for example is a definition of *eGovernment* from the European Union:

> eGovernment is about using the tools and systems made possible by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to provide better public services to citizens and businesses. ICTs are already widely used by government bodies, just as in enterprises, but eGovernment involves much more than just the tools. Effective eGovernment also involves rethinking organisations and processes, and changing behaviour so that public services are delivered more efficiently to the people who need to use them. Implemented well, eGovernment enables all citizens, enterprises and organisations to carry out their business with government more easily, more quickly and at lower cost.[200]

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[194] For example Bellamy & Taylor, ref. 119.

[195] For example Heeks, ref. 118.

[196] Mayer-Schönberger & Lazer, *Governance and information technology,* 2007.

[197] Fountain, J. E. *Building the virtual state: information technology and institutional change*, 2001.

[198] Chadwick, ref. 36.

[199] For example Aichholzer, G. Scenarios of e-Government in 2010 and implications for strategy design. Electronic Journal of e-Government, 2004, 2(1).<www.ejeg.com/volume-http://www.ejeg.com/volume-2/volume2-issue-1/v2-i1-art1.htm>, [accessed 14.06.2008].

[200] European Commission. *Information Society thematic portal: eGovernment.* <http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/egovernment/index_en.htm>, 2010, [accessed 26.10.2010].

If one compares that with this definition of *eGovernance* from Unesco it can be seen that they have much in common:

> E-Governance is the public sector's use of information and communication technologies with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective.[201]

Both referred to the use of ICT to increase the efficiency of the provision of public services by government. Two further definitions highlight the effect of ICT on the relationship between government and its stakeholders, the first a definition of eGovernment from consultants Gartner and the second a definition of eGovernance from the Council of Europe:

> E-government is the transformation of public sector internal and external relationships through Internet-enabled operations, information technology (IT) and communication to optimize government service delivery, constituency participation and governance.[202]

> … a set of technology-mediated processes that are changing both the delivery of public services and the broader interactions between citizens and government.[203]

Professor Tom Riley, a consultant who has advised the Canadian government, provided a helpful distinction between the concepts of eGovernment and eGovernance:

> e-Government is actually a narrower approach dealing with the development of online services to the citizen, more the e on any particular government service –
> such as e-tax, e-transportation or e-health. e-Governance is a wider concept that defines and assesses the impacts that technologies are having on the practice and administration of governments. It also includes the relationship between public servants and the wider society, such as dealings with the elected bodies or outside groups, like not-for-profit organizations, NGOs, academic institutions or private sector corporate entities. e-Governance encompasses a series of necessary steps for government agencies to develop and administer in order to ensure successful implementation of e-government services to the public at large.[204]

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[201] Unesco. *E-governance capacity building.* <http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=2179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html>, 2007, [accessed 03.07.2008].

[202] Scardino, L. *et al.* 2001. *E-government and external service providers.* R-14-3856, 2001.

[203] Oakley, K. *What is e-governance? Council of Europe. Integrated Project 1: e-Governance Workshop,* 10-11 June 2002, Council of Europe. <http://www.coe.int/t/e/integrated_projects/democracy/02_activities/01_e-governance/02_the_work_of_the_e-governance_committee/03_IP1(2002)9.asp#TopOfPage>, 2002, [accessed 28.05.2008], p.1.

[204] Riley, T.B. e-government vs. e-governance. *Riley Report,* June 2006. <http://www.rileyis.com/report/june06.htm>, [accessed 16.06.2008]. p.1.

Developing the potential for new relationships between government and citizens brings us to the notion of "eDemocracy",[205] "digital democracy"[206] or "eParticipation".[207] The term "eParticipation" has much to recommend it as it implies something wider than "eDemocracy", which some may consider to be synonymous with "eVoting" but is in fact much more. Through opinion-polling, campaigning and lobbying, and engaging directly with political parties and candidates, the citizen now has new ways to *influence* government and its policy-making, not just be the recipient of services and information.

So, to clarify and simplify the definitions for this research, eGovernance is considered to be the overarching term, encompassing both eGovernment and eParticipation, where eGovernment is the use of new technology by government to improve the efficiency of internal processes, and provide better and new services to stakeholders, and eParticipation is the use of technology to empower citizens to have greater influence on, and involvement in, government. However, the term "eGovernment" is in more common usage and in academic papers, so for simplicity, this is the preferred term used in this thesis.

The provision of public information services currently falls within the eGovernment banner but as interactive services develop, they could profoundly affect democracy. However, as Kolsaker and Lee-Kelley pointed out, the country needs to learn to walk before it can run:

> We perceive a gap between vision and delivery and suggest that the immediate emphasis should shift to improving existing online services before embarking on transformational government.[208]

Considering all the findings of various studies, Norris observed that: "e-government has a long way to go to reach the predictions of its principal normative models."[209]

One of the most influential models he was referring to was that proposed by Layne and Lee.[210] They identified four stages of eGovernment development: (1) cataloguing – websites and online forms; (2) online transactions with government; (3) vertical integration between governments at the various levels for similar functions; and (4) horizontal integration – the true one-stop shop for citizens.

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[205] For example Clift, S.L. *E-government and democracy: representation and citizen engagement in the information age*. <http://www.publicus.net/articles/cliftegovdemocracy.doc>, 2004, [accessed 26.05.2008].

[206] Hacker, K.L. & Van Dijk, J., What is digital democracy? *In*: K.L. Hacker & J. Van Dijk, eds, *Digital democracy: issues of theory and practice,* 2000, pp.1-9, p.1.

[207] DEMO_net , ref. 39.

[208] Kolsaker & Lee-Kelley, ref. 208, p.68.

[209] Norris, D.F., ed. *Current issues and trends in e-government research,* 2007. p.iv.

[210] Layne, K. & Lee, J. Developing fully functional E-government: A four stage model. *Government Information Quarterly,* 2001, 18(2), 122-136.

Problems of definition are not limited to eGovernment. Many words have been expended trying to define the concept of information policy. Having studied the field, Burger came to the conclusion that:

> Information policy can legitimately be used only as an umbrella term for a group of public policies united in one way or another by that ambiguous term "information".[211]

This mirrors Deputy Data Protection Registrar Francis Aldhouse's[212] "outsider's" view that the topics making up information policy only have in common the fact that they are all of concern to librarians and information scientists.

What is important is that information policy is seen as a *process* rather than a document and this research seeks to shed light on that process. In Browne's discussion of the problems of identifying a normative model for information policy, she suggests building on the information transfer process, following the lifecycle of information and including: "processes of analysis, interpretation, evaluation, synthesis, repackaging and dissemination."[213] The result should provide an "intellectually defensible" framework for scholars but grounded in the real world and understandable by policy-makers.[214] This assumes that such a normative model is possible. Kay[215] highlighted the difficulties of developing prescriptive models when government policy is so prone to being diverted by unpredictable events or outside influences.

What issues information policy actually covers has exercised various other researchers and analysts. The Library and Information Commission considered the elements of a national information policy to include:

- information superhighway
- regulatory mechanisms
- universal access
- plurality of technical solutions
- core content for public good
- ensuring delivery of content
- privacy/data protection
- legal deposit
- intellectual property
- free access to core information

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[211] Burger, R. H. *Information policy: a framework for evaluation and policy research*, 1993, p.91.
[212] Aldhouse, F. Implementing information policies: some data protection experience. *In*: Rowlands, I. ed. *Understanding information policy*, 1997, pp.114-127, p. 115.
[213] Browne, M. The field of information policy: 1. Fundamental concepts. *Journal of Information Science,* 1997, 23(4), 261-275. p.272.
[214] *Ibid*. p.272.
[215] Kay, A. *The dynamics of public policy: theory and evidence,* 2006.

- UK-wide programme of information handling skills
- information specialists
- information strategies for organisations.[216]

More recently, Duff [217] came up with what he described as a normative list of information policy issues, however this seems rather a list of overlapping headings. More helpful is Rowlands's policy construct of:

- information for citizenship
- information protectionism
- information for competitive advantage, and
- information for consumer choice.[218]

This research falls firmly in the camp of the first of these – information for citizenship – although there may be some areas where government information does support consumer choice, for example the choice of schools or surgeons.

2.3.2 Academic eGovernment research

Looking at the reviews of literature and conference proceedings, there are some conflicting views of the current state of research in the area of eGovernment, which may reflect the differing time scales and sources of papers, however the impression gained is that research written to date lacks rigour, does not draw sufficiently on the work of predecessors and shows little evidence of the research philosophy employed.

Heeks and Bailur[219] were particularly critical. Their 2007 study of 84 journal and conference papers (published between 2002-2005) found that:

> Research draws mainly from a weak or confused positivism and is dominated by over-optimistic, a-theoretical work that has done little to accumulate either knowledge or practical guidance for e-government. Worse, there is a lack of clarity and lack of rigor about research methods alongside poor treatment of generalization.[220]

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[216] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission. *Keystone for the Information Age: a national information policy for the UK*, 1999.

[217] Duff, A.S. The past, present, and future of information policy. *Information, Communication & Society,* 2004, 7(1), 69-87. p.77.

[218] Rowlands. I. General overview. *In:* Rowlands ed. *Understanding information policy*, 1997, pp.3-16, p.15.

[219] Heeks & Bailur, ref. 187.

[220] *Ibid*, p.243.

Norris and Lloyd,[221] in a review of articles from refereed journals, also found that few researchers created or tested theories and that many put forward conclusions that were not supported by their research. Adequacy of the literature reviews by researchers was also poor. This research, by contrast, does not take a positivist approach, provides specific recommendations to government and has developed a theoretical framework for assessing evaluation of implementation of information policy.

Similar criticisms have been made of information policy research. As Duff succinctly put it:

> In academe, information policy suffers from disciplinary territorialism, conceptual under development, and even the absence of a widely accepted definition.[222]

Rowlands[223] found little attention had been paid to the theoretical foundations, with a lack of frameworks, tools and methodologies. His survey of the information policy literature showed that authors did not make explicit their methodologies or assumptions.

Focusing on conference papers, in 2007 Grönlund and Andersson[224] repeated Grönlund's[225] 2004 research using a maturity study to see how the quality and range of research had developed. They did find that the references had increased considerably and that research methodology was more rigorous, however descriptive research had risen from 61% to 69% and there had been little increase in the development and testing of theories. One suggestion they put forward for explaining this lack of theory is funding mechanisms for research; governments (and the EU) are increasingly funding joint projects between academia and industry for the development of products and services, which is not conducive to standing back and critically evaluating progress. They observed that many of the papers presented at the conferences reviewed were explicitly or implicitly reporting on projects in which the researchers had been involved, and this is supported by findings from Norris and Lloyd,[226] with over a third of their considered papers being described as "case studies", although they state that they are being "generous" in describing them as such as the research was not methodologically rigorous.

Heeks and Bailur[227] also observed that more than one in six authors were explicitly writing about projects or services with which they had been involved, one reason they put forward for the generally optimistic, as opposed to pessimistic, view of eGovernment progress. Another

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[221] Norris, D. & Lloyd, B.A. The scholarly literature on e-government: characterizing a nascent field. *International Journal of Electronic Government Research*, 2006, 2(4), 40-56.

[222] Duff, ref. 217, p.70.

[223] Rowlands, I. Concepts, framework and research tools. *In:* Rowlands ed. *Understanding information policy*, 1997, pp.27-25.

[224] Grönlund, Å & Andersson, A. E-gov research 2003-2006: improvements and issues. *In*: Norris, D., ed, *Current issues and trends in e-government research*, 2007, pp.247-268.

[225] Grönlund, Å. State of the art in e-gov research: surveying conference publications. *International Journal of Electronic Government Research*, 2005, 1(4), 1-25.

[226] Norris & Lloyd, ref.221.

[227] Heeks & Bailur , ref. 187.

reason they posit is the large percentage of new researchers (two-thirds, based on lack of self-citing) who may be less willing to challenge perceived hype about the positive impact of eGovernment. This researcher is new to eGovernment research but not to information policy, and is not anxious about upsetting the status quo, however this finding from Heeks and Bailur flagged up the need to start from a neutral position between optimism and pessimism, a position shared with Heeks and Bailur themselves. Experience at the Statistics Commission showed the importance of listening to all sides of an argument, basing recommendations on the evidence. Hence there was a need to interview a wide range of stakeholders for this research in order to get a balanced view, and triangulate this with government policy statements and published comment.

2.3.3 Academic research relating to information policy

2.3.3.1 Access to information

A distinction is made between freedom of information (FoI), where the citizen chooses which documents to request, and access as used here to mean where government provides information pro-actively.

The literature search found only a few items in the academic literature looking at the specific issue of central government policy on access in its broadest sense, rather than accessibility/usability, ie use of the technology. The most comprehensive was Aichholzer and Burkert's 2004 edited volume *Public sector information in the digital age*[228] which is prescient in that the issues it raises have come to the fore since its publication. It argues for more, easier and cheaper access to public sector information in Europe, and rather echoes the elements of rights to information that are now being considered by the Public Sector Transparency Board. The chapter by Bargmann, Pfeifer and Piwinger[229] was a rare example of work specifically addressing the issues from the citizen's point of view and they argue that making non-personal information public should be the default position, not the exception. Aichholzer and Tang,[230] in the same volume, provide a useful early history of the development of PSI policy in the UK (and Austria), based on the policy documents. De Saulles,[231] and particularly Saxby, brought the story more up-to-date, again based on documentary analysis of the policy documents and academic literature, although neither yet[232] cover the developments from 2009 and neither they, nor other academic researchers,

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[228] Aichholzer, G. & Burkert, H. eds. *Public sector information in the digital age: between markets, public management and citizens' rights*, 2004.

[229] Bargmann, M., Pfeifer, G. & Piwinger. A citizens' perspective on public sector information. *In*: Aichholzer, G. & Burkert, H. eds. *Public sector information in the digital age: between markets, public management and citizens' rights*, 2004, pp. 255-274.

[230] Aichholzer, G. & Tang, P. Harnessing public sector information for greater accessibility: Austria and the UK. *In*: Aichholzer, G. & Burkert, H. eds. *Public sector information in the digital age: between markets, public management and citizens' rights*, 2004, pp.287-326.

[231] De Saulles, M. e-Government and the re-use of public sector information. *In*: Remenyi, D. ed. *5th European conference on e-Government,* 16-17 June 2005. Reading: Academic Conferences, 2005, pp.121-126.

[232] Saxby has an article in preparation, due for publication in 2011.

appear to have undertaken interviews with stakeholders to draw the "profane map" as opposed to a "sacred map".

Various academic writing focuses on the economic benefits of the commercial re-use of information,[233] however, as in the search on eGovernment in general, the work of the international bodies proved more fruitful in addressing wider philosophical concerns about information rights:[234]

> Access to information is fundamental to all aspects of our lives – in learning, at work, in staying healthy, improving our individual and collective rights, in being entertained, in knowing our history, in maintaining our cultures and languages and in participating actively in democratic societies.[235]

As can be seen from the quote above from the chair of Unesco's Information for All Programme, access to information is considered fundamental to a democratic society by the supranational organisations which are leading the policy-making in this area. For example, the Unesco Information for All Programme (IFAP) was set up in 2000 (succeeding the General Information Programme) as an intergovernmental programme: "exclusively dedicated to promoting universal access to information and knowledge for development."[236] Although its focus may be on development, in 2004 it published *Policy guidelines for the development and promotion of governmental public domain information[237]* which contains elements for a national information policy that are applicable to all countries. The guidelines were produced with expert input from the University of Oxford and the UK Department for International Development but it is noted that the UK has not set up an IFAP committee, unlike many other countries from the developed world, eg Canada, France, Germany and Denmark.

To show the importance of the provision of public sector information, Osborne and Gaebler highlighted how the 1964 Surgeon General's report condemning smoking triggered a dramatic decline in smoking in the US; they quoted columnist George Will from the *Boston Globe*: "the most cost-effective thing government does is disseminate health information."[238]

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[233] For example Weiss, P. *Borders in cyberspace: conflicting public sector information policies and their economic impacts.* United States. Department of Commerce. <http://www.epsiplatform.eu/psi_library/reports/borders_in_cyberspace>, 2002, [accessed 19.09.2010], Pollock, R. The economics of public sector information. *In:* Fitzgerald, B. ed. *Access to public sector information: law, technology and policy,* 2010, & De Saulles. M. When public meets private: conflicts in information policy. *info,* 2007, 9(6), 10-16.

[234] For example *World Summit on the Information Society*, Geneva 2003 and Tunis 2005, and the Unesco. *Information for All Programme (IFAP)*, <http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1627&URL_DO= DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html>, 2008, [accessed 24.07.2008].

[235] Jakubowicz, K. *Statement by Dr. Karol Jakubowicz, chair of the Information for All Programme on the occasion of the World Information Society Day, 2008*. Paris: Unesco, 2008. <http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=26764&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html>, [accessed 17.06.2008].

[236] Unesco. *Information for All Programme (IFAP)*. <http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1627&URL_DO= DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html>, 2008, [accessed 24.07.2008].

[237] Uhlir. P. F. *Policy guidelines for the development and promotion of governmental public domain information*, 2004.

[238] Osborne & Gaebler, ref.116 , p.338.

Writing in 1984 on public access to government information in the USA, Hernon and McClure[239] assumed that access would be through the depository library system. This shows how times have changed. By 1987 they called for a wide-ranging research programme into information access to support the development of a national information policy;[240] access by electronic means was beginning to be recognised as an issue.

At the moment the Internet is the dominant mechanism for providing access to government information. This research does not address development and use of government websites from a design and usability perspective, however it notes reports which address government's progress in achieving its objectives in this area, for example the 2007 National Audit Office report,[241] the background study,[242] and the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee investigation.[243]

No literature was identified which addressed how government chooses what information to make publicly available, whether through its websites or otherwise.

2.3.3.2 Information literacy and the digital divide

Selwyn[244] recognised that the "digital divide" was not as black and white as those who have access to IT and those who do not, for example access in the home is very different to access in a public space. Feather[245] also argued a link between lack of information and social and economic exclusion. Another element of the digital divide is between those who have the skills to access and those who do not. Providing universal access to public information is wasted if citizens do not have the skills to find and use the information effectively.[246]

> In a digital world, information literacy requires users to have the skills to use information and communication technologies and their applications to access and create information. For example, the ability to navigate in cyberspace and negotiate hypertext multimedia documents requires both the technical skills to use the Internet as well as the literacy skills to interpret the information.[247]

[239] Hernon, P. & McClure, C. *Public access to government information: issues, trends and strategies*, 1984.

[240] Hernon, P. & McClure, C. *Federal information policies in the 1980's: conflicts and issues*, 1987.

[241] Great Britain. National Audit Office. *Government on the internet: progress in delivering information and services online*, 2007.

[242] LSE Public Policy Group & Oxford Internet Institute. *Government on the internet: progress in delivering information and services online: research report*, 2007.

[243] Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Committee of Public Accounts. *Government on the Internet: progress in delivering information and services online*, 2008.

[244] Selwyn, ref. 35.

[245] Feather, J. The information society: a study of continuity and change. 5th ed, 2008, pp.198-199.

[246] Gurstein, M. *Open data: empowering the empowered or effective data use for everyone?* [Open data blog]. <https://email.lboro.ac.uk/owa/ae=Item&a=Open&t=IPM.Note&id=RgAAAABqK%2f2fHtp9bTpyqGQvcpWS9BwDobPra2fmKvQredNcok7HXbACUIF2WmAADobPra%2fmKvQredNcok7HXbADlLXAr9AAAJ>, 2010, [accessed 10.09.2010].

[247] Unesco. *Information for All Programme: Information literacy.*<http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=21293&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html>, 2008, [accessed 27.05.08].

This quote from the Unesco Information for All Programme website encapsulates the range and importance of information literacy to citizens. It is not enough for them just to have access to information; they need the skills to be able to manage and critically evaluate what they find. The Alexandria Proclamation adopted by the Higher Level Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning in November 2005, co-sponsored by Unesco, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the National Forum on Information Literacy, stated that information literacy:

> …empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion of all nations.[248]

It went on to urge governments and intergovernmental organisations to include information literacy in initial and continuing education for key economic sectors and government policy making and administration, a point reinforced by Feather.[249] Unesco itself has shown a strong commitment to developing information literacy amongst its member states through its Information for All Programme and published in 2008 *Understanding information literacy: a primer* by Forest "Woody" Horton Jr [250] aimed at government ministry officials at all levels, amongst others, and *Towards information literacy indicators.*[251]

"Information literacy" is of course a term used within the information profession and not one necessarily recognised elsewhere. Braman provides a helpful three-level description of information literacy in terms of "functionality", analogous to functional literacy, which illustrates the overlap with ICT skills:

- "carry out functions such as the ability to locate and use information as needed to participate in political activity, become educated, perform one's job, and manage financial affairs"[252]
- specific skills: "abilities to retrieve, evaluate, organize, manipulate, and present information"[253]
- cognitive orientation: "emphasizing the understanding of connectivity (how is information transferred, who sees it while I am transferring it, and how do I establish levels of trust?), basic logical operations and data structures, the functions of generic tools such as correction tools and search engines, and the ability to master various types of interfaces."[254]

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[248] International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions & Unesco. *Alexandria Proclamation.* <http://www.infolit.org/International_Colloquium/alexproceng.doc>, [accessed 27.05.08].
[249] Feather, ref. 245.
[250] Horton, F.W. *Understanding information literacy: a primer*, 2008.
[251] Catts, R & Lao, J. *Towards information literacy indicators*, 2008.
[252] Braman. S. *Change of state : information, policy, and power*, 2007, p. 203.
[253] *Ibid.*
[254] Braman, ref. 252.

Too often reference was made to the need for ICT or Internet skills without an understanding of the value of *information* skills.[255] Access and information literacy go hand-in-hand and government policy should address information literacy skills, not just ICT skills. De Saulles[256] reminded us that companies also need a more information literate workforce if they are to avoid wasting money on inefficient Internet searching, and government policy should address this deficiency. Muir *et al.*[257] also found that government was not as *au fait* with information skills as it was with ICT skills.

As computers become simpler to use, the level of ICT skills needed may actually be less but the reverse may be true of information skills; the more information you find, the more you need the skills to evaluate and manage it. Chadwick[258] argued that information skills were more important in the online environment than elsewhere because of the high volume of unmediated data, a point reinforced by Feather,[259] who stressed the need for skills in evaluating information that had not been subject to quality control. For example wikis:

> … put much of the onus for the verification of information on the end-user rather than the information provider.[260]

The data also needs to be in a form that is comprehensible to the user. As Heeks eloquently put it: "Data remains data unless citizens have the skills to turn it into information."[261]

Feather[262] raised the paradox of technology enabling greater access to information but bringing the risk of less potential access for those who were disempowered because they did not have the finance or the skills. They needed access to training or to intermediaries who were trained. He saw more need than ever for: "people with special skills who can help information-seekers"[263] and argued that librarians needed to be flexible in their attitude to both undertaking the role of intermediary and information literacy trainer. Bargmann, Pfeifer and Piwinger[264] also highlighted the potential role of librarians in assisting access and training in information skills, calling for improvement in their education, adequate funding for public libraries and involvement of government libraries in the provision of public sector information.

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[255] For example Newholm *et. al.* The digital divide and the theory of optimal slack. *New Media & Society*, 2008, 10(2), 295-319. & Livingstone & Helsper. Gradations in digital inclusion: children, young people and the digital divide. *New Media & Society*, 2007, 9(4), 671-696.
[256] De Saulles, M. Information literacy amongst UK SMEs: an information policy gap. *Aslib Proceedings,* 2007, 59(1), 68-79.
[257] Muir, A. *et al. Report on developments world-wide on national information policy: prepared for Resource and the Library Association,* 2001.
[258] Chadwick, ref. 36.
[259] Feather, ref. 245.
[260] *Ibid,* p.89.
[261] Heeks, R. *Government data: understanding the barriers to citizen access and use*, 2000.
[262] Feather, ref. 245.
[263] *Ibid.*, p.185.
[264] Bargmann, M., Pfeifer, G. & Piwinger, ref. 229.

2.3.3.3. Co-ordination

A central research issue is how information policy is co-ordinated and implemented across government. It is a recurring theme in the literature, especially of policy analysis, as was highlighted in section 2.2.1. Co-ordination of services for the users is also at the heart of the eGovernment agenda.[265] Deloitte's influential six-stage model of eGovernment progress stressed the move towards clustering of common services, leading to full integration and enterprise transformation.[266] But Fountain, in her 2001 case study on the building of the Business Advisor Interagency Network, backed by Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review, found that:

> … the very concept that made the Business Advisor responsive to the varied needs of business owners – its interagency approach – make the project difficult to sustain politically and organisationally. Although the site was designed to be functionally driven, the limitations of interagency cooperation have constrained its ability to be fully responsive to the needs of its users.[267]

Chadwick also reported that in the UK the e-Envoy:

> … experienced significant problems with spreading the gospel of e-government throughout British central and local government.[268]

As regards information policy, Unesco's NATIS[269] proposed a national co-ordinating body. In the United States, the Rockefeller report[270] stressed the importance of a central co-ordinating body, and Trauth[271] found in 1986 that US information policy development had been fragmented as policies had resulted from different technologies and their concomitant problems. The differing disciplines responded to the problems in their area, but with the convergence of technology and society's growing dependence on it, there was a need for a more integrated approach. She suggested using the systems "INPUT – PROCESS – OUTPUT" model to look at the process rather than the technology, but as Burger[272] noted, this only takes you so far down the evaluation road. It is worth noting that Trauth herself placed the "flow of information" in the "PROCESS" stage, perhaps reflecting the emphasis on the internal processing and sharing of information around government at the time, rather than making it directly available to the citizen. This research would fit more comfortably in her "OUTPUT" stage.

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[265] Chadwick, ref. 258.
[266] *Ibid.*, p.190.
[267] Fountain, ref. 197.
[268] Chadwick, ref.36, p.191.
[269] Unesco. *National information systems (NATIS): objectives for national and international action*, 1974.
[270] Rockefeller, N.A. *National information policy: report to the President of the United States submitted by the staff of the Domestic Council Committee on the Right of Privacy; Honorable Nelson A. Rockefeller, Chairman*, 1976.
[271] Trauth, E.M. An integrative approach to information policy research. *Telecommunications Policy,* 1986, 10(1), 41-50.
[272] Burger, ref. 211, p.96.

Rowlands[273] pointed out that seamless co-ordination of information policy across government may not be possible as the players have differing, and possibly unresolvable, visions and goals. He went on to highlight the problems of co-ordination when information policy is so complex, and much is latent rather than explicit.

2.3.3.4 National Information Policy

The consideration of co-ordination of information policy – or lack of it – leads on to the question of what information policies should be co-ordinated and how policy on citizens' access to public sector information sits within the overall scope of information policy.

> Information is an essential part of a nation's resources and access to it is one of the basic human rights. The formulation and implementation of a national information policy is the only way to ensure that all who engage in administrative, educational, scientific and cultural activities have access to the information they need … Information is not only a national resource vital for scientific and economic progress, but also the medium of social communication. The personal, vocational and social development of the individual depends on the amount, quality and accessibility of information to such a user. The ultimate aim of an information policy must, therefore, be an informed society.[274]

The concept of a "national information policy" (NIP) was much discussed at national and international levels during the 1970s to 1990s and important reports recommended the setting-up of national bodies, whether within or outside government, to co-ordinate information policy. For example a Unesco intergovernmental conference in 1971 stated:

> A governmental, or government-chartered, agency should exist at the national level to guide, stimulate and co-ordinate the development of information resources and services in the perspective of national, regional and international co-operation.[275]

The 1974 Unesco conference on planning of national documentation, library and archive infrastructures, which produced the quote above, was a springboard for the development of Unesco's 1976 NATIS (National Information Systems) national information policy.[276] The policy proposed national co-ordinating bodies for planning NATIS systems which should not be subservient to a government department or minister as regards the subject they covered. The NATIS programme was addressing the needs of Unesco members for documentation,

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[273] Rowlands, ref.218.
[274] Unesco, International Federation for Documentation & International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. *Planning of national documentation, library and archives infrastructures: intergovernmental conference: final report*, 1975, p.25.
[275] Unesco. *Information policy objectives (UNISIST proposals)*, 1974.
[276] Urquhart, D.J. *NATIS: National Information Systems: national information policy*, 1976.

libraries and archives, whilst the parallel UNISIST programme (United Nations International Scientific Information System) concentrated on the exchange of scientific and technical information worldwide.[277] The two programmes merged in 1977 to form Unesco's General Information Programme, which was given the goal of:

> … developing and promoting information systems and services at the national, regional and international levels, formulating policies and plans, setting standards, developing information infrastructure, and educating and training information professionals and users.[278]

In the previous year, Vice President Nelson Rockefeller had recommended to the US President:

1. That the United States set as a goal the development of a coordinated National Information Policy.
2. That there be established in the Executive Office of the President an Office of Information Policy by either structuring a new institutional entity or by refocusing and expanding responsibilities within any of several existing entities.[279]

Turning attention to the United Kingdom, writing in 1988, Ian Malley defined national information policy as:

> … government-directed policy for co-ordinated action on all matters relating to information. Most writers on national information policy agree that there is no such policy in the UK at present, and there is also some agreement that there never has been such a policy. However, there is evidence that from time to time the mechanisms for establishing such a policy have existed and the Government itself, although failing to proceed to a national information policy, has set up or supported organisations that might have been capable of assembling and articulating such a policy.[280]

This has continued to be true: since he wrote this the Library and Information Commission and the Office of the e-Envoy have come and gone.

Malley went on to suggest that a national information policy was not developed before 1981 as the focus was too narrow, and after that date the whole information industry rapidly

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[277] Soler, G. Evolution and current status of national information policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2007. *In* Fernandez-Aballi, ed. *Building national information policies: experiences in Latin America*, 2007, pp.12-19.
[278] *Ibid.*, p.15.
[279] Rockefeller, ref. 270, p.vi.
[280] Malley, I. *National information policy in the UK*, 1988, p.5.

developed and the field became too diverse for one co-ordinated policy,[281] a problem that is more prevalent now. (Even in 1994 Hill[282] identified a list of government departments with an interest in information policy similar to the list in Table 1.1 on page 19.)

Earlier in 1981 the government had rejected a proposal from the House of Commons Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts for a minister of Cabinet rank to take responsibility for national policy on library and information services.[283,284,285] The post, as envisioned by the Select Committee, would be narrowly focussed on a library and information service policy, as opposed to the wider concept of a national information policy. The Select Committee also recommended the setting up of a Standing Commission to co-ordinate library and information services on a national basis, and this too was rejected by the government. Instead it preferred to expand the remit of the Library Advisory Councils to become Library and Information Service Councils, however this can perhaps be seen as the seed for the Library and Information Commission, which was set up by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 1995, following many years of consultation with the library and information community.

Meanwhile the Government was not ignoring the burgeoning information industry. In its response[286] to the Cabinet Office Information Technology Advisory Panel report *Making a business of information*[287] it gave responsibility for tradeable information to the Minister for Information Technology within the Department of Trade and Industry – a post that lasted only until 1987,[288] although the responsibility for the information industry remains with the Dti successor departments. Writing in 1996 about a UK national information policy for the electronic age, Professor Stephen Saxby's[289] analysis of PSI policy painted a picture of public sector information primarily being treated as a tradeable commodity to be exploited by business rather than as a public good. This led to confusion as different departments and agencies took an independent line on how they exploited their own information and pointed to: "the need for a broader and better resourced information policy".[290] He concluded:

[281] Malley, ref. 281, p.11.
[282] Hill, M.W. *National information policies and strategies*, 1994, p.6.
[283] Malley, ref.280, p.15.
[284] Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Education, Science and Arts Committee. *Fourth report from the Education, Science and Arts Committee. Session 1979-80. Information storage and retrieval in the British Library service,* 1980.
[285] Great Britain. Department of Education and Science. *Information storage and retrieval in the British Library service, Observations by the government on the Second and Fourth Reports from the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, Session 1979-80,* 1981.
[286] Great Britain. Department of Trade and Industry. *Government response to the ITAP report of 'Making a business of information',* 1984.
[287] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Information Technology Advisory Panel. *Making a business of information: a survey of new opportunities*, 1983.
[288] Malley, ref. 280, p.20.
[289] Saxby, S. A UK national information policy for the electronic age. *International Review of Law, Computers and Technology,* 1996, 10(1), 105-135.
[290] *Ibid.* p.124.

Whereas securing the delivery of the economic fruits of the information society is a legitimate and desirable aspiration for policy, the government should also recognize that it has a higher responsibility. This extends beyond the needs of the market and the dogma of government ideology, towards the maintenance of society's core values applied for the wider good of all.[291]

Shortly after its inception, the Library and Information Commission recognised the need for concerted action: "if we are to remain competitive in the global information society"[292] and issued a discussion paper *Towards a national information policy for the UK*[293] in 1997. By now "information" was a buzz word around government; the terms "information society" and the "Information Superhighway" were in common parlance. The paper was widely circulated but there was little feedback from government.[294] However the Commission issued an updated paper[295] and organised the *Keystone for the Information Age* conference in March 2000[296]; two weeks later its functions were subsumed into Resource: the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries (now the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, MLA). MLA will now itself be closed and its functions moved elsewhere by April 2012.[297]

The year 2001 was the last time the concept of a NIP for the UK was looked at in any detail: a Policy Advisory Group (PAG) was convened by the Library Association to build on recommendations from the Library and Information Commission. It was funded by Resource and made recommendations to government and the profession,[298] partly based on research commissioned from Muir *et al*[299] into national information policy in various countries around the world. Guy Daines convened the PAG and, when interviewed in 2009, he was of the view that neither MLA nor the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which oversees library policy, had any current interest in the development of a framework of information policies.[300]

2.4   Gaps in research

Conclusions from various literature reviews and other academic research papers (for example Hernon[301]) suggest that there is a need for an over-arching synthesis of information policy as

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[291] Saxby, S. A UK national information policy for the electronic age. *International Review of Law, Computers and Technology,* 1996, 10(1), 105-135, p.125.

[292] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission. Towards a national information policy for the UK, 1997, p.1.

[293] *Ibid.*

[294] Johnson, R. *National information policy*, 2001.

[295] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission, ref. 216.

[296] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission. *Keystone for the information age, British Library 16-17 March*, 2000.

[297] Great Britain. Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, ref. 88.

[298] Library Association (Great Britain). *Report of the Policy Advisory Group on a national information policy*. <http://www.la-hq.org.uk/directory/prof_issues/nip_report.rtf>, 2002, [accessed 12.08.2008].

[299] Muir, A. *et al. Report on developments world-wide on national information policy: prepared for Resource and the Library Association,* 2001.

[300] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.

[301] Hernon, P. Government information policy in a time of uncertainty and change. *In*: Hernon, P., McClure, C. & Relyea, H.C. *Federal information policies in the 1990s: views and perspectives*, 1996, pp. 1-18.

much research tends to look at individual specific aspects. Trauth,[302] in her analysis of the published research, found a lack of studies that were both prescriptive – made recommendations – and integrative – covered a range of disciplines or policy aspects. This was partly because of the lack of time and/or money for individual research; having three years of research funding for this project enabled a more holistic approach.

Findings from the review of the literature, confirmed by Grönlund and Andersson,[303] also showed that much research had been undertaken on the systems re-engineering aspects of eGovernment – the implementation – but there appeared to be less on the policy side and little focussing on the provision of information to citizens, the first stage of eGovernment initiatives. Andersen and Henriksen concluded that:

> … at present, e-government research is founded primarily on the legacy of IS research and fails to incorporate disciplines such as public administration and political science in an adequate manner. Changing this path could offer rewarding research and help move the research field to a unique position.[304]

The literature review found little research looking at the development of information policy over time to get a broad understanding of how the development process works.

Writing in 1996, Hernon[305] argued that many policy issues being discussed in the 1980s were the same as in the 1990s but too often there was a lack of institutional memory to recall and learn from previous debates and research, or to help policy-makers recast the debates in such a way that better or more useful policy analysis could emerge. He concluded that:

> There is a need for more writings on other levels of government and countries, for comparisons across national boundaries and for conceptual analysis of information policy as a field of scholarship.[306]

This is still true today.

2.5   Development of themes for detailed analysis

Analysis of the relevant academic literature suggested the themes that would be most fruitful to pursue in relation to citizens' access to public sector information. Firstly it would be helpful

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[302] Trauth, ref. 271.

[303] Grönlund, A. & Andersson, A. E-gov research 2003-2006: improvements and issues. *In:* Norris, D.F., ed. *Current issues and trends in e-government research*, 2007, pp.247-268.

[304] Andersen, K.V. & Henriksen, H.K. The first leg of e-government research: domains and application areas 1998-2003. *International Journal of Electronic Government Research, 2005,* 1(4), 26-44, pp.38-39.

[305] Hernon, ref. 301, p.16.

[306] *Ibid*, p.15.

to identify how the provision of PSI had been incorporated into the UK government's overall objectives from 1996 to 2010 and chart how important it had been to government. This is discussed in the mapping of UK government policies in chapter 4 and interviews with key players in chapter 5: Findings: Policy development.

Secondly, how has policy in this area been developed? The literature suggested that two concerns, as discussed in section 2.2.2, were lack of co-ordination and leadership. How the policy-making process is working at the end of the first decade of the 21st century would be addressed through the interviews, with particular emphasis on what co-ordination takes place across Whitehall departments and the importance of leadership. These are also addressed in Chapter 5: Findings: Policy development.

Thirdly, what are the specific issues that relate to policy on PSI provision? The literature review suggested that they fall into four areas, which are considered in Chapter 6:

- how successful has the government been in making services citizen-centric? – a theme which goes back to the earliest relevant policy documents
- what measures has the government taken to provide access to public sector information, for example through portals, via different channels, including non-digital?
- what content is made available and in what format?
- do citizens have the skills needed to access and manage the information?

Fourthly, what evaluation has the government undertaken to establish the effectiveness of its policy in providing access to PSI? Chapter 8 addresses evaluation in more detail, and looks specifically at international and national metrics already in existence that may be helpful in evaluating implementation of policy on citizens' access to public sector information. It also draws on the literature of evaluation frameworks to develop a framework specific to policy in this area and assesses it using the Power of Information Taskforce recommendations (*see also* Annex G).

Finally, two issues emerged during the research. Firstly, as can be seen from the last two paragraphs of section 2.1, opening up government data for re-use became an important issue for government during 2009 and 2010 so this theme is developed in Chapter 7: Opening up UK government data. Secondly, an issue that was identified through the interviews rather than the literature review – indeed there was a lack of writing on this topic in the professional literature – was: what impact does the information profession have on the development and implementation of policy on the provision of PSI to citizens? The findings on this are included in Chapter 5: Policy development.

2.6   Meeting objective OB1

This review of the literature set out to meet objective OB1: to understand the academic and practitioner research that informs the current context in which policy on citizens' access to PSI is formulated. The review found little literature that addressed the specific area of this research but much that was tangential. The most important works were the UK government-commissioned reports on the Power of Information in 2007 and 2009. Much happened regarding opening up government data during the last year of the research and the academic literature had yet to catch up with these developments.

The general literature on policy development showed that policy-making in practice did not fall into neat stages of development and much of the research had a US bias, with advocacy groups having more influence there than in the UK. The literature on the UK situation suggested that the Labour government of 1997 onwards was influenced by New Public Management, with its concentration on delivery and centralist approach: co-ordination, leadership and personal relationships within government were very important features.

The more specific literature on eGovernment and information policy was the most relevant as issues around citizens' access to PSI fall at the boundary of the two. A review of these areas identified gaps in research to be filled or important issues that should be followed up to meet the research objectives. The gaps and issues to be addressed are:

OB3: to identify and analyse the contents of UK government policies from 1996 which relate to citizens' access to PSI (*see* chapter 4):
- lack of research on development of policy over time
- lack of research in this area generally.

OB4: to assess how policy on PSI is developed and governed (*see* chapter 5):
- co-ordination, leadership and personal relationships in policy-making on citizens' access to PSI
- lack of research on the influence of the information profession on policy-making.

OB5: to examine how the policies are working in practice and identify any gaps in the policies (see chapter 6):
- how successful the UK government has been in making services citizen-centric
- actions the government has taken to provide access to PSI, for example through portals, via different channels, including non-digital
- how content is made available and in what format
- skills needed by citizens to access and manage PSI.

OB6: to explore the opening up of government data since 2009 (*see* chapter 7):

- considerable activity on blogs but lack of academic literature on recent government data re-use policy

OB7: to identify how policy on PSI is evaluated and investigate how this evaluation could be developed (*see* chapter 8):

- lack of research on evaluation of information policy
- no research found on evaluation of citizens' access to PSI.

This chapter has set the scene for the research, drawing on the literature. The next chapter addresses objective OB2: to decide which is or are the most suitable methodology/ies and methods that will best meet the aim of the research.

Chapter 3:   Methodology

3.1   Introduction

This chapter addresses research question RQ2: What methodology would be suitable for investigating UK government policy on citizens' access to PSI? in order to meet Objective OB2: to decide which is or are the most suitable methodology/ies and specific methods that will best meet the aim of the research. It first considers which overall theoretical perspective is the most suitable as a research philosophy, then sets out the possible options for research strategy and methods that flow from that, before justifying and explaining which methods were actually used for the research. The chapter is structured as follows:

3.1.1   Research philosophy

A review of the literature on research philosophy leads one to the conclusion that there is no agreed matrix of research philosophies and strategies, nor even agreement on the definitions of terminology used, a point made in the research literature itself.[307] When designing our research, Crotty[308] suggests that there are four hierarchical elements which inform our choice of approach:

- at the bottom level are the actual *methods* proposed for undertaking the research
- at the next level the strategy for carrying out the research is the *methodology*, which governs the choice and use of the methods chosen
- the philosophical stance of the researcher, which informs the methodology, provides the *theoretical perspective*
- finally at the top level is the *epistemology*: the theory of knowledge used.

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[307] For example, Crotty, M. *The foundations of social research*, 2003, p.1 and Schwandt, T.A. *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry*, 2001, p.xvii.
[308] Crotty, ref. 307, p.2-4.

However other writers, for example Schwandt[309] and Finch,[310] describe terms to be epistemologies that Crotty interprets as theoretical perspectives, eg hermeneutics and interpretivism. Robson[311] does not use the term "epistemology" but he equates constructivism with interpretivism, the former term relating to an epistemology and the latter to a theoretical perspective in Crotty's analysis. As there seems to be the most confusion between the epistemological and theoretical perspectives, they are considered here together.

Crotty suggests three broad categories of epistemology are: objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism.[312] Taking an objectivist approach suggests that one believes that it is possible to discover an absolute truth – be objective – about the focus of the research, unaffected by human perception. This is most usually associated with a positivist theoretical perspective, which in turn is most associated with quantitative research methodologies used in the natural sciences to investigate natural phenomena. Robson[313] suggests that positivism has largely been discredited in recent years as it is accepted that there will always be some bias in the researcher, despite efforts to eradicate it. Scientists who accept this view when undertaking quantitative research would consider themselves to be post-positivists.

At the other end of the spectrum, the subjectivist approach suggests that meaning is imposed on the object by the subject – there is no objective reality and all is in the eye of the beholder. Between these two extremes is constructionism, where meaning – and therefore truth – is constructed by the interaction of the subject with the object.

There appears to be no direct, absolute correlation between subjectivism and constructionism and specific theoretical perspectives, nor do subjectivism and constructionism necessarily imply the exclusive use of qualitative techniques.[314] However positivists and post-positivists are likely to use a quantitative research methodology and make deductive inferences, trying to solve a problem using a theory. Researchers using qualitative techniques would probably use an inductive approach,[315] based on the study of actual situations from which to derive theory.

It is worth noting that Robson[316] uses the terms relativist and realist rather than subjectivist and constructionist – so perhaps one should concentrate on the meanings of the concepts rather than the labels attached to them.

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[309] Schwandt, T.A. *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry*, 2001, p.71.
[310] Finch, J. *Research and policy*, 1986, p.7.
[311] Robson, C. *Real world research*, 2002, p.27.
[312] Crotty, ref. 308, p.5.
[313] Robson, ref. 311, p.26-27.
[314] Crotty, ref. 307, p. 14-15.
[315] Silverman, D. *Doing qualitative research*, 2nd ed., 2005, pp.78-84.
[316] Robson, ref. 311.

From an epistemological point of view, the only absolute truth available for investigation in *this* research must be the words in the actual policy documents, but if one were to ask the question of whether this can be measured using methods taken from the natural sciences, the answer would have to be negative rather than positive.[317] The nature of the research questions means that the research is not looking to compare independent variables and seek correlations; it is not focussing on the measurable. An objectivist, positivist (or post-positivist), theoretical perspective was therefore rejected.

One only has to witness a debate in Parliament or read a variety of media reports on politics to understand that policies are interpreted in many ways. However, if the research was to adopt a solely subjectivist emphasis on the perceptions of the stakeholders, both those who had an impact on the development of the policies, and those on whom the policies had an impact, it would miss the detail of the policies to which the perceptions related. A balanced approach is required, objectively analysing specific relevant policies (as far as possible) but also exploring the motivations of policy-makers and critics/commentators on the policies to gain a fuller understanding of what is happening.[318] This suggests taking a constructionist, or realist, standpoint, and an inductive approach,[319] assessing what has actually happened, how and why, and who brought it about, in order to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

This research therefore draws on the research philosophy of critical realism,[320] a branch of realism originally propounded by Roy Bhaskar[321] that investigates power relationships and is designed to bring about change:[322] "criticising the social practices that it studies."[323] In doing so, it will try to uncover the values that underpin the individual policies, and be sensitive to the perspectives of the individual stakeholders. Robson claims that critical realism: "has been seen as particularly appropriate for research in practice- and value-based professions such as social work."[324] This would suggest that it is suitable for use in research by information professionals. If the research is designed to bring about change, it follows that it is likely to make recommendations on how to achieve this change.

This research will combine an analysis of the "facts" – what the policies actually say and the structures in place to develop, implement and influence the policies – with personal perspectives on what the policies should be, how well they have been implemented and the efficacy of the structures that implement them. These multiple perspectives are best

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[317] Blaikie, N. *Approaches to social enquiry*, 1993.
[318] Browne, M. The field of information policy: 2. Redefining the boundaries and methodologies. *Journal of Information Science,* 1997, 23(5), 339-351.
[319] Silverman, D. *Doing qualitative research*, 2nd ed., 2005, pp.78-84.
[320] Robson, C. *Real world research*, 2002, p. 41.
[321] For example: Bhaskar, R. *Reclaiming reality: a critical introduction to contemporary philosophy (Classical texts in critical realism)*, 2010.
[322] Crotty, ref. 308, p.157.
[323] Robson, ref. 320, p.41.
[324] *Ibid*, p.30.

ascertained through qualitative methods, although it is accepted that this introduces the possibility of greater bias on the part of the researcher.

Critical realism looks at reality in terms of the "mechanisms" that are in operation and the contexts in which they work. In identifying the themes to address in this research, one is attempting to uncover the various mechanisms in play in the UK that affect how citizens are gaining access to the public sector information (PSI) that they need to run their lives. These mechanisms might refer to the elements of the policies themselves, the policy-making process and structures set up to develop and implement the policies, the channels through which the information is provided and even the effects of new technology on how information is provided. Considering these mechanisms from a range of viewpoints of the expert participants in the research will help to build a picture of the reality, albeit an imperfect one, from which to draw conclusions and make any recommendations on how the mechanisms might be improved. The next section explains the choice of methodology and methods for examining the mechanisms.

3.1.2 Methodological approach

An initial list of 20 detailed research questions was drawn up based on the researcher's professional experience of the previous 15 years. The questions were gradually refined and generalised in the light of the initial open interviews and the literature review. The final core research questions were:

> RQ1: What previous work has been done on the theory and practice of policy on citizens' access to PSI?

> RQ2: What methodology would be suitable for investigating UK government policy on citizens' access to PSI?

> RQ3: What policies on citizens' access to public sector information has the UK government developed since 1996?

> RQ4: How is policy on citizens' access to PSI developed and governed?

> RQ5: How well are the policies working in practice, how could they be improved and what gaps in the policies need filling?

> RQ6: What has changed in the policies in 2009-2010 in the light of a move to more open and transparent government and why?

RQ7: How is implementation of UK policy on citizens' access to PSI evaluated and how could this evaluation be improved or extended?

RQ8: What recommendations follow from meeting the overall aim of the research?

The research was the designed to answer these research questions by meeting eight corresponding objectives:

OB1: To understand the academic and practitioner research which informs the current context in which policy on citizens' access to PSI is formulated.

OB2: To decide which is or are the most suitable methodology/ies and specific methods that will best meet the aim of the research.

OB3: To investigate the contents of UK government policies from 1996 which relate to citizens' access to PSI.

OB4: To investigate how policy on PSI is developed and governed.

OB5: To investigate how the policies are working in practice and identify gaps in the policies.

OB6: To investigate the opening up of government data since 2009.

OB7: To identify how implementation of policy on PSI is evaluated and how this evaluation could be expanded.

OB8: To make recommendations to government, the information profession and the research community in the light of the answers to the research questions.

What methodological approach or approaches would be suitable to meet these objectives in the light of the theoretical approach taken? In the first instance, the decision is between quantitative and qualitative methodologies. With a constructivist, critical realist approach, qualitative methodologies are expected and Robson[325] has suggested that observation and interviews are the most used to gain multiple perspectives. This research is not addressing behaviour as such and therefore observation was not considered a suitable method to adopt. However, a purely interview-based approach would not provide the baseline of the contents of the policies themselves.

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[325] Robson, ref. 311, p.27.

Two types of methods were identified as necessary to meet the research objectives:

- documentary analysis to investigate what has been *written*, including both the policy documents being investigated and critical comment on the policies, as well as relevant more general literature. This should uncover the mechanisms in play in the UK relating to policy on citizens' access to PSI

- a qualitative survey-based method to investigate the *personal views* of those experts who have an impact on the policies or have a critical perspective on them. This should help to establish how the mechanisms are operating in practice and how they might be improved.

3.2   Data collection

3.2.1 Collection of published data

The literature review concentrated on academic research in the field. Any policy documents that were identified, whether UK-focused or international, were catalogued for possible inclusion in the analysis of policy initiatives. Previous work was reviewed, for example on policy analysis and research methodology, as well as studies of modelling, benchmarks and frameworks to inform the framework for evaluation of implementation of information policy. This drew on public policy and public administration literature as well as eGovernment and information policy studies.

Main initial sources of monographs relevant to the research topics were the catalogues of the Loughborough University Library and the British Library; however many influential works cited by other authors were followed up and these often proved the most fruitful. Searches on the Amazon database were also helpful as the results mostly included abstracts and covered more up-to-date and forthcoming material. Also, book reviews in the major journals were useful in identifying relevant new texts.

Of particular value in identifying useful journal articles was *Library and Information Science Abstracts*, which showed these journals to be most relevant:

- *Government Information Quarterly*
- *Journal of Government Information*
- *Information Polity*
- *International Journal of Electronic Government Research*
- *Electronic Journal of e-Government*
- *International Journal of Electronic Governance*

- *Electronic Government: an International Journal*
- *Journal of Information Technology & Politics.*

This was also supported by the list of journals highlighted by the European eGovernment Society as being the major titles.[326] Table of contents alerts were set up for the major academic journals in order to check for articles on new research. Where possible, these journals were scanned manually back to 1995; owing to the common terminology used in this research area, for example "information" and "access", electronic searches could not guarantee to find all references that were relevant but would pull out much that was irrelevant. Muir *et al*[327] likewise found false drops a problem in their 2001 study of national information policy.

Google Scholar was most useful in linking to other works by authors. Back issues of *Update*, *Information World Review*, *Managing Information* and Royal Statistical Society journals were also scanned for relevant news items and articles, although this mostly produced references to government initiatives and policy comment rather than academic research. The *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* a key journal in this area, was also scanned back to 1996.

Only two potentially useful theses, one a Masters[328] and one a PhD thesis,[329] both from City University, were identified through searches of the *Index to Theses*, *Dissertation Abstracts*, Loughborough's Institutional Repository, the British Library Thesis Service and the Sheffield University Thesis catalogue.

The literature review uncovered many references to UK government information policy initiatives and comment on these policies, but in order to identify and draw up a more comprehensive list, an initial systematic search of websites of government departments and agencies, the Policy Hub, research bodies and major international organisations was carried out and re-run on a regular basis. All references were recorded and classified by subject and level of relevance in RefWorks.

To keep up to date with current policy initiatives and policy comment, 40 RSS feeds, electronic newsletters and email alerts were subscribed to (*see* Annex C). These were reviewed from time to time to assess their value and those that did not produce significant new material were dropped. Surprisingly, the Information Policy blog from Belarus.org proved

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[326] European eGovernment Society. *Scientific journals.* <http://uni-koblenz.de/FB4/Contrib/ EGOVS/Journals>, 2007, [accessed 31.10.2007].

[327] Muir, A. *et al. Report on developments world-wide on national information policy: prepared for Resource and the Library Association,* 2001.

[328] Briggs. M. *Access to information: an evaluation framework analysis.* MSc dissertation, 2001.

[329] Rowlands, I. *Mapping the knowledge base of information policy: clusters of documents, people and ideas.* PhD thesis, 1998.

one of the most useful sources of information, monitoring a wide range of resources throughout the world; *GC Weekly* from Kable was another major source of policy comment.

During the course of the research, blogging became a common channel for dispensing comment and encouraging participation and dialogue. The Power of Information Taskforce set up a blog in April 2008 and this included valuable leads. In June 2009 this was superseded by the Cabinet Office Digital Engagement team blog. The Helpful Technology blog run by Steph Grey, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), was also extremely useful, as was the Open Knowledge Foundation weblog and the personal blogs of MP Tom Watson, previously Minister for Digital Engagement, and of Chief Information Officer John Suffolk.

3.2.2 Gaining personal perspectives

Published material only gives part of the picture. It is important to capture the views and experience of key players, and triangulate[330] this with analysis of the policy documents and comment on those documents, to obtain a clearer view of the mechanisms by which information policy is working and has worked, how it has developed and been evaluated, and what the main influences and influencers have been. For example, when addressing Objective OB4: To investigate how policy on PSI is developed and governed, issues that emerged from the literature review which could not easily be answered from published documents were:

- Are ministers or civil servants taking the lead in terms of development of eGovernment and information policy in the UK – in terms of Habermas' models of decisionism, technocracy and pragmatism?[331]
- Do policy advisers, think tanks, lobby groups and the media influence information policy?
- How does government co-ordinate development and implementation of information policy?

Four survey-based methods for gaining personal perspectives on the mechanisms were considered: focus groups, questionnaire, a Delphi study and targeted interviews:

- *Focus groups:* Focus groups, as the name suggests, are group interviews on a specific topic and can be an efficient way of collecting data from several people at the same time.[332] The interaction between group members can stimulate a greater flow of

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[330] Denscombe, M. *The good research guide*, 2007, p.134.
[331] Sager, F. Habermas' models of decisionism, technocracy and pragmatism in times of governance: the relationship of public administration, politics and science in the alcohol prevention policies of the Swiss member states. *Public Administration,* 2007, 85(2), 449-427.
[332] Robson, ref. 320, p.284.

information,[333] however they cannot draw out the complexities of different individuals' perspectives in the same way that a one-to-one interview would. There may be group dynamics which discourage all group members from participating fully and some group members may be unwilling to share confidential information[334] in the way that they may talk "off the record" in one-to-one interviews.[335] It was therefore felt that focus groups would be unsuitable for gathering the rich data needed. On a practical note, it was unlikely that many of those identified would be willing to participate in a focus group, and the problems of trying to identify suitable dates when enough players in each of the categories could be free made this methodology unworkable.

- *Questionnaires*: Self-completion questionnaires are useful for obtaining uncomplicated information from a large number of respondents[336] but generally have a low response rate.[337] Neither can it be guaranteed that it was the person to whom it was sent who completed the questionnaire, particularly in the case of senior officials and politicians,[338] yet it is their personal perspectives that would be valuable. A single questionnaire approach was not deemed appropriate for this research as each person receiving the questionnaire would have to get the same set of questions.[339] All those identified to be approached would have different stories to tell, from their own perspectives; one would need to have many different questionnaires and, again, they would not produce the rich data required. With targeted interviews, supplementary questions could be put, following on from the respondents' answers.

- *Delphi study:* In a Delphi study a group of experts are separately given research questions to answer.[340] The results are then circulated anonymously to all for comment and the answers gradually refined through several rounds. This research method was not considered suitable for many of the same reasons as questionnaires and focus groups – the divergent nature of the evidence to be elicited from the participants. Also, as many of the individuals would be extremely busy, and in most cases high-level, people, it would be unlikely that they would be able to spare the time to participate in a Delphi study. An adaptation of this approach was considered in order to gain feedback on the recommendations, however the Delphi method is designed to reach a consensus amongst experts[341] but results from the interviews showed that the divergence of views was too extreme and a consensus was unlikely

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[333] Denscombe, ref. 330, p.178.

[334] Robson, ref. 320, p.284.

[335] Stedward, G. On the record: an introduction to interviewing. *In:* Burnham, P., ed. *Surviving the research process in politics*, 1997, pp.151-165.

[336] Denscombe, ref. 330, p.154.

[337] Robson, ref. 320, p.233.

[338] Researcher's own experience on commissioning and receiving questionnaires.

[339] Denscombe, ref. 330, p.153.

[340] Robson, ref. 320, p. 57.

[341] Aichholzer, G. The Delphi method: eliciting experts' knowledge in technology foresight. *In:* Bogner, A., Littig, B. & Menz, W., eds. *Interviewing experts*, 2009, pp.252-274.

on the majority of issues raised. Also the experts were not expert on all areas of the research: each was picked for their specific expertise and viewpoint, which varied considerably. Aichholzer[342] also warns of the low response rate in later rounds.

- *Interviews:* Targeted interviews were deemed the most appropriate method for eliciting the views of key players. They are "the preferred empirical tool of political scientists,"[343] allowing the flexibility to address complex issues, taking into account the background and perspectives of those interviewed. Interviews would overcome the problems identified in the other three potential methods. They formed the basis of data collection used by the original Power of Information review team[344] and IpsosMORI research for the Statistics Commission on opinion-formers' perceptions of the UK statistical system.[345] However, it is a very time-consuming research method and there would necessarily be a limit on the number of interviews that could be undertaken within the time-frame of the research.

In addition to the interviews, various events at which key stakeholders presented were attended in order to gain an understanding of current government policy and the views of the stakeholders on that policy, for example conferences organised by OPSI in 2008 and 2009, a Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology seminar in 2008, the COMMUNIA conference in 2009, the European eGovernment Conference, also in 2009, and the Open Gov Data Camp in 2010. This supplemented the comments on policy in published material.

3.2.2.1   Selection of interviewees

Using a flow chart to describe the policy-making and implementation process, five categories of players were established whose knowledge and understanding would need to be captured by this research:

- *policy-makers and policy implementers*: those who make the decisions about what the policy should be and those who carry out the instructions of the policy-makers, coping with the realities and problems that the implementation produces. Initially this constituted two separate categories but in practice there proved to be considerable overlap, with senior civil servants carrying out both roles

- *policy regulators and advisers*: those who advise on what the policies should be and assess whether they are being properly/efficiently implemented, ie those who influence but do not have the power to take decisions or make policy

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[342] Aichholzer, G. The Delphi method: eliciting experts' knowledge in technology foresight. *In:* Bogner, A., Littig, B. & Menz, W., eds. *Interviewing experts*, 2009, pp.252-274, p.253.
[343] Stedward, G. *On the record: an introduction to interviewing. In:* Burnham. *Surviving the research process in politics*, 1997, p.151.
[344] Mayo & Steinberg, ref. 21.
[345] Great Britain. Statistics Commission. *Official statistics: perceptions and trust*, 2005.

- *academic researchers*: those who have investigated and commented upon information policy, and most particularly those who influence government or have been commissioned by government, or who have most influenced academic thinking

- *information professionals*: those who have or have had responsibility for recommending information policy to government from the perspective of the profession

- *other lobbyists*: those who have lobbied government on particular information issues, for example the PSI Alliance and mySociety.

Probability sampling was not considered relevant as only a limited number of individuals would have sufficient expertise and interest to address the research questions. Also the research was not aiming to get a consensus on a particular topic; the individuals had very different comments to make. The key players were approached for their specific experience and expertise, which were diverse in nature. Citizens were not interviewed as the research was trying to illuminate the policy-making process rather than the effect of the policies on the public.

An initial list of relevant professional contacts who had already given permission to be interviewed was developed whilst preparing the research proposal. This was supplemented with other significant players, at the most senior level possible, to provide a purposive balanced sample of 50, sufficient to draw on until the saturation point was deemed to have been reached: the point at which no further different views were likely to be forthcoming that would affect the conclusions of the research. Moore[346] suggests that 20-30 in-depth interviews are usually sufficient for qualitative research projects so an initial population of 50 ought to provide sufficient for a sample of 25, taking into account practicalities of availability.

Interviewees were chosen because of their, mostly, unique position in the policy-making/implementation process and, where possible, they were those with the highest responsibility. As Wroblewski and Leitner[347] suggest, it is helpful to start with a preliminary selection since key players may emerge during the research, and this proved to be the case. Some extra interviewees were chosen because of relevant talks they gave at events or because they were recommended by other interviewees as having influential views, so to that extent there was some snowball sampling.

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[346] Moore, N. *How to do research*, 2000, p.123.
[347] Wroblewski, A. & Leitner, A. Expert interviews in programme evaluation. *In:* Bogner, A., Littig, B. & Menz, W., eds. *Interviewing experts*, 2009., pp.235-251.

Interviewees were prioritised from 1 to 3, with 1 being those individuals that it would be most helpful to interview, 2 those individuals that would make suitable substitutes if there were not enough category 1 interviewees for any section, and 3 as the lowest priority but who would still have a useful perspective. This helped to focus the scheduling of interviews and to maintain the quality of the list of those to be approached. As potential interviewees were added to the sample, the less relevant individuals were dropped from the list.

All the interviewees in this research were considered to be experts in their own field. Littig[348] suggests that Dexter's 1969 definition of experts as: "the influential, the prominent, and the well-informed", is still used in today's methodological literature on interviewing experts. By these criteria, all those interviewed for this research would qualify as "experts". Bogner[349] considers that experts must also have formative or interpretive power and make decisions that affect others. All interviewees had power within their own circles rather than specifically power over the development of UK information policy, although in some cases it was the power to influence, but not to make, decisions.

3.2.2.2   Types of interview

To make the best use of the time and availability, two types of interview were identified, reflecting the different stages of the development of the research ideas:

- open discussions with individuals who would be prepared to share their broad outlook on the relevant issues; these early, informal, discussions helped to scope the issues and frame the research questions

- semi-structured interviews, based on the research questions, to help formulate the conclusions and framework for evaluation of information policy implementation. This format allowed for a free-ranging discussion within the areas relevant to each interviewee, giving the opportunity to uncover some of their values and perceptions.

In terms of the typology of expert interview types characterised by Bogner and Menz,[350] these are "exploratory" and "theory-generating" interviews. Exploratory interviews are those which, as the name suggests, help the researcher to gain a clearer idea of the issues in the area under investigation and therefore assist in the development of the interview guide. Three interviewees were selected who had a broad overview of the issues but came from three different perspectives: an external adviser, a civil servant with experience both of government statistical policy and knowledge management, and a senior member of the information profession who had worked in government but was also very active in professional bodies. Theory-generating interviews are targeted at the expert's knowledge but also his

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[348] Littig, B. Interviewing the elite – interviewing experts: is there a difference? *In:* Bogner, A., Littig, B. & Menz, W., eds. *Interviewing experts*, 2009, pp.98-113.

[349] *Ibid.*, p.107.

[350] Bogner, A. & Menz, W. The theory-generating expert interview. *In:* Bogner, A., Littig, B. & Menz, W., eds. *Interviewing experts*, 2009., pp.43-80.

interpretation of knowledge: the purpose of the interview is not just to gain facts but to understand the perspective of the interviewee and draw inferences.

Littig[351] recommends that interviewers of experts should use flexible guidelines with a list of relevant issues rather than specific questions; this provides interviewees with space to express their views and experts are likely to have been accustomed to getting their own points across. The "exploratory" interviews were of this nature but it was decided to develop a basic set of questions for the main interviews that would be amended to suit the area of competence of each interviewee in order to cover the identified topics. This did not preclude the interviewees developing their own line of discussion and introducing new concepts that they saw as relevant. Indeed that was an essential part of the approach taken.

Littig goes on to suggest that interviewers needed the skill to be able to allow the interviewee to lead the conversation but draw them back to the issues that the interviewer wants to address. To do this, the interviewer must have proved themselves to be competent to the interviewee. Pfadenhauer[352] stressed the importance of the interviewer having learnt as much as possible about the subject matter – to become as "quasi-expert" – in order to be able to gain the respect and confidence of the interviewer.

The interviews were not scheduled until year 2, after the researcher had had sufficient time to become familiar and up-to-date with the subject matter and current policy agendas. As far as possible, questions were put in a neutral way, but Bogner and Menz[353] warn of the impossibility of being truly neutral as the interviewee will know that the interviewer has already studied the issues and will have developed some opinions:

> Insisting on a claim to be neutral looks more like an attempt to conceal one's own position in a situation where there is no serious possibility of being "genuinely" neutral. Moreover, the interviewer can show his or her own "commitment" in respect of the substantive issues in such a way that the interviewee is encouraged to respond by expounding his or her own stores of knowledge and information.[354]

The interviews themselves were held in batches, with representatives from each category being approached for each round of interviews until the saturation point had been reached. Eventually three open and 28 semi-structured interviews were undertaken.[355] (*See* Annex E for a list of interviewees.) The interviewees for the semi-structured interviews were chosen from the list of potential interviewees to provide a balance of individuals from each of the five categories. However, a pragmatic approach was necessary: who was available and willing to

[351] Littig. ref. 348, p.105.
[352] Pfadenhauer, M. At eye-level: an expert interview. *In:* Bogner, A., Littig, B. & Menz, W., eds. *Interviewing experts*, 2009, p. 90.
[353] Bogner & Menz, ref. 350, p.70.
[354] *Ibid.*, p.71.
[355] *Note*: All interviews referred to in the footnotes were undertaken by the researcher, unless otherwise stated.

be interviewed, although the convenience of the interviewer was not a consideration. The majority of interviews lasted about one hour and were undertaken face-to-face as this would enable reaction to body language in developing lines of questioning further. It would also be easier to build a rapport with the interviewee, and therefore get a more comprehensive response from them.

In three instances interviews had to be undertaken via telephone but this was not the preferred option. The researcher does not get the visual clues to the interviewees' reaction to the questions and Christmann[356] also cited the interviewer's lack of control over distractions and interruptions that the interviewee is experiencing. It is more difficult to assess and counter lapses in concentration. This was a problem with one of the telephone interviews but two of the interviewees were known to the researcher, and the researcher had previously met the third, which helped to negate some of the lack of visual feedback so valuable when the interviewee is not known to the interviewer. In one case, responses were by email because of the busy schedule of the respondent. This brought thoughtful, considered answers but did not give the same opportunity for immediately following up with supplementary questions and therefore being able to delve into, possibly new, issues raised.

Bogner and Menz[357] developed a typology of interview situations and strategies. Of these, the interviews for this research fall into two categories: interviewer as expert (from a different knowledge culture) and interviewer as accomplice. The interviewer as accomplice characterises the interviews with those from the information profession, not because there was any less objectivity but rather because the shared background and common language led to a more conversational style of interview.

3.2.2.3 Ethical considerations

Two interwoven ethical considerations affected the research regarding interaction with the interviewees. Oblené[358] raises the need to balance the requirement to do no harm to the participants with the scholarly duty of the research. The investigation was not intending to assess or come to any judgement about the individuals but rather to assess development and implementation of policy. There is no criticism, implied or otherwise, of individuals, merely an acknowledgement of their perspective.

This would not be an issue if all the participants had been anonymised, however the decision was taken to ask interviewees to speak "on the record" and all agreed, subject to clearance of quotes used, which was done. The reason for naming respondents was because they were not a representative of a type of post or person but *the* person with certain specific and

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[356] Christmann, G.B. Undertaking interviews on the telephone: a difficult undertaking. *In:* Bogner, A., Littig, B. & Menz, W., eds. *Interviewing experts*, 2009, p.157-183.

[357] Bogner & Menz, ref. 350, p.68.

[358] Oblené, V., Expert versus researcher: ethical considerations in the process of bargaining a study. *In*: Bogner, A., Littig, B. & Menz, W., eds. *Interviewing experts*, 2009., pp.184-200.

unique responsibilities. To be able to quote them lends the research credibility; to disguise who had made various statements would have been very difficult and may have identified the interviewees unintentionally. The force of the argument comes from *who* made the comments as well as *what* was said.[359]

3.2.2.4   Development of the interview schedule

The literature review informed the questions to be asked in the interviews and confirmed that internal co-ordination of policy-making and the skills elements of the digital divide (as opposed to the technological elements) were central issues to be addressed. Listening to speeches and questions at relevant professional events also suggested a lack of policy implementation evaluation in this area.

The general schedule of interview questions is at Annex F. The interview schedules were tailored to the individual interviewees and constantly updated to reflect the results of previous interviews, drawing on Glaser and Strauss's[360,361] grounded theory approach. Usually *circa* 15 broad questions were put to interviewees, leaving scope for them to develop their answers as they wished; however, supplementary questions were also prepared for prompting as appropriate.

3.2.3 Analysis

A content analysis of the policy documents was combined with the analyses of the interviews to draw up a picture of how information policy in relation to the provision of public information to the citizen had developed since 1996 – a dynamic policy analysis. This drew on the work on policy-making in general of Parsons,[362] Hogwood and Gunn,[363] Baumgartner *et al*,[364] Hill [365]and that of Adrian Kay[366] in developing structured policy narratives. To focus more specifically on *information* policy and *eGovernment* policy analysis, the work of Rowlands *et al*,[367, 368] Burger,[369] Esteves and Joseph,[370] Mayer-Schönberger & Lazer,[371] and Mullen & Horner[372] was considered.

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[359] *Note*: In one instance the interviewee changed jobs after the interview and, whilst efforts were made to contact them for approval, these were not successful. Their quotes were therefore anonymised. The interviewee has worked at The National Archives and was not Dr Valerie Johnson, who did agree to be quoted.

[360] Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*, 1998, pp.12-13.

[361] Silverman, ref. 319, pp.170-180.

[362] Parsons, W. *Public policy: an introduction to the theory and practice of policy analysis,* 1995.

[363] Hogwood, B.W. & Gunn, L.A. *Policy analysis for the real world*, 1984.

[364] Baumgartner, F.R., Green-Pedersen, C. & Jones, B.D. *Comparative studies of policy agendas*, 2008.

[365] Hill, M. *The policy process: a reader*, 1997.

[366] Kay, A. *The dynamics of public policy: theory and evidence,* 2006.

[367] Rowlands, I., ed. *Understanding information policy*, 1997.

[368] Rowlands, I., Eisenschitz, T. & Bawden, D. Frame analysis for understanding information policy. *Journal of Information Science*, 2002, 28(1), 31-38.

[369] Burger, R. H. *Information policy: a framework for evaluation and policy research*, 1993.

[370] Esteves, J. & Joseph, R.C. A comprehensive framework for the assessment of eGovernment projects. *Government Information Quarterly*, 2008, 25(1), 118-132.

[371] Mayer-Schönberger & Lazer, *Governance and information technology,* 2007.

[372] Mullen, H. & Horner, D.S. Ethical problems for e-Government: an evaluative framework. *Electronic Journal of e-Government*, 2004, 2(3), <http://www.ejeg.com/volume-2/volume2-issue3/v2-i3-art5.htm>, [accessed 19.06.2008].

During the course of the research the number of relevant policies promulgated and projects initiated by government increased significantly. It was therefore decided to put more emphasis on the policy initiatives from 2005 onwards. (*See* Annex D for a list of mapped policy documents.)

Initially interview transcripts were analysed using ATLASti6 and it was intended that this would be extended to the policy documents, however it was found that the tendency was to become too immersed in the detail, which inhibited rather than enabled a synthesis into an overall picture of how the policy was developed and by whom. Instead, tables of the main themes within the interviews were drawn up and the sections of interview and policy were allocated to the themes as appropriate, and also, in the case of interviews, grouped by the background of the interviewee. Once the relevant material was brought together it was much easier to draw out the messages. A similar approach was taken with the policy documents, although they tended only to address one of the subject areas and the mapping was therefore organised chronologically within themes.

3.3   *Building a framework for evaluating information policy implementation*

In order to meet objective OB7: to identify how implementation of policy on PSI is evaluated and investigate how this evaluation could be developed, existing national and international evaluation regimes were identified and analysed to assess the extent to which they included evaluation of implementation of policy on citizens' access to PSI (*see* Chapter 8). The answer was "very little," so to address this gap it was decided to develop a framework for evaluating implementation of this policy, drawing on the published literature on policy evaluation and incorporating the evaluation mechanisms that already existed. Research on frameworks, benchmarking and modelling policy by, amongst others, Schlager,[373] Finger and Pécaud,[374] Carbo and Williams,[375] McClure,[376] Kunstelj and Vintar,[377] Janssen, Rotthier and Snijkers,[378] and Nour, AbdelRahman and Fadlalla,[379] informed the framework, although none provided a blueprint.

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[373] Schlager, E. A comparison of frameworks, theories, and models of policy process. *In:* Sabatier, P.A., ed. *Theories of the policy process,* 2007, pp.293-319.

[374] Finger, M. & Pecoud, G. From e-Government to e-Governance? Towards a model of e-Governance. *Electronic Journal of E-government*, 2003, 1(1), <http://www.ejeg.com/volume-1/volume1-issue-1/issue1-art1.htm>, [accessed 19.06.2008].

[375] Carbo, T. & Williams, J.G. Models and metrics for evaluating local electronic government systems and services. *Electronic Journal of E-government*, 2004, 2{2}, <http://www.ejeg.com/volume-2/volume2-issue2/v2-i2-art3.htm>, [accessed 19.06.2008].

[376] McClure, C.R. Frameworks for studying federal information policies: the role of graphic modeling. *In:* McClure, C.R., Hernon, P. & Relyea, H.C. *United States government information policies: views and perspectives*, 1989.

[377] Kunstelj, M. & Vintar, M. Evaluating the progress of e-government development: a critical analysis. *Information Polity, 2004,* 9(3-4), 131-148.

[378] Janssen, D., Rotthier, S. & Snijkers, K. If you measure it they will score: an assessment of international eGovernment benchmarking. *Information Polity,* 2004, 9(3-4), 121-130.

The purpose was to develop a framework that would be simple in concept and practical, thereby facilitating use by practitioners, but that would be hospitable to considerable detail as required. It also needed to reflect the different facets of the policies, such as political, technical and social. It was therefore decided to investigate and to test how a PESTEL analysis could be used as the basis of the framework, combined with Kipling's "six honest serving men": why, who, what, where, when and how."[380]

The framework was tested in two stages. Firstly the framework was populated with existing and proposed measures to see how well these could be accommodated within it and then used to identify gaps that could be filled by further potential measures. Secondly each recommendation of the *Power of Information Taskforce Report*[381] was considered in terms of the elements of the framework that were applicable in order to see if it could be used to identify gaps in the policies and their implementation (*see* Annex G and section 8.5). It will be for others to further test the framework against a different set of policies to see how it performs.

3.4 Meeting objective OB2

This chapter has been addressing objective OB2: to decide which is or are the most suitable methodology/ies and methods that will best meet the aim of the research: to investigate UK government policy on citizens' access to PSI. The epistemology espoused by this research is that of constructionism (or realism), balancing an analysis of written policy documents with an investigation of the personal perspectives of the players involved. By taking a critical realist theoretical approach, this research is seeking to uncover the mechanisms that are in operation with the development and implementation of policy, investigating the power relationships, and considering how to bring change where the where the operation of the policies might be improved.

As a baseline for the research, the main relevant UK policy documents from 1996-2009 will be identified and analysed to map the development of the policies over time. A review of the literature will establish the mechanisms in operation, however the main method to be employed is semi-structured interviews with the most influential individuals to understand their personal perspectives on how the mechanisms are working. The interviewees will be the most senior working in the field: top civil servants or advisers working directly with the policies; external commentators and lobbyists; senior academics; or top members of the information profession.

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[379] Nour, M. A., AbdelRahman, A.A. & Fadlalla, A. A context-based integrative framework for e-government initiatives. *Government Information Quarterly*, 2008, 25(3), 448-461.
[380] Kipling, R. *Just so stories for little children*, 1955, p.77.
[381] Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce, ref. 22.

The literature review and attendance at conferences flagged up the lack of evaluation of implementation of information policy. To address how evaluation may be undertaken, a further review of the evaluation literature will identify current practice and the interviews will address how evaluation might be undertaken. To take this a stage further, a framework for evaluation will be developed, based on a matrix of PESTEL and Kipling's "six honest serving men": why, who, what, where, when and how."[382] This will be used to identify where there are gaps in current measures in operation and how they might be filled. The framework will also be tested against the *Power of Information Taskforce report* recommendations to assess whether it can be used to identify gaps in the policies on citizens' access to PSI that might be addressed.

Having determined the methods to be used to meet the research aim, the next chapter identifies and assesses the relevant UK policies on citizens' access to PSI from 1996-2009.

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[382] Kipling, ref. 380, p.77.

Chapter 4: UK policies 1996-2009

4.1 Introduction

> To understand where future policies are likely to lead us, we need to know about past policies. For, as policy becomes its own cause, the future problems in which we are increasingly interested are a response to our past solutions.[383]

This chapter is addressing OB3: to identify and analyse the contents of UK government policies from 1996 which relate to citizens' access to public sector information (PSI). A starting point for the investigation was to analyse the various government initiatives that there have been since 1996, with a cut-off date of the end of 2009. More emphasis has been placed on the greater recent policy documents as the pace of change in this area grew exponentially from 2007, however it is worth looking back at the origins of the UK government's commitment to making its information services available over the Internet.

UK government policies with an impact on citizens' access to public sector information (PSI) fall into three categories. The majority of relevant initiatives come from within the eGovernment agenda, however it is worth also considering policy on official statistics as these data form the backbone of much PSI. Finally this research looked at some of the policy documents from the library and information sector.[384] In most cases the amount of relevant detail in the policy documents is very small so this chapter does not provide an in-depth documentary analysis; rather it provides an overview of the development of policy on citizens' access to PSI, painting the big picture. The chapter is structured as follows:

4.2   Early eGovernment policy development

4.3   Development of citizen-centric services

4.4   Addressing the digital divide and information literacy

4.5   Public sector information policy

4.6   Official statistics policy

4.7   Library policy

4.8   Meeting objective OB3.

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[383] Wildavsky, ref. 170, p.83.

[384] *Note*: For simplicity, the policies are referred to as "UK" policies. In many instances they are in fact policies for England but similar policies were developed in the devolved administrations.

4.2 Early eGovernment policy development

4.2.1 Government.direct

The New Labour government was in power for most of the time that the development of electronic services provided by government has been taking place but it was actually the previous Conservative government under Prime Minister John Major that issued the first consultative Green paper *Government.direct*[385] in 1996. This had been influenced by the Bangemann Report from the European Union in 1994[386] and the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee report[387] on the "information society" – the term used at the time that would evolve into eGovernment. The House of Lords select committee report described UK government policy in 1996 on the provision of government information as "cautious":[388]

> There are three major obstacles to adopting an "Open Government" policy for use of the Internet in the UK. First, in the absence of an overall policy regarding the electronic publication of government information, Departments are free to pick and choose what information they publish. Second, there are conflicts between the need for Departments and Agencies to maximise revenues and the desire to make government information widely and freely available. Third, although some UK public sector web pages are commendably well designed – OFTEL's, which has links to BT and Mercury, is a particularly good example – many are not.[389]

This final sentence from the quote above betrays the time in which it was written, but while the situation has improved and developed, the issues remain.

Government.direct [390] set out the Conservative government's vision of how it would introduce electronic services conforming to a set of seven principles:

- *choice*: availability of different channels, including face-to-face and telephone or paper-based services. In 2010 the emphasis is on digital channels, although other channels still exist
- *confidence*: in security of personal data held by government – a big issue in 2010. In a Kable survey in early 2010 83% of respondents were concerned about the storage

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[385] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Central IT Unit. *Government.direct: a prospectus for the electronic delivery of government services*, 1996.

[386] Bangemann, M.E.A. *Recommendations to the European Council: Europe and the global information society* [Bangemann report], 1994.

[387] Great Britain. Parliament. House of Lords. Select Committee on Science and Technology. *Information society: agenda for action in the UK: 5th report session 1995-96* (HL Paper no 77). <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199596/ldselect/inforsoc/ch2.htm>, 1966, [accessed 25.02.2010].

[388] Great Britain. Parliament. House of Lords. Select Committee on Science and Technology, ref. 379, para 2.7.

[389] *Ibid.*, para 5.59.

[390] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Central IT Unit, ref. 385.

and sharing of citizen data by public sector organisations, while 84% said they were in favour of government having to seek permission before sharing their data[391]

- *accessibility*: location and timing of access, ease of use, language. The third and latest incarnation of government's electronic "one-stop-shop" is Directgov and the Disability Discrimination Act includes guidelines for public sector websites. Access to high-speed broadband for delivery of electronic services is a key element of the 2009 *Digital Britain[392]* strategy

- *efficiency* and *rationalisation*: these two principles are at the heart the transformational government agenda in 2010 and the financial crisis has made them even more important as government strives to minimise its expenditure

- *open information*: a commitment to make "the whole range of government information" available electronically, except to preserve commercial and personal privacy or in the public interest, and in a format to boost open government and the UK's competitiveness

- *fraud prevention*: this ties in with data security required under "confidence", establishing identities of those dealing with government and preventing fraudulent manipulation of data.

The government's response[393] to the consultation came out in 1997 but too late to be implemented before the 1997 election which saw the New Labour Party[394] come to power. However, the change of power did not see a significant change in direction: both main parties had broadly similar commitments in their election manifestos and indeed Hudson[395] reports that while in Opposition, Tony Blair had "famously announced" to his party's annual conference that he had struck a deal with British Telecom to provide internet access to all libraries, schools and hospitals in the UK.

4.2.2 *Our information age*

Our information age[396] in 1998 was the first overall IT policy statement to be published by the Labour government and set the scene for its vision of how the UK would use new digital technologies to: transform education; widen access; promote competition and competitiveness; foster quality; and modernise government. ICT literacy was seen as a key skill required by all, but the emphasis was on the "T" rather than the "I", indeed the whole

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[391] Majority of the public opposes data sharing. *GC Weekly*, 23 February 2010. <http://www.kable.co.uk/majority-of-public-opposes-data-sharing-23feb10>, [accessed 25.02.2010].

[392] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport. *Digital Britain: final report*, 2009. (Cm 7650). <http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/digital britain-finalreport-jun09.doc>, [accessed 17.06.2009].

[393] Great Britain. Office of Public Service. Central Information Technology Unit. *The Government's response to comments on the Green Paper government.direct*, 1997.

[394] *Note*: For simplicity and clarity, New Labour is referred to just as the Labour Party in this thesis.

[395] Hudson, J. E-government in the United Kingdom. *In*: Anttiroiko, A-V. *Electronic government: concepts, methodologies, tools, and applications*, 2008, v.1, pp.172-178, p.173.

[396] Great Britain. Central Office of Information. *Our information age*, 1998.

focus was on the technology and networks (for example: the People's Network for public libraries, the National Grid for Learning and the University for Industry), rather than the content. Discussion of information haves and have-nots actually centred on access to ICT facilities, not access to information *per se.* Information provided by government was given little attention, however this strategy saw the start of target-setting which would gather momentum in later policy documents.

4.2.3 *Modernising government*

Modernising government[397] the following year laid out the government's vision in more detail and further developed the target for availability of government services online. As well as 25% of services to be online by 2002, the government added a commitment to make all government services available electronically by 2008 – although the "all" excluded any services that departments decided were not capable of being delivered electronically or for which they perceived there would be little demand.[398]

4.2.4 *e-Government Strategic Framework*

The third IT initiative, from 2000, was the first to be labelled "eGovernment" – *e-Government: a strategic framework in the information age.*[399] The emphasis was on using eBusiness methods to provide: "better services for citizens and business and more effective use of the Government's information resources,"[400] working with both the private and public sectors outside Whitehall. The e-Envoy was charged with owning the strategy and the Central IT Unit would lead on implementation and promotion of shared working. Emerging themes which would be developed further through the transformational government agenda were:

- the need to make services citizen- and business-focussed, announcing the setting up of portals that would become Directgov and Business Link
- making services accessible through a range of channels – bringing forward the target for all services to be available electronically to 2005
- and a recognition of the importance of government information, whether in terms of access to information through the Freedom of Information Act, or government's need to standardise and co-ordinate its internal information systems.

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[397] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Modernising government,* 1999.
[398] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 389, p.52.
[399] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *e-Government: a strategic framework for public services in the information age*, 2000.
[400] *Ibid*, p.2.

The Performance and Innovation Unit within the Cabinet Office produced a more detailed plan of action,[401] with considerable focus on the citizen (and less on cost savings than later initiatives) and the successive annual reports from the Office of the e-Envoy[402,403,404] charted progress in implementing the specifics of the plan, including the development of: the UK Online portal; UK online centres; eServices available; and the roll out of broadband.

4.3   Development of citizen-centric services

4.3.1 Transformational government

From 2005 the eGovernment agenda came under the banner of "transformational government" and the original strategy document *Transformational government: enabled by technology*[405] was produced by the Chief Information Officer Council and the Service Transformation Board in November that year. The three themes of the strategy were: transforming services for the benefit of citizens, business and front-line staff – especially citizen-centric services; operational efficiency through shared services, including with local government; and effective delivery of technology by government through the increasing professionalism of its staff. As part of the strategy, the IT profession within government was launched and it was planned that groups would be set up in government to address particular customer segments. There is little mention of PSI *per se*, apart from the setting up of the Geographical Information Panel to develop a geographical information strategy for use within government. However, there is considerable emphasis on: the need to consolidate government websites for services through Directgov (for citizen-facing websites) and Business Link (for business-facing websites); developing transactional services; and improving searching capability.

The follow-up implementation plan[406] in 2006 set a target for departments to produce a strategy for website convergence by November 2006. Public trust in government services was defined as a key risk to be managed and a new data sharing Ministerial committee, Misc 31, had been set up. Main reporting on transformational government was through Cabinet Committee PSX (E) addressing Electronic Service Delivery and chaired by the Chief

[401] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Performance and Innovation Unit. *e.gov: electronic government services for the 21st century*, 2000. <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/~/media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/e%20gov%20pdf.ashx>, [accessed 17.06.2008].

[402] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Office of the E-Envoy. *UK online annual report 2000,* <http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/e-envoy/reports-anrep1-top/$file/default.htm>, 2000, [accessed 02.10.2010].

[403] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Office of the E-Envoy. *UK online annual report 2001,* <http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/e-envoy/reports-anrep2001-top/$file/default.htm>, 2001, [accessed 02.10.2010].

[404] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Office of the E-Envoy. *UK online annual report 2002,* <http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/e-envoy/esummit-ukoannrep/$file/indexpage.htm>, 2002, [accessed 02.10.2010].

[405] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Transformational government: enabled by technology.* <http://www.cio.gov.uk/documents/pdf/transgov/transgov-strategy.pdf>, 2005, [accessed 17.06.2008].

[406] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Transformational government implementation plan.* <http://www.cio.gov.uk/documents/pdf/transgov/transgovt.pdf>, [n.d.], [accessed 17.06.2008].

Secretary to the Treasury, who "owned" the transformational government agenda. Public sector information was not addressed, but a new communication professional framework was announced.

Annual reports[407,408,409]over the next three years chart developments to improve the customer's experience – customer insight tools; customer journey mapping; performance measurement of contact centres; and closure of websites with convergence on NHS Choices, NHS Direct, DirectGov and Business Link. Little mention is made of information content, through whatever channel, but by 2008 the work of the Power of Information Taskforce (*see* section 4.5.5*)* had started to feed into the wider work on transformational government.

4.3.2 Varney Review

In parallel with the transformational work within government, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the 2006 Budget that he had commissioned Sir David Varney, executive chairman of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, to undertake an independent review[410] of service transformation, looking at:

> how to save government, citizen and business time and money by examining the scope for integrating front-line service delivery."[411]

The review took an integrated multi-channel approach to services, recommending: more co-ordinated helpline services; more cross-government one-stop shop services; and increased use of the third sector as intermediaries. His view was that the Web should be the primary access point for simple information and advice requests and that there should be a target of 80% of contacts resolved first time. He also recommended the adoption of one telephone number for non-emergency services, an idea first mooted in the original *Transformational government* [412]report and being taken up again in 2010 in the context of non-emergency health services.[413] Finally on the issue of co-ordinated services, he recommended that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) should take over responsibility from the Cabinet Office for the Directgov website and take the lead on developing and piloting the Tell Us Once

[407] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Transformational government enabled by technology: annual report 2006.* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/140539/trans_gov2006.pdf>, 2007, [accessed 27.09.2010].

[408] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Transformational government – our progress in 2007: delivering better, more efficient services for everyone.* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/140571/tg_annual_report07.pdf>, 2007, [accessed 27.09.2010].

[409] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Transformational government – our progress in 2008: delivering better, more efficient services for everyone.* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/cio/transformational_government/annual_report2008.aspx>, 2009, [accessed 27.09.2010].

[410] Varney, D. *Service transformation: a better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpayer.* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/4/F/pbr06_varney_review.pdf>, 2006, [accessed 03.04.2010].

[411] *Ibid.*, p.4.

[412] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 405.

[413] Great Britain. Department of Health. *111 – The new number for the future of non-emergency health services.* <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/MediaCentre/Pressreleases/DH_118861>, 2010, [accessed 29.09.2010].

service. Tell Us Once, as the name implies, was designed for citizens to inform government only once about significant events, eg births, marriages and bereavements. (Following successful pilots with local authorities,[414] in December 2009 the Labour government finally announced the rolling-out of the Tell Us Once service across the country.[415])

The recommendations of the Varney review were taken forward as part of the 2007 *Pre-budget report and comprehensive spending review*,[416] and particularly the *Service transformation agreement*,[417] which accompanied it, and the 30 Public Service Agreements[418] which set targets for achieving the government's priorities 2008-2011. Varney was appointed adviser to the Prime Minister and chair of the cross-Whitehall Delivery Council – which reinforces the emphasis on "delivery" identified by Parsons[419] and others.

4.4   Addressing the digital divide and information literacy

By 2004 the government considered that the development of eGovernment services was well-advanced but the take-up of those services was not. To address this lack of take-up and to narrow the digital divide, the government developed its vision for action in *Enabling a digitally United Kingdom*[420] and followed this up in 2005 with its strategy for implementation: *Connecting the UK: the digital strategy.*[421] The main emphasis of the strategy was access to technology, both the channel of access – mostly broadband to the home and school but also through UK Online centres – and the hardware, especially laptops for school-children. The content of services was little mentioned although the importance of content in encouraging take-up was recognised. There was considerable emphasis on ICT skills and basic literacy skills needed however not on information literacy skills *per se.*

During 2008 and 2009, two initiatives were developed in tandem: the overall digital strategy *Digital Britain*,[422] with an emphasis on digital broadcasting and broadband technology, and

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[414] *For* example, Great Britain. Local Government Delivery Council. *Tell Us Once: case study.* London: Improvement & Development Agency, 2009. <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/10012779>, [accessed 21.08.2010].

[415] Great Britain. HM Government. *Putting the frontline first: smarter government.* Cm 7753, 2009.

[416] Great Britain. HM Treasury. *Meeting the aspirations of the British people: 2007 pre-budget report and comprehensive spending review.* <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm72/7227/7227.pdf>, 2007, [accessed 27.09.2010].

[417] Great Britain. HM Government. *Service transformation agreement.* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk /d/pbr_csr07_service.pdf>, 2007, [accessed 27.09.2010].

[418] Great Britain. HM Treasury. *Public Service Agreements 2008-2011.* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100407010852/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pbr_csr07_psaindex.htm>, 2009, [accessed 26.08.2010].

[419] Parsons , ref. 163.

[420] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Enabling a digitally United Kingdom: a framework for action,* 2004.

[421] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. *Connecting the UK: the digital strategy.* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/~/media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/digital_strategy%20pdf.ashx>, 2005, [accessed 14.11.2007].

[422] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, ref. 392.

the digital inclusion strategy,[423] led by Minister for Digital Inclusion Rt Hon Paul Murphy. In the consultation on the digital inclusion strategy, digital inclusion was defined as:

> The best use of digital technology, either directly or indirectly to improve the lives and life chances of all citizens, particularly the most disadvantaged, and the places in which they live.[424]

The consultation document laid out the current state of development of government activity to improve digital inclusion and sought feedback on a range of issues to guide its future work, including the recommendation for appointing a Champion for Digital Inclusion, supported by an expert task force. The *Digital Britain* report and the government's response to the consultation[425] announced Martha Lane Fox as the Champion for Digital Inclusion, to work with an Expert Task Force to: "promote the interests of the 6 million people who both fall in the categories of social exclusion and do not use the internet."[426]

In conjunction with *Digital Britain*,[427] the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) published the *Independent review of ICT user skills*[428] by Baroness Estelle Morris. The review assessed all the various government initiatives to improve ICT skills – digital life skills is her preferred term – since the Labour government came to power in 1997 and made recommendations for a simplified way forward. Her definition of digital life skills is: "a set of basic ICT skills a user requires to use a computer to safely enter, access and communicate information online."[429] Again, this lacks elements of information literacy – organising and particularly evaluating information to see if it is suitable and trustworthy. The review presents an impression of a plethora of worthy initiatives to develop ICT skills and combat social and digital exclusion, but insufficient co-ordination and follow-through, coupled with dwindling funding for ICT training and a growing digital divide. It proposed:

> an "Entitlement" to Digital Life Skills for all adults made up of:
> * a social marketing campaign, driven through the Government's Digital Britain strategy, to highlight the benefits of getting online

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[423] Great Britain. Department for Communities and Local Government. *Delivering digital inclusion: an action plan for consultation*, 2008. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/docuemnts/communities/pdf/1001077.pdf>, [accessed 10.11.2008].

[424] *Ibid.*, p.8.

[425] Great Britain. HM Government. *HM Government – Delivering digital inclusion – an action plan for consultation: HM Government response to the consultation, including progress achieved since publication, and new initiatives.* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/GovtResponse_DeliveringDigitalInclusionConsultation.pdf>, 2009, [accessed 25.09.2010].

[426] *Ibid.,* p.3.

[427] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, ref. 392.

[428] Morris, E. *Independent review of ICT user skills*. Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009. <http://www.dius.gov.uk/news_and_speeches/press_releases/~/media/3F79A51589404CFDB62F3DA0DEBA69A1.ashx>, [accessed 03.10.2010].

[429] *Ibid.*, p.9.

- a single helpline and website with online learning modules, with links to a range of free resources, provided by broadcasters and other commercial suppliers
- access to a diverse range of entitlement providers to receive support to learn the basic skills they need to get online.[430]

Digital Britain gave responsibility for developing a consortium to address digital participation to Ofcom and the *Digital Britain implementation update*[431] alluded to the government taking forward recommendations of the Morris review with the consortium as part of its work to develop a National Plan for Digital Participation. The *Digital Britain implementation plan*[432] and *Implementation update*[433] make it obvious that the majority of the work relates to broadband and broadcast developments, however in *Putting the frontline first*[434] the Prime Minister announced a further £30 million investment with UK Online to support the National Plan for Digital Participation.[435]

4.5   Public sector information policy

4.5.1 *Open government*

The government believes that people should have the freedom to make their own choices on the important matters which affect their lives. Information is a condition of choice and provides a measure of quality. … information enables citizens to demand the quality of service they are entitled to expect and puts pressure on those running services to deliver high standards. The provision of full, accurate information in plain language about public services, what they cost, who is in charge and what standards they offer is a fundamental principle … . It has led to new developments across the whole range of service delivery. … public services appeared for too long to be shrouded in unnecessary secrecy. The Government is now giving the public – often for the first time – the information they need.[436]

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[430] Morris, E. *Independent review of ICT user skills*. Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009. <http://www.dius.gov.uk/news_and_speeches/press_releases/~/media/3F79A51589404CFDB62F3DA0DEBA69A1.ashx>, [accessed 03.10.2010], p.7.

[431] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport. *Digital Britain: implementation update.* http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/DB_Implementationplan_Dec09.pdf, 2009, [accessed 27.08.2010].

[432] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport. *Digital Britain: implementation plan*, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/DB_ImplementationPlanv6_Aug09.pdf>, 2009, [accessed 03.10.2010].

[433] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, ref. 431.

[434] Great Britain. HM Government, ref.415.

[435] *Note*: Initial work before the 2010 general election has been continued by Lane Fox, who was appointed as Digital Champion by the incoming government, and her organisation Race Online 2012 has produced its *Manifesto for a networked nation*, with a vision for: "the UK to be one of the first places in the world where everyone can use the web." *See:* Race Online 2012, ref. 31, p.4.

[436] Great Britain. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. *Open government*, 1993, paras 2.1 – 2.3, p.7.

Reading this in 2010, one might be forgiven for thinking that it is a recent policy document, but in fact it comes from *Open government*, an initiative of the 1993 Major government and relates to "the Citizen's Charter". *Open government* was published three years before the first UK policy document on electronic services and seven years before the Freedom of Information Act. It is notable for the inclusion of the draft of the Code of practice on government information, shortly to be finalised and implemented.[437] What strikes one is that whilst the rhetoric in the paragraphs above may be laudable – and somewhat familiar – the code places much more emphasis on what can be legitimately withheld rather than what must be made available. The code, of course, is just a code and therefore difficult to enforce, and one might surmise that the 2000 Freedom of Information Act would not have been necessary if the Code was proving sufficient to ensure "open government."

4.5.2 Freedom of Information

Fulfilling a manifesto pledge,[438] the incoming Labour administration in 1997 produced a white paper, *Your right to know*,[439] to stimulate debate on the proposals for a Freedom of Information (FoI) Act, the first such legislation in the UK. The proposals were designed to cover all of the public sector and other agencies that have a statutory function, unlike the previous code which related only to central government. The resulting *Freedom of Information Act 2000*,[440] which came fully into force in 2005, expanded the role of the Data Protection Registrar to become the Information Commissioner, with powers to regulate public bodies' activities under the Act. For example public bodies were now required to produce a publication scheme listing all the information that they published, and any fees charged, and the Commissioner would have to approve all these schemes. Major areas of exemption from providing information on request are: national security; where the information would prejudice the financial stability of the country; draft documents; documents relating to the formulation of policy; and personal data, but the act also allows citizens greater access to information about themselves.

The passage from the white paper in 1997 to the full enactment of the Act in 2005 was clearly not an expeditious one and ex-Prime Minister Tony Blair[441] made it clear in his 2010 memoirs that he greatly regretted bringing in the legislation at all as it exposed more of government workings than expected and was particularly used by journalists. Many scandals were brought to light, including of course that surrounding expenses of Members of Parliament

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[437] Great Britain. HM Government. *Open government: code of practice on access to government information.* 2nd ed., 1997.

[438] Labour Party (Great Britain), ref. 3, p.37.

[439] Great Britain. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. *Your right to know: the government's proposals for a Freedom of Information Act*, 1997. <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/caboff/foi/anne.htm>, [accessed 26.09.2010].

[440] Great Britain. *Freedom of Information Act 2000: Elizabeth II.* <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/notes/contents>, 2000, [accessed 25.09.2010].

[441] Blair, T. *A journey,* 2010.

(MPs).[442] Attempts to limit the scope of the act failed[443] and it could be argued that they only served to increase the public's perception of secrecy within Whitehall and Parliament. Once freedom of information legislation is brought in it is very difficult, in a democracy, to reverse it, and indeed the 2010 Coalition government has pledged to increase, rather than decrease, the scope of FoI.[444]

4.5.3 Crown copyright and the commercial exploitation of PSI

As well as FoI, 2000 was a turning point in the development of PSI licensing policy in the UK. There had been green[445] and white[446] papers which led up to the development of more streamlined Crown copyright arrangements announced in the *Cross-cutting review of knowledge economy[447]* in 2000, including the adoption of a "click-use" licence. This was a simple mechanism for allowing various categories of user to re-use accessible data subject to Crown copyright, with streamlined charges where appropriate. Users still had to apply, but as the name suggests, licences could be gained with one "click". [448]

Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) was given the remit to oversee operation of the Crown copyright regime across government, although trading funds were allowed to manage their own licence arrangements on HMSO's behalf. Most Crown copyright material would now be made available at marginal cost. The exception was the trading funds, government agencies that developed information products not as part of government business and were allowed to keep the receipts of their income from sale of information products, for example Ordnance Survey and the Hydrographic Office. However the trading funds had to assure HMSO that they were controlling their assets fairly, and as a result of a further consultation,[449] the Information Fair Trader Scheme (IFTS) was developed. All trading funds had to sign up to the scheme, which in effect ensured that HMSO accredited the way that the trading funds, and any other public agencies which signed up to the scheme, managed and sold their information in a way that was fair and facilitated development of the knowledge economy.

[442] For a summary of the various issues in MPs expenses scandal, *see*: BBC. News. *MPs' expenses.* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/uk_politics/2009/mps'_expenses/default.stm>, 2010, [accessed 23.11.2010].

[443] Frankel, M. *The Blair memoirs and FoI,* <http://www.cfoi.org.uk/blairarticle060910.html>, 2010, [accessed 01.10.2010].

[444] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *The Coalition: our programme for government. Section 16: Government transparency.* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf>, 2010, [accessed 14.05.2010], p.11.

[445] Great Britain. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. *Crown copyright in the information age.* <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/advice/crown-copyright/crown-copyright-in-the-information-age.pdf>,1998, [accessed 26.09.2010].

[446] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Future management of Crown copyright.* <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/advice/crown-copyright/future-management-of-crown-copyright.pdf>, 1999, [accessed 26.09.2010].

[447] Great Britain. HM Treasury. *Cross cutting review of the knowledge economy: review of government information; final report.* <http://archive.treasury.gov.uk/sr2000/associated/knowledge/index.html>, 2000, [accessed 25.09.2010].

[448] *Note*: That regime remained in force until it was replaced on 30 September 2010 by a new Open Government Licence which is compatible with the Creative Commons and Open Data Commons attribution licence models. *See:* Great Britain. The National Archives. *Open government license for public sector information.* <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/>, 2010, [accessed 01.10.2010].

[449] Great Britain. Her Majesty's Stationery Office. *Licensing of Crown copyright HMSO regulatory framework consultation.* <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/advice/crown-copyright/crown-copyright-licensing-consultation-outcome.pdf>, 2002, [accessed 01.10.2010].

Third parties that felt they were not being fairly dealt with could appeal to HMSO. The consultation also recommended the setting up of a Crown copyright user group to advise ministers on re-use of crown copyright material – a group that would in time become the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information (APPSI).[450] To complement the other work, an Information Asset Register of government-held, unpublished, data was set-up within HMSO which complemented the publication scheme for published information.

The recognition that government had a valuable asset, both for itself and the country, was explored further by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) in an extensive market survey: *The commercial use of public information (CUPI).*[451] In its response,[452] the government accepted the general thrust of recommendations to improve the accounting practices of public sector information holders, encourage the expansion of the IFTS , improve oversight, and make trading funds more transparent to stimulate re-use. However more work needed to be done to assess the economics of the trading funds, and to that end HM Treasury commissioned *Models of public sector information provision via trading funds*[453] from economists at Cambridge University. The "Cambridge report" analysed the pricing policy for public sector information held by the trading funds and estimated the costs and benefits of marginal-cost pricing. They recommended that the most social benefit would be gained from moving prices for unrefined datasets to marginal costing – in essence zero as these products were digital. Little actual change came until Professor Sir Tim Berners-Lee was appointed to advise government on how to make its data more available (*see* section 4.5.5).

4.5.4 Re-use and the European Commission

The European Commission had also been considering the need to encourage the exploitation of the information assets of member states and in 2005 the Directive on re-use of public sector information[454] came into force. To implement the directive in the UK, HMSO was incorporated into a new department within the Cabinet Office, the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) and the Crown Copyright User Group became APPSI. OPSI's first report (of three[455,456,457]) on progress with implementation gives some of the thinking behind the regulations:

[450] Great Britain. Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information. *About the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information*. <http://www.appsi.gov.uk/AAPSIPage/page/AboutUs>, 2010, [accessed 24.10.2010].

[451] Great Britain. Office of Fair Trading. *The commercial use of public information (CUPI)*, 2006. (OFT861). <http://www.oft.gov.uk/shared_oft/reports/ consumer_protection/oft861.pdf>, [accessed 24.03.2008].

[452] Great Britain. Department of Trade and Industry. *The commercial use of public information (CUPI): the government response to the Office of Fair Trading study*, 2007. (URN 07/929).

[453] Newbery, D., Bently, L. & Pollock, R. *Models of public sector information provision via trading funds*, 2008.

[454] European Parliament & Council of Europe, 2003. Directive 2003/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the re-use of public sector information. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 345/90-96.

[455] Great Britain. Office of Public Sector Information. *The United Kingdom implementation of the European Directive on the e-use of Public Sector Information – the first two years.* Great Britain. Office of Public Sector Information, 2007.

[456] Great Britain. Office of Public Sector Information. *The United Kingdom report on the re-use of public sector information 2008*, 2008.

The overriding aim of the PSI Directive was economic. Public sector information is a valuable information resource that could be used by the private sector to develop value added products and services. The removal of barriers to re-use will act as a stimulus to the European information and publishing industry, so providing significant economic opportunities and enhancing job creation across Europe. The PSI agenda also has the additional benefit of improving the flow of information from the public sector to the citizen.[458]

The Directive required that information that was available for re-use should be clearly identified (in the Publication Schemes and Information Asset Register in the case of the UK), and that there were simple mechanisms for applying for licences as well as a complaints procedure. Significantly it did not require information to be made available for re-use so OPSI had no powers to enforce release of data. However OPSI did subsequently set up an Unlocking service,[459] facilitating requests for datasets to be made available that currently were not.

Another element of public information policy is the Location strategy, *Place matters*,[460] which guides activity to improve access to, and re-use of, geospatial information across the UK and implements the EC INSPIRE (Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community) Directive,[461] which came into force at the end of 2009. The strategy was developed by the Geographic Information Panel and the pan-government initiative is being taken forward by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), branded as UK Location.

4.5.5 Power of Information and its aftermath

In February 2007, the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Hilary Armstrong, commissioned an external review from Tom Steinberg, Director of mySociety, and Ed Mayo, Chief Executive of the National Consumer Council:

[457] Great Britain. Office of Public Sector Information. *The United Kingdom report on the re-use of public sector information 2009*, 2009.

[458] Great Britain. Office of Public Sector Information, ref. 455, p.3.

[459] Great Britain. Office of Public Sector Information. *Public sector information unlocking service.* <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/unlocking-service/OPSIpage.aspx?page=UnlockIndex>, 2010, [accessed 26.11.2010].

[460] Great Britain. Geographic Information Panel. *Place matters: the Location Strategy for the United Kingdom: a report by the Geographic Information Panel to Baroness Andrews, Minister for the Geographic Information Panel.* <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/locationstrategy.pdf>, 2008, [accessed 14.06.2010].

[461] European Parliament and Council of Europe. Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE). *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 108, 25 April 2007. <http://eurex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:108:SOM:EN:HTML>, [accessed 14.06.2010].

to explore new developments in the use of citizen-centric- and state-generated information in the UK and to present an analysis and recommendations to the Cabinet Office Minister.[462]

The resultant report *The Power of Information* (PoI)[463] was published in June, together with the Government's response. The government accepted all 15 recommendations[464] that were in line with the strategy in which government:

- welcomes and engages with users and operators of user-generated sites in pursuit of common 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.[465]

Particular outcomes of the review were: work within the Central Office of Information (COI) to develop expertise in government on the use of social networking as well as rules of engagement for civil servants; OPSI's data unlocking service; development of a mash-up incubator at the Department for Transport; and the commissioning of the Cambridge report[466] into pricing of trading funds data, as explained in the interim progress report.[467] However the government went further and set up a Taskforce under the chairmanship of ex-MP [now Lord] Richard Allan to draw up further practical proposals to help government engage in the social networking environment. The Taskforce reported in 2009 that it had been able to:

- demonstrate significant latent capacity in the community for innovative information-based applications through the ShowUsABetterWay competition
- raise further the profile of the Power of Information agenda through engagement with central and local government, industry and civil society
- contribute to the public and internal government debates around access to UK geospatial data
- build links with people working on similar agendas in other countries for the mutual exchange of ideas and expertise

[462] Mayo, E. & Steinberg, T. *The power of information: an independent review by Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg.* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ strategy/power_information.pdf>, 2007, [accessed 25.02.2008], p.7.
[463] *Ibid.*
[464] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *The Government's response to* The power of information: an independent review by Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg (2007), 2007.
[465] Mayo & Steinberg, ref. 462, p.4.
[466] Newbery *et al.*, ref.453.
[467] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Interim progress report on implementing the Government's response to the* Power of information review, 2008. <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/~/media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ publications/reports/power_information/poi_interim%20pdf.ashx>, [accessed 18.06.2008].

- support the creation of social media guidance for civil servants
- examine the usability of key government websites and commission new guidance based on the output of our study
- 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 reuse
- begin work on the concept of a repository for government information.[468]

Again, the government responded positively to the ideas generated by the Taskforce in *Digital engagement*[469] and Annex G shows progress against each of the Taskforce recommendations, drawing on the government's official response and later announcements, together with blog postings from *digigov*,[470] set up to share information on government's digital initiatives.

The work bore fruit with the Prime Minister's announcement on 10 June 2009 that Professor Sir Tim Berners-Lee had been appointed to lead a team of technical and delivery experts to address how government could make its public sector data more available. The *Putting the frontline first: smarter government*[471] white paper in December 2009 brought forward proposals for releasing a wide range of government datasets through a single access point, data.gov.uk.[472] The site went live in January 2010 and now has thousands of datasets from both central and local government. In addition, the site provides access to applications that have been developed from datasets released, space for sharing ideas and expertise and information on the work of the Public Sector Transparency Board and the Local Data Panel, both set up by the Coalition Government in 2010 to oversee the continuing opening up of government data. Work is progressing on adding information to explain what the information can be reliably used for, in order to help developers use the most appropriate data.[473]

Putting the frontline first also announced increasing access to and re-use of transport data and weather data from the Met Office, as well as consultation on options for easing access to Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping data.[474]

[468] Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce. *Power of Information Taskforce report.* <http://poit.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/poit/>, 2009, [accessed 09.04.2009]. p.2.

[469] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Digital engagement: update on Power of Information.* <http://blogs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digitalengagement/file.axd?file=2009%2f5%2fDigital+Engagement+-+final+-+pdf.pdf>, 2009. [accessed 17.06.2009].

[470] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Digigov* [blog]. <http://coi.gov.uk/blogs/digigov/feed/atom/>, 2010, [accessed 20.08.2010].

[471] Great Britain. HM Government, ref. 415.

[472] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *data.gov.uk.* <http://www.data.gov.uk>, 2010, [accessed 03.10.2010].

[473] Stirling, R. *Podcast: Richard Stirling talks about progress on data.gov.uk.* <http://data.gov.uk/blog/podcast-richard-stirling-talks-about-progress-datagovuk>, 27.07.2010. [accessed 03.10.2010].

[474] *Note*: The government response to the consultation in March 2010 confirmed that many OS datasets would be made available free of charge from 1April 2010 – a significant turn-around of government policy to date. *See*: Great Britain. Department for Communities and Local Government. *Policy options for geographic information from Ordnance Survey – consultation: government response,* 2010.

Although not part of the government's response to the Taskforce report, *Working together: public services on your side*[475] in March 2009, accepted and endorsed the Taskforce's vision of open information. Addressing personalisation of services in the light of the financial crisis, the report highlighted the importance of providing information to citizens about their services as a way of giving them power, and committed government to opening up more local data. The message was little different from that in *Excellence and fairness: achieving world class public services*[476] from the previous year which stressed that the reform agenda would: "rest on improved transparency of information about public services and their performance."[477]

4.6   Official statistics policy

Official statistics constitute a considerable proportion of the information made available to the public and many of the datasets that have been released on data.gov.uk are from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The 1997 Labour manifesto brought together the commitment to a freedom of information act with a commitment to an independent National Statistical Service in the interests of open government.[478] In fulfilment of this commitment, a consultative green paper *Statistics: a matter of trust*[479] was issued in 1998 and the results were published in the 1999 white paper *Building trust in statistics.*[480] This laid the groundwork for the new service, enshrined in the 2000 *Framework for National Statistics.*[481] The titles of the green and white papers show how "trust" in government information was a key driver.

The *Framework for National Statistics* introduced the concept of "National Statistics" as a substantial subset of all official statistics that were deemed (by the publishing departmental minister) to be the most important and were required to comply with a code of practice to be developed and enforced by the National Statistician. The post of National Statistician was a new one, incorporating responsibility for ONS, the major publisher of official statistics, and acting as chief adviser to the government on statistical matters, as well as having responsibility for the professional quality of those statistics that were designated National Statistics. To ensure the integrity of the system, the government also set up a new independent body, the Statistics Commission, which would look both ways, assessing how

[475] Great Britain. HM Government. *Working together: public services on your side.* London: Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2009. <http://www.hmg.gov.uk/media/15556/workingtogether.pdf>, [accessed 27.09.2010].
[476] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Excellence and fairness: achieving world class public services.* London: Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2008. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20081230001747/http://cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/strategy/assets/publications/world_class_public_services.pdf>, [accessed 27.09.2010].
[477] *Ibid.*, p.24.
[478] Labour Party (Great Britain), ref. 3, p.37.
[479] Great Britain. HM Treasury. *Statistics: a matter of trust*, 1998. <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/ons/govstat/report.htm>, [accessed 02.10.2010].
[480] Great Britain. HM Treasury. *Building trust in statistics*, 1999. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about_ns/downloads/whitepapertext1.pdf>, [accessed 02.10.2010].
[481] Great Britain. Office for National Statistics. *Framework for National Statistics.* <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/uk-statistical-system/history/key-historical-documents/index.html>, 2000, [accessed 26.06.2008].

well the statistical service was working and commenting on any perceived ministerial interference with the production and publication of statistics.

None of the above arrangements had a statutory basis but the *Framework* tasked the Statistics Commission with considering the case for legislation, which it duly did in 2004. *Legislation to build trust in statistics*[482] made detailed recommendations for putting the statistical service on a legislative footing, enshrining independence in order to protect the integrity of the statistics. Public perception of ministerial interference was still an issue. Drawing on the Statistics Commission report, the Treasury, the sponsoring body for both the ONS and Statistics Commission, issued the green paper *Independence for statistics: a consultative document*[483] in 2006, and the government's response to the consultation[484] which led to the *Statistics and registration service act 2007*.[485]

The key change brought about by the legislation was the setting up of the UK Statistics Authority, which would incorporate both the functions of the Statistics Commission in oversight of the system, and ONS in the production of key statistical series. Crucially, the Authority would report to Parliament, not to government, in order to guarantee its independence. The post of National Statistician remained, with responsibility for ONS and as chief professional adviser to the Authority, although responsibility for registration of births, marriages and deaths would move to the Identity and Passport Service. In line with its remit, the Authority has produced a Code of Practice for official statistics,[486] which incorporates many elements relevant to public sector information as a whole, and particularly to the datasets being made available through data.gov.uk (a point made by data.gov.uk chief Richard Stirling in a podcast in July 2010[487]). For example, the protocol on user engagement instructs providers of statistical information to:

1. Identify users. Document their statistical needs, and their wishes in terms of engagement.
2. Make users aware of how they can find the information they need.
3. Take account of users' views on the presentation of statistics, and associated commentary, datasets and metadata.
4. Provide users with information about the quality of statistics, including any statistical biases.
5. Involve users in the evaluation of experimental statistics.

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[482] Great Britain. Statistics Commission. *Legislation to build trust in statistics*, 2004.
[483] Great Britain. HM Treasury. *Independence for statistics: a consultation document,* 2006. <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/budget/budget_06/other_documents/ bud_bud06_odstatistics.cfm>, [accessed 04.07.2008].
[484] Great Britain. HM Treasury. *Independence for statistics: the government response*, 2006. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about/key-documents/statistical-legislation/index.html>, [accessed 02.10.2010].
[485] Great Britain. *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.* Elizabeth II. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/18/contents>, [accessed 26.09.2010].
[486] Great Britain. UK Statistics Authority. *Code of practice for official statistics.* <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>, 2009, [accessed 19.01.2009].
[487] Stirling, ref. 473.

6. Seek feedback from users on their experiences of the statistical service they receive, data quality, and the format and timing of outputs. Review the feedback systematically.

7. Consult users before making changes that affect statistics (for example, to coverage, definitions or methods) or publications.[488]

The Authority is still in its infancy but it quickly asserted its independent voice with criticisms of government practice.[489]

4.7   Library policy

Main responsibility for policy on libraries resides within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The Library and Information Commission (LIC) was set up by DCMS in 1995, as a: "national source of expertise, advising Government on all issues relating to the library and information sector."[490] In addition to providing advice and acting as a co-ordinator for the library and information sector, it commissioned and funded a variety of research, having absorbed the research function of the British Library, supported work to improve services for the visually impaired and made proposals for co-ordinating provision for lifelong learning from the cradle to the grave.

In relation to this research, it most notably made recommendations for the development of a National Information Policy[491,492] (*see* section 3.3.3.4), which were not taken up by government. However probably its most lasting legacy was the development and adoption of proposals for the People's Network.[493,494,495] Lottery funding was secured for providing all public libraries with free internet access for citizens, training staff to be able to help the public, as well as seeding content. This was at a time when the government was developing UK Online centres so the People's Network dovetailed with, and supported, government policy.

[488] Great Britain. UK Statistics Authority, ref. 486, p.13.
[489] For examples, see the Correspondence section of the UK Statistics Authority's website: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/correspondence/index.html>.
[490] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission. *Home page*. <http://web.archive.org/web/20001205190000/http://www.lic.gov.uk/>, [2000], [accessed 26.06.2008].
[491] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission. *Towards a national information policy for the UK*. <http://web.archive.org/web/20000902115228/www.lic.gov.uk/publications/policyreports/nip.html>,1997, [accessed 25.02.2008].
[492] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission. *Keystone for the information age: a national information policy for the UK*. <http://web.archive.org/web/20001206171500/www.lic.gov.uk/publications/policyreports/keystone.html>, 1999, [accessed 24.02.2008].
[493] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission. *New library: the people's network*. London: Great Britain. Library and Information Commission, 1997.
[494] Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport. *"New library: the people's network": the government's response*. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100407120701/http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/New_library.pdf>, 1998, [accessed 26.09.2010].
[495] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission. *Building the new library network: a report to government*, 1998.

The LIC was replaced in 2000 by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA, initially called Resource), which did not put as much emphasis on information policy as had been the case with the LIC. Indeed, scrutiny of the MLA corporate[496] and business[497] plans show that the library strand of work was overwhelmingly work with and for public libraries. This reflects the focus of DCMS and the fact that MLA is a creature of DCMS rather than, say, BIS. However it did continue the work of the People's Network and the DCMS 2003 *Framework for the future: learning, libraries and information in the next decade*[498] announced a stronger role for MLA regarding the public library system. The focus of the Framework was for the public library service to have locally-driven but nationally co-ordinated plans to:

- promote reading and informal learning
- provide access to digital skills and services, including eGovernment
- tackle social exclusion, build community identity and develop citizenship.

The rhetoric is little different from the 2000 *Libraries for all: social inclusion in public libraries*[499] but the 2003 report emphasised the need to concentrate on non-users, not just users of public libraries, and to work in partnership with other organisations, including business. However both documents showed how public libraries should be used as a vehicle to take forward government's priorities for development of skills, social inclusion and access to eGovernment, including information, services.

MLA itself is now due to be closed down by 2012 and its duties split between other organisations.[500] It is not yet clear what the implications of this will be for the library community, but in the meantime MLA is committed to working with the Race Online 2012 team to take forward the *Manifesto for a networked nation*.[501]

4.8   Meeting objective OB3

This chapter has been addressing objective OB3: to identify and analyse the contents of UK government policies from 1996 which relate to citizens' access to PSI. The majority of the

[496] Great Britain. Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. *Museums, Libraries and Archives corporate plan 2008 to 2011.* <http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets// C/corporate_plan_2008_13176.pdf>, 2008, [accessed 13.07.2008].

[497] Great Britain. Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. *Museums, Libraries and Archives Council business plan 2009/10.* <http://www.mla.gov.uk/about/~/media/Files/pdf/2009/Business_Plan_09-10_ver5>, [accessed 04.10.2010].

[498] Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport & Demos. *Framework for the future: libraries, learning and information in the next decade.* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/Framework_for_the_Future1.pdf>, 2003, [accessed 25.09.2010].

[499] Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport. *Libraries for all: social inclusion in public libraries.* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100407120701/http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/Social_Inclusion_PLibraries.pdf>, 1999, [accessed 27.09.2010].

[500] Great Britain. Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. *MLA pledge a smooth transition.* Press release 26 July 2010. <http://www.mla.gov.uk/news_and_views/press_releases/2010/mla_gov_announcement>, 2010, [accessed 09.08.2010].

[501] *Ibid.*

policy documents have fallen within the eGovernment domain, initially labelled "information society" initiatives and from 2005 "transformational government". Key features have been to develop citizen-centric(as opposed to department-centric) services, to improve efficiency and to cut costs. If more citizens access services online, the services will be cheaper to provide than one-to-one services and citizens will also be saved time and money. Much of the focus has been to develop portals for citizens (Directgov) and businesses (BusinessLink) through which services are channelled. This raises the issues of whether citizens have the skills to be able to access and use the services and how help should be provided for those who do not have them, through one-stop-shops and public libraries for example. Government initiatives on skills have concentrated on IT skills rather than information literacy skills and on providing broadband access to households to narrow the digital divide.

The concept of "open government" dates back to 1993 in the UK but was enshrined in the 2000 Freedom of Information Act. This Act relates to information that government provides on request as opposed to information it publishes proactively to help citizens make decisions and run their lives. However there have been pressures to encourage government to produce more data that can be re-used by third parties to develop new information services. The EU Directive on the re-use of public sector information ensured that the UK government developed mechanisms for regulating re-use of data, setting up the Office of Public Sector Information, which also had responsibility for regulating copyright on government-published material. Further policy on the making of data available for re-use was stimulated by the government-commissioned *Power of information* and the follow-up *Power of Information Taskforce report* which particularly addressed how government could promote innovative use of government data. Government's commitment to providing datasets in re-usable formats grew considerably during 2009 and 2010, influenced by the Power of Information work but also advisers Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Professor Nigel Shadbolt – advice that has continued with the new Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition.

Much PSI is published by government in the form of official statistics. There have been considerable efforts made since 1997 to improve the quality of the statistics and to make them more responsive to user needs. There have also been moves to make the compilation and publication more visibly separate from government control, most recently in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, in order to increase public trust in the figures.

Public libraries have a role to play in helping citizens gain access to PSI, either through the People's Network (set up 1998 with lottery funding to provide computers in every public library and access to resources), or by acting as intermediaries for those without the skills to use the computers themselves. Public libraries also potentially play a part in helping citizens develop the necessary information literacy skills and in tackling the digital divide. Policy advice to government on library and information services was enhanced by the setting up of the Library

and Information Commission (LIC) in 1995 for this purpose, however the LIC was subsumed into the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council in 2000 and now that too will be dispersed in 2012. One of the areas that the LIC focussed on was the concept of a "national information policy" but this was not pursued by the government.

This chapter has identified and provided an overview of the UK policy documents that relate to citizens' access to public sector information since 1996. The next chapter addressees objective OB4: to assess how policy on PSI is developed and governed.

Chapter 5: Findings: Policy development

5.1 Introduction

In line with the thematic analysis, this chapter addresses objective OB4: to assess how policy on public sector information (PSI) is developed and governed. It starts to uncover the mechanisms and power structures that affect government policy on citizens' access to PSI, in line with the critical realist approach. Drawing on the interviews with stakeholders, it looks at the drivers and influencers, both from inside and outside, that have had an impact on information policy. The chapter is structured as follows:

5.2 Importance to government of the provision of PSI

Throughout 2009 semi-structured interviews were held with 28 stakeholders (*see* Annex E for a list of interviewees) with a wide range of interest in the provision of PSI by government. Although for many interviewees it was not their primary interest, they nevertheless, perhaps not surprisingly, felt the issue to be important; they would not have been approached to be interviewed unless they had sufficient knowledge and interest in the subject to be able to give an authoritative opinion. For Michael Cross, journalist and co-founder of the Free Our Data campaign: "It's the most important thing. If they provide information, then everything else

follows from it."[502] In a similar vein Chris Batt, former Chief Executive of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) responded:

> We are in an information age and we need to move to a knowledge age. … The role of government, more than anything else, is to provide information that enables people to live their lives to the full. They certainly don't do that at the moment.[503]

Seven interviewees, both inside and outside government, felt this was increasing but some felt it still to be low.[504] Richard Allan,[505] who chaired the Power of Information taskforce, thought that it was only important to a few specialists in Whitehall but that that was inevitable in crisis-led government: the slow-burning issues do not get to the top of the list, as shown by the priorities in the Conservative Liberal Democrat coalition agreement.[506] Dr Ian Brown,[507] senior fellow at the Oxford Internet Institute, looked at the issue in terms of a cost-benefit analysis. The costs of making government information available were tangible and obvious whereas the benefits were much vaguer and would not be clear for some time.

Of those expressing an opinion about the important of PSI to government, Michael Nicholson, Deputy Chairman of the PSI Alliance, Managing Director of Intelligent Addressing and a member of the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information (APPSI), probably held the most extreme views, something he acknowledged himself:

> I don't think they ever have time to stop and think that government could not work without it, and that really the country couldn't work without it, and that it probably underpins a substantial amount of GNP, and they just don't understand really.[508]

This "lack of understanding" was echoed by other interviewees, mostly outside government. Chris Batt[509] did not think that government understood what role information played in its responsibilities for governance of the country and Guy Daines, Director of Policy and Advocacy for the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), felt that most MPs saw provision of PSI in terms of technology rather than content:

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[502] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.
[503] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[504] *Note*: The interviews were all carried out before the official launch of data.gov.uk so it is possible that more interviewees would have been positive about progress if the interviews had been run in 2010.
[505] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[506] Conservative Party (Great Britain) & Liberal Democratic Party (Great Britain). *Conservative Liberal Democratic coalition negotiations agreements reached 11 May 2010.* <http://www.conservatives.com/News/News-stories/2010/05/Coalition_Agreement_published.aspx>, 2010, [accessed 13.05.2010].
[507] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[508] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[509] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.

I think they start getting interested when you start talking about the knowledge economy, but how you translate information into knowledge into innovation and into new products and new things, I think they're probably not terribly aware.[510]

Professor Stephen Saxby,[511] a lecturer in law at Southampton University, saw a lack of understanding within government of the value of information to the policy-making process. There was a concentration on efficiency, which was reasonable in itself, but he felt that government had not grasped that types of information in the right form, accessible and available at the right time, actually improved the quality of policy-making. Tom Steinberg, co-author of the *Power of Information Review* and founder of the social networking site MySociety, also commented on the importance of PSI in the context of the government's own needs for information:

It is terrifically difficult to run a country as it is, if you don't gather and publish your own information well, there's almost no chance you'll be able to use it yourself as a government to tell what's going right and wrong.[512]

Dr Andy Williamson,[513] Director of the eDemocracy Programme at the Hansard Society, also highlighted the importance of information in policy-making as he felt that communicating with the public about policies was one of the cores of the government's work. John Sheridan,[514] Head of e-Services and Strategy at the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI), and therefore a policy-developer and implementer within government, gave a positive view of the role of information in public policy, suggesting that the provision of information in new and different ways was becoming increasingly important. There had been considerable effort to develop performance metrics for public services but more needed to be done to present the information in useful ways, allowing others to build applications using the data.

5.2.1 Information for decision-making

The importance of performance data to help citizens make decisions was raised by Professor David Rhind, Chairman of APPSI and a previous Chairman of the Statistics Commission, and John Pullinger, Librarian of the House of Commons. Rhind[515] felt that citizens needed information to judge the progress of government against the policy targets it set itself, so that they would make informed decisions about whether a government should be re-elected. For

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[510] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[511] Interview with Professor Stephen Saxby, 9 September 2009.
[512] Email correspondence with Tom Steinberg, 18 August 2009.
[513] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[514] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[515] Interview with David Rhind, 5 August 2009.

Pullinger,[516] information was "the lifeblood of democracy". This metaphor was also used by John Suffolk, the government's Chief Information Officer:

> People are used to conversing online with people that they've never met and will never meet, creating their own trust network, and therefore information is the lifeblood of people making many decisions today and it's predominantly online. … We have to respond appropriately as public servants to push as much useful information out to citizens for them to make decisions.[517]

Peter Griffiths,[518] former President of CILIP and a previous head of library services at the Home Office, commented in a similar manner and suggested that government getting its own messages across was one form of information provision. Professor Rita Marcella,[519] Dean of Aberdeen Business School, The Robert Gordon University, took this a stage further. Whilst government might consider that a better informed society could perform more ably in a variety of ways and be more successful or healthy, economically vibrant and well-educated, she felt that information as a means of influencing the electorate was sometimes closer to its heart. She based this finding on her experience of research on the EU, concluding that the EU found it difficult to distinguish between the two types of provision, which led to a lack of clarity in systems design. Jayne Nickalls,[520] Chief Executive of Directgov, agreed that in the past, government departments had put more emphasis on making available information they wanted to publish rather than putting themselves in the citizen's place but she felt that that had changed and government was developing services more around citizens' needs. This is addressed in more detail in Chapter 6.

5.2.2 Drivers for change

A senior staff member at TNA[521] was particularly positive about what they perceived as a big change in government attitude towards making public data more available, moving from a presumption of closed to a presumption of open data. They suggested that the Freedom of Information Act, together with Web 2.0 and citizens' ability to get information from a range of places, was leading ministers and civil servants to give more thought to the openness agenda and the potential for better service delivery. The change is not just in the UK. In the United States, incoming President Obama made a commitment to opening up data on his first day in office.[522]

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[516] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[517] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[518] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[519] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[520] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[521] Interview with a senior staff member at TNA, 11 May 2009.
[522] Obama, B. *Transparency and open government: memorandum for the heads of executive departments and agencies.* [21 January 2009]. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/TransparencyandOpenGovernment/>, [accessed 26.11.2010].

Jim Wretham, Head of Information Policy at the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI), illustrated how the Internet had made a difference to policy on licensing public information:

> When we launched the Click Use licence in 2001 a number of departments were of the view that all sorts of terrible things will happen. … We're now in the situation where there are over 20,000 Click Use licences in place world-wide. Nothing has gone wrong really. To some extent this heralded the idea that information is a resource that can be re-used and government and the public sector have the opportunity to let things happen. … People are taking data from all sorts of different sources and the very mechanistic licensing method does not sit comfortably with that approach.[523]

Dame Lynne Brindley,[524] Chief Executive of the British Library, also identified transparency and FoI as drivers for change when discussing the importance of PSI to government, as well as new electronic mechanisms of doing business with citizens. Chris Batt[525] recognised the influence of e-services as well, with wide access to broadband networks increasing people's expectations. However, with the exception of Directgov, he didn't see any kind of coherent policy framework which made sure that everybody saw what was really relevant to them.

Professor Rita Marcella[526] highlighted the role of a crisis in helping people to realise how critical information can be. Crises were also one of three drivers for change in eGovernment services suggested by Jo Bryson,[527] Executive Director with the Australian Public Sector Commission, in relation to the scene in her country, along with having champions within government and public agitation.

5.3   Who makes information policy?

This question probably elicited the widest range of answers, and the least conclusive. Is the balance of policy-making with ministers or civil servants, and how much can outside bodies influence policy? Some felt strongly that ministers had the most influence, others that it was down to civil servants. Some considered that there was a strong influence from outside whilst others considered policy-making to be an internal activity. The answer is probably a mixture of all of the above, depending on the issue and which ministers are in power at any one time. This largely reflects findings of the Constitution Unit of University College London (UCL)[528] – input into the policy agenda comes from a variety of sources, not just ministers: internal and external advisers (for example the Power of Information Team); think tanks; and pressure

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[523] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[524] Interview with Dame Lynne Brindley, 28 September, 2009.
[525] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[526] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[527] Meeting with Jo Bryson, Loughborough, 11 March 2010.
[528] Waller, P., Morris, R.M. & Simpson, D., ref. 164.

groups. Outside events can also have an influence. This research probably found a larger role for officials in departments than the UCL report, but this may be due to the technical nature of the subject. However, if ministers had agreed to be interviewed (two approaches were made), the balance of the picture may have been different.

The complicated network of interested parties promulgating information policy was stressed by Panos Hahamis,[529] a senior lecturer in eGovernment from Westminster Business School, as well as Chris Batt[530] when he commented on the sources of information policy from the perspective of the MLA. Professor David Rhind[531] highlighted the range of players. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) had a remit over freedom of information, TNA and the re-use of PSI as ministerial policy domains but he suggested that other departments would see their own information as unusual and had to find their own ways of dealing with it. Michael Cross believed that there was a lack of leadership in this area of policy-making:

> There's a hole in the centre. When OPSI and TSO [The Stationery Office] were created, the assumption was that it wasn't important, you could just shovel it off to one side and things like The National Archives would be self-funding. Clearly no-one is in charge.[532]

Professor Nick Moore,[533] who worked for the Policy Studies Institute for many years, also stressed the lack of a locus and compared the British system unfavourably with that of Scandinavia, where there was a much clearer demarcation between government departments. He felt that one government department needed to be assigned responsibility. Lobbyist and entrepreneur William Heath,[534] a leading lobbyist through his Ideal Government blog and the Open Rights Group, had a similarly negative view:

> So who sets the policy? The problem is largely one of human and structural inertia … As regards external campaigners for change, think tanks and NGOs are perceived as rather arrogant, self-appointed upstarts, and the language in dealing with them is parent-to-child. The economic arguments will be powerful in due course but at the moment security arguments trump everything.[535]

In subsequent email correspondence he suggested that the exchange of ideas between government and campaigners improved considerably in the run up to the last general election and beyond.[536]

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[529] Interview with Panos Hahamis, 30 July 2009.
[530] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[531] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.
[532] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.
[533] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[534] Interview with William Heath, 7 September 2009.
[535] *Ibid.*
[536] Email correspondence with William Heath, 16 August 2010.

Jim Wretham[537] described how some of the different players in Whitehall had had their own particular set of interests and priorities. The Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform had a business perspective, the Cabinet Office was interested in social networking and citizen-based sites whilst the Treasury was concerned with expenditure. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) had the lead on INSPIRE (EU Directive: Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe) and Wretham thought that would become a key issue over the next year. Graeme Baxter, a research assistant at Aberdeen Business School, The Robert Gordon University, pointed out that the picture was even more complicated because the departments within the Devolved Administrations: "…have all got their own responsibilities for information provision of varying sorts as well."[538]

5.3.1 Influence of ministers and the civil service

Interviewees were asked to consider the relative influence on information policy-making between ministers and officials. For those who were aware of ministerial involvement in information policy-making, the suggestion was that it was ministers rather than the higher-ranking secretaries of state who took an interest. However, with the exception of the former Minister for Digital Engagement Tom Watson MP (he resigned whilst the interviews were taking place) and Michael Wills MP at the MoJ, both of whom were cited as crucial by Wretham[539] (OPSI) and Rhind[540] (APPSI), little mention was made of named ministers. Stephen Timms MP had a role as the lead minister on the Digital Britain agenda and Lord Mandelson's portfolio as Business Secretary included the digital economy and intellectual property. Wretham[541] felt that there had been considerable progress in information policy resulting from the commitment of Watson and Wills, but that, at the time, ministerial interest more widely was "somewhat patchy". He was, nevertheless, encouraged that Gordon Brown had acknowledged that information was an asset for the public.

Dr Andy Williamson[542] suggested that ministerial involvement was at the top level rather than in the detail, whilst John Pullinger put ministerial interest in information policy in the perspective of their whole agenda:

> I think most departments and most ministers are interested in their policies, and information is just one attribute of that policy, so the idea of an information policy as such is not widely understood I don't think. Whether you're talking about statistics or

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[537] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[538] Interview with Graeme Baxter, 15 July 2009.
[539] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[540] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August, 2009.
[541] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[542] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.

scientific evidence or anything else, its value to the minister or the department is in its ability to help you deal with your policy problem; it's not an issue in itself.[543]

Peter Griffiths[544] felt strongly that "information policy" had been confused and conflated with "communications policy", to its detriment. He went on to call for a better appreciation in departments of a distinction between information as information scientists and librarians would understand it, and information as communications specialists would understand it. Williamson made a similar point about the blurring of information and communication:

> COI [Central Office of Information] is starting to be influential in the online engagement base as well. But they're not really about information policy, they're more communications but you try and find out where that line is, it's a blurry line. Cabinet Office is vital as well and who they are in a way sets the standard for what's going to happen. It's not a coincidence I think that COI reports into Cabinet Office. So those two are probably the core cross-government units. Then I think the rest of it is siloed.[545]

Saxby[546] raised the difficulty for civil servants of influencing policy across departments, particularly when ministers' objectives are much more short-term. Hahamis, a former civil servant himself, felt that the quality of policy was higher if drafted by civil servants rather than ministers, their advisers or consultants.[547]

Turning to the views of current civil servants (at the time of writing in 2010), David Pullinger in the COI, a non-ministerial department reporting to the Cabinet Office, commented on ministerial involvement:

> It [policy] is made by the Cabinet Office, and if there is policy to be made, of course it needs to be signed off by a minister. So the process of making policy in this area is that you might have one or two people who are driving it forward, but whatever happens, it goes up through Cabinet Office and then it gets signed off by a minister.[548]

He summed up the mixed nature of policy-making within government, some being minister-led, some civil servant-led and some in response to outside influences. Jayne Nickalls[549] came into government to run Directgov and gave the caveat that she was not a policy person but she also stressed the role of the Cabinet Office. In order for Directgov to effect change

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[543] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[544] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[545] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[546] Interview with Professor Stephen Saxby, 9 September 2009.
[547] Interview with Panos Hahamis, 30 Jul 2009.
[548] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[549] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.

across government, there needed to be a commitment within departments to work with them in partnership.

5.3.2 Influence of Her Majesty's Treasury

The Constitution Unit of UCL, in its analysis of the formulation and development of government policy,[550] documented the rise of the influence of HM Treasury (HMT) since 1997 on policy government-wide, with both positive and negative effects. For example it is necessary for government to have scrutiny over expenditure plans to ensure that a proper case has been made, but under budgetary rules, HMT could announce policy affecting other departments without the same level of scrutiny.

During the interviews, David Worlock[551] (a commercial information services provider and former member of APPSI) initially, and most forcibly, raised the issue of the need for HMT support if information policy was to be successful: "I'm afraid in Britain if you don't carry the Treasury you don't carry anything." He was responding from his perspective as a private sector developer of information services. It is not therefore surprising that his view was supported by that of Michael Nicholson,[552] who also had re-use of PSI as his major concern. He suggested that the amounts of money required from HMT were very small but that the potential for revenue generation was considerable, thus HMT was very short-sighted.

Journalist Michael Cross,[553] from his experience of the Free Our Data campaign, took a similar line, as did academics Brown[554] and Hahamis.[555] Dr Andy Williamson of the Hansard Society also supported this view, although his experience was not drawn from the UK:

> …it is massively influential because to do anything in government you need money and to get money you need the budget, and the budget is decided by Treasury. If it's any significant policy, it isn't going to get signed off by Treasury if they don't think it's a good use of money. … If you talked about developing an over-arching information policy for government, you'd have Treasury sitting on there saying: 'Why? What's it going to cost? What's the benefit?' So very, very important. I don't presume it's any greatly different in the UK.[556]

Taskforce chairman Richard Allan agreed on the need for Treasury support and was optimistic:

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[550] Waller, Morris & Simpson, ref. 164, p. 41.
[551] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.
[552] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[553] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.
[554] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[555] Interview with Panos Hahamis, 30 July 2009.
[556] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.

The Taskforce has been through various channels selling stuff to Treasury, so I think they get it much more than they used to, and they particularly get the notion that if you want an innovation-led economy, these are growth sectors that could actually generate a huge amount of revenue. … I would argue that it's always going to be to a certain extent a leap of faith because by definition we're talking about the sort of innovation we can't imagine today. … Part of the challenge, is to keep putting the message in to Treasury to say: "Maybe it's worth taking a risk on this. ." It's a risk to do that, but I think there's a reasonable appetite for it.[557]

Jayne Nickalls,[558] Directgov, considered that the Treasury had an impact on her work, although perhaps less than the academics and private sector interviewees might have thought. John Suffolk [559] made the point that policy-setting was not within the remit of Treasury, although it would clearly have to approve the financial case for projects that went above his department's spending limit.

The senior staff member[560] from TNA discussed the need for efficiency savings in their work on information management within government, as well as revenue generation, with the changing economic climate. The Operational Efficiency Programme[561] that came out with the previous budget was a big driver for TNA, which needed to demonstrate through cross-government benchmarking that the information function offered value for money. John Sheridan's[562] OPSI perspective on the Operational Efficiency Programme was rather different, concentrating on the statements about charges for PSI. When asked if the Programme had been a limiting factor he replied:

No, quite the opposite. There was a very strong set of statements that came out of the budget around information, reinforcing marginal costs as the default position, so that was very helpful. … The truth is that these are good concepts economically but these are very difficult concepts to apply specifically to information.[563]

Professor David Rhind emphasised the complex nature of HMT:

So it's a contradiction to say Treasury says this because Treasury has multiple views in different parts of it. The public expenditure side of Treasury doesn't want to spend a penny more than it has to and therefore selling public sector information is a good thing, seen from their perspective. … Other bits of the Treasury are more

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[557] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[558] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[559] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[560] Interview with a senior staff member at TNA, 11 May 2009.
[561] Great Britain. HM Treasury. *Operational Efficiency Programme: final report.* Great Britain. HM Treasury. <http://www.shareholderexecutive.gov.uk/publications/pdf/oep_final_report_210409_pu728.pdf>, 2009, [accessed 04.07.2010].
[562] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[563] *Ibid.*

intellectually attracted to the idea of there's a bigger, if less tangible, gain, by making information available freely, and developers are taking this up and building jobs on top of it.[564]

5.3.3 Influence of the Office of Public Sector Information and the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information

5.3.3.1 Perspectives on the work of OPSI

John Sheridan,[565] Head of e-Services and Strategy at OPSI, gave an insider's view of the structure of OPSI and how the team works together:

> Carol [Tullo, Director] has brought into her team the right sort of mixture of people and we all work very well together, which is important across quite a diverse group of people. … The balance that we have between developing policy, delivering some real stuff and being quite rooted in the practical and the regulation is really powerful To have fingers in those three pies gives a really unique perspective. One of the lessons that we have in OPSI is that to make practical progress, having a number of different wider public policy objectives that you are contributing to is very helpful.[566]

As its advisory body, APPSI worked closely with OPSI and its chairman Professor David Rhind[567] thought OPSI had both done a good job and was respected outside the UK. In discussing OPSI's role and progress, he highlighted the new powers for OPSI to check whether other government departments were able to charge for information and to arbitrate, together with the Office of Fair Trading, on the acceptability of the Ordnance Survey business plan. However he was not complacent:

> There are lots of areas where it just doesn't work very well at the moment. Huge frustrations I keep being told about, but I think we are on a journey where things will get better. It's certainly much better than it was two or three years ago.[568]

Rhind's positive view of OPSI was reflected in many of the comments of other interviewees, although Williamson[569] was surprised that he hadn't heard about OPSI and APPSI through the course of his work at the Hansard Society and Hahamis[570] was concerned that advisory bodies couldn't make a real difference unless they had the power to enforce, not just advise.

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[564] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.
[565] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[566] I*bid.*
[567] *Ibid.*
[568] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.
[569] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[570] Interview with Panos Hahamis, 30 July 2009.

Cross[571] echoed this in relation to the lack of enforcement in the PSI Directive which OPSI was set up to implement. Steinberg also expressed concern about the level of resources that OPSI had at its disposal:

> OPSI I think is absolutely essential, expert, does a really good job. … OPSI is perfectly positioned for what it needs to do, but I would want to see OPSI to be able to be the first port of call for a consultancy service on information asset repositories, licensing, all those sort of things, not just for central government but for local government as well. … OPSI are pretty good, but could do with more resources to chase poor adherence to current rules and to grease the wheel in information rich but cash poor departments and agencies.[572]

Jim Wretham[573] gave his personal view of the progress that OPSI had made and its future direction. He felt that OPSI had done a good job and had some control over trading funds and other organisations that were licensed through the Information Fair Trader Scheme (IFTS). There was scope to reinforce its regulatory powers and various reports had suggested that it needed to be resourced appropriately for this, but he thought it had done well with the resources that had been at its disposal, although there was scope for more development. He added in 2010:

> TNA's Standards Team that has a regulatory function in the context of the re-use of public sector information has strengthened and enhanced the Information Fair Trader Scheme. … In particular, we are have added new IFTS principles. A key one is placing the emphasis on public sector organisations proactively maximising the amount of information that is made available for re-use. Similarly, TNA is working on developing a new licensing framework. … we are now moving to a non-transactional model which will mean that re-users will not need to register and apply for a licence. The model will also be interoperable with international standard licence models such as Creative Commons. This is an initiative that is contributing to the Coalition government's transparency agenda.[574]

Nicholson[575] and Worlock,[576] the two people working outside government with the greatest interest in the EU Directive on the re-use of PSI, did not feel that OPSI was fit for purpose. Worlock suggested OPSI was underpowered for its job whilst Nicholson questioned its role as a regulator:

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[571] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.
[572] Email correspondence with Tom Steinberg, 18 August 2009.
[573] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[574] Email correspondence with Jim Wretham, 18 July 2010.
[575] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[576] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.

I think as a policy unit advising government it's really very good in that it's got some intelligent, clever, sensible, well-meaning people there, but if the policy is then completely overruled by Treasury, I think you have to conclude that they don't have adequate power. But I do think the idea that the government has a sort of think tank which is specialised in PSI is a good idea. In terms of being a regulator, I think OPSI's a tactical mistake. It has no statutory power, and to the extent that it would ever wield its power, it would have to go nuclear in order to do it, with resignations and goodness knows what. It just isn't a regulator and it's not an enforcer.[577]

John Sheridan[578] did feel that OPSI was fit for purpose but agreed that it was under-resourced, as highlighted in the original Power of Information report and *Commercial use of public information*:[579]

I think the biggest check on what we can achieve is the understanding and the important prominence that is given to what we're doing, and the fact that we're an innovation part of an organisation that is basically running a really big Argos… delivery to hundreds of people.[580]

5.3.3.2 OPSI move to The National Archives

This last comment by Sheridan raised the issue of the impact of move of the OPSI from the Cabinet Office to TNA in October 2006. This was taken up with various interviewees to gain their impressions of the benefits or otherwise of the move. The answers on the whole were rather ambivalent. Batt[581] felt TNA was a suitable a home as anywhere else but: "whether they're performing in a way that is now more integrated with what the TNA's doing I'm not sure." Allan[582] suggested that it was too soon to tell whether the organisation would be able to develop its role as the first port of call or whether its identity would become diluted and it became lost and marginalised. Brown[583] also thought it was too early to tell how successful the move had been. There was a small risk of ghettoising the function but he hoped that having the range of voices within that function would avoid that.

John Pullinger took a balanced view:

Positionally I think they're probably weaker away from the centre, but practically that's counter-balanced by being stronger by being part of an archives organisation that itself is having a bigger role. … I think there is now an immediate day-to-day recognition amongst permanent secretaries that information is something they need

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[577] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[578] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[579] Great Britain. Office of Fair Trading, ref. 20.
[580] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[581] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[582] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[583] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.

to worry about, so they're going to be looking to information professionals to help them with problems that are on their desk. That is an opportunity and if you've got someone [Natalie Ceeney, TNA Chief Executive at the time of the interview] who's at a senior level who is making those points, that is a chance.[584]

Daines[585] was concerned about how OPSI would fare within TNA in the light of the efficiency savings required in the Operational Efficiency Programme, whilst Williamson[586] expressed what he perceived as a contradiction between archiving and using information. He felt that TNA was the wrong place because it made the point that information was seen as something to be archived and stored rather than something live, active and useful. This conflict with the archival and re-use roles was taken up by the senior staff member[587] at TNA, whose personal view was that TNA looked at information management as a life cycle and OPSI logically fitted into that, but the challenge may have been as much around nomenclature as anything else. Their own perception was that OPSI was a very high-performing team and its work on re-use was recognised across Europe. For John Sheridan,[588] OPSI, the most important thing was to be able to assemble the right team of people from across government as the need arose.

5.3.3.3 Perspectives on the work of APPSI

Professor David Rhind,[589] the second chairman of APPSI, discussed the role of the Panel. He saw it as outward-looking although officials were among those who gave presentations to inform and enthuse the Panel. Members came from business and academia as well as government and provided advice to ministers, although it did not have any power. Ministers Tom Watson (Cabinet Office), Michael Wills (Ministry of Justice) and Shriti Vadera (Business, Innovation and Skills) had all been keen on the public use of PSI to inform the democratic process.

The membership of APPSI was heralded by Cross,[590] Brown[591] and Nicholson,[592] however concern was expressed about the role and influence of APPSI. Steinberg[593] felt that it did not impinge on the consciousness of Whitehall and Allan[594] saw its interests as limited to PSI regulations. Michael Nicholson,[595] a member of APPSI, was impressed by the people and the way the committee was run but expressed concern at its lack of powers. He was pleased that Minister Michael Wills was interested but expressed regret that David Worlock was no longer

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[584] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[585] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[586] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[587] Interview with a senior staff member at TNA, 11 May 2009.
[588] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[589] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.
[590] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.
[591] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[592] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[593] Email correspondence with Tom Steinberg, 18 August 2009.
[594] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[595] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.

on the panel as he was a great contributor. Worlock himself reflected back on his time on APPSI:

> APPSI needs to be much more independent and report directly to ministers. In my five years with APPSI … no minister ever came to meet with us. … An awful lot of these bodies, they're not to inform and drive government policy but to inform the public that public policy is being done properly. … It was hugely difficult to get senior civil servants to come to meetings with APPSI, and of course APPSI only ever has made, in my knowledge, one judgement in an arbitration case. It went substantially against Ordnance Survey[596] and Ordnance Survey has effectively ignored it.[597]

Wretham[598] added an interesting corollary, suggesting that there had been change since Worlock left the Panel, with much more ministerial interest from Michael Wills MP, as Nicholson[599] acknowledged above. Saxby was positive about the influence of APPSI. Because it brought together experts who were not already tarnished with the problem that they were politicians with objectives, and party-political concerns, he thought that that kind of body could help shape information policy across government far more effectively than civil servants could:

> I think APPSI has shown that you can have a successful third eye looking at these issues and telling ministers how it is and hopefully making a contribution. If they're not listened to though …[600]

APPSI chairman David Rhind provided his own perspective:

> [APPSI] is constructed to get a plurality of different views, deliberately, and from that we try to weed out any nonsense and come towards some sort of conclusions. … when there is no consensus we should articulate the different views, put their strengths and weaknesses and try and steer a way through those and say: "These are the pros and cons, and the majority thought that this was the most important one." … So I think success criteria for APPSI are: to be up-to-date, to be able to know what's going on in different arenas, to know about different opportunities, both from new technology, from new ideas wherever it comes from in the world, not just in the narrow thing in the UK, and to be able to articulate the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to ministers and to Carol Tullo [in charge of OPSI].[601]

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[596] Great Britain. Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information. *Complaints Review Board.* <http://www.appsi.gov.uk/CategoryView/category/ComplaintsReviewBoard/>, 2007, [accessed 26.11.2010].
[597] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.
[598] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[599] *See* ref. 595.
[600] Interview with Professor Stephen Saxby, 9 September 2009.
[601] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.

5.3.4 Influencers from outside government

Turning to the influence that those outside government have on the development of information policy, Brown[602] was positive about the effect of the Power of Information Taskforce, bringing in a wider range of stakeholders than had previously been very influential within government. Heath[603] was more cautious, however, about how government viewed external thinkers: government needed to be very adaptable and appeared to react badly to external criticism or points of view which questioned their underlying assumptions. He suggested that activists such as Tom Steinberg and Harry Metcalfe were: "perceived as gadflies rather than as priceless assets in British social culture." Meanwhile Nicholson[604] stressed the greater influence of those working inside government, particularly within the trading funds, despite outside advice being intellectually stronger and from a broader spectrum.

Worlock[605] suggested that the *Guardian's* Free Our Data campaign had had some success in raising issues about trading fund charges for PSI but was now "running out of steam" and not much had happened. However it should be noted that he was interviewed in February 2009, almost a year before the data.gov.uk service was launched and the consultation on making Ordnance Survey data more freely available.

Williamson perceived a lack of public consultation in policy-making – an area he focuses on in his research for the Hansard Society:

> I think all too often the desire is to go to the so-called experts, who are quite often former policy people who used to work in your department or in a very similar area and are safe and speak the same language. There's too little attempt to go out to wider stakeholders and I think some of that's changing. There are really good examples of where it's done but they're too few and far between. I think there's some influence there from politicians but I'm always slightly wary of suggesting that there's too much. … Civil servants achieve what they want despite the politicians getting in the way.[606]

5.3.5 Influence of the information profession

Worlock[607] was the first to raise the issue of the influence, or lack of it, of the information profession on information policy-making. The profession had much knowledge about user needs but little influence on government policy. Arguably the *Guardian's* Free Our Data

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[602] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[603] Interview with William Heath, 7 September 2009.
[604] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[605] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.
[606] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[607] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.

campaign[608] had more impact. (This low level of influence is not new. Mahon[609] noted in 1997 that there was a lack of information professionals and information policy researchers involved in the EU information policy debate.)

For Allan,[610] progress was being driven by the "just do it" Web 2.0 activist culture rather than the traditional information profession. When others were asked about whether the information profession was having an impact on information policy, most answers were negative. For example:

> I'd have to say, not really, no.[611]

> I don't think they've had any influence to a great extent.[612]

> Well not much.[613]

> On the public front, the information profession is perhaps less noisy than other stakeholders. That's not to say less effective, but of course that's harder to judge from outside government than inside.[614]

> Very little I think. … I certainly don't see much of it. I think the information professions might trick themselves into thinking they do.[615]

> I don't think we see anything very visible at all.[616]

> Not a lot probably.[617]

> I cannot remember the last time that I heard an information professional making a major statement about PSI.[618]

> The information community generally is not as articulate as some other communities, and the information community is generally very polite, measured, and must itself get

[608] *Free Our Data*. <http://www.freeourdata.org.uk/index.php>, 2008, [accessed 29.07.2008].
[609] Mahon, B. European information policy: the role of institutional factors. *In:* Rowlands, I., ed. *Understanding informational policy*, 1997, pp.101-113.
[610] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[611] Interview with William Heath, 7 September 2009.
[612] Interview with Professor Stephen Saxby, 9 September 2009.
[613] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[614] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[615] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[616] Interview with Steve Wood, 17 November 2009.
[617] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[618] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.

much more political, to understand the environment it's in, think who its advocates are, think about it as a policy campaign.[619]

In this last comment, John Pullinger,[620] House of Commons Librarian, was one of a number of interviewees who commented on the more introverted nature of the information profession. He also concluded that the profession needed people who were able to engage with the Prime Minister and the head of the civil service and suggested that once you had that leadership, institutions will be much more likely to coalesce. These comments rather echo those of Professor John Feather:

> "…there is ample evidence of a lack of imagination – and perhaps a lack of the necessary political skills – to promote the contribution that information professionals can make to the social, economic and cultural change which is directly or indirectly affecting the lives of every man, woman and child on the planet.[621]

The leadership gap was also raised by Guy Daines,[622] CILIP, who felt that librarians were not going to have political influence if they were only interested in the current operational workings of the library service. Michael Nicholson commented in similar vein:

> The information profession tends not to be a bunch of articulate galloping extroverts. Some of the problems here are trying to persuade bits of government to leave their comfort zones, and that requires someone's who's going to really bang a drum.[623]

Chris Batt,[624] an information professional himself, agreed that the profession needed to want to see the long-term value of influencing national policy. Gwenda Sippings,[625] a previous Head of Profession for knowledge and information management within government, raised a similar point about the nature of librarians from her experience within government and the need for them to be more proactive. She had heard of instances where employers had found it easier to recruit extroverts and train them in library skills rather than train qualified librarians to be extrovert. Sippings also saw a definite need for library and information skills within government, particularly in developing data sharing systems, and Professor Rita Marcella[626] stressed the importance of having systems designed by people who understand information.

Nicholson[627] perceived some beneficial influence of information professionals, suggesting that the profession had encouraged tagging of data to make it more easily searchable. He was

[619] Interview with John Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[620] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[621] Feather, ref.245.
[622] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[623] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[624] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[625] Interview with Gwenda Sippings, 1 September 2009.
[626] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[627] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.

speaking from outside government and his views were rather contradicted by David Pullinger,[628] who did not find the profession within government met his needs. He felt that information managers made a very low contribution to Web developments and were still locked into old library systems. He required a much faster pace of development and use of ordinary people's language in ontologies. In addition:

> The purpose they're developing all of this information management for is internal purposes and I'm external focussed and the whole world changes when you go external. We've got uncontrolled language, yes, but actually what you want to do to make it work is completely different, so you want to embed your information into the World Wide Web. You don't care where it is as long as people get to it.[629]

Guy Daines[630] suggested that it was difficult for the profession to have much influence because it was so fragmented. By the same token, he noted how fragmented government itself was, with no one place dealing with information policy and information management. Dame Lynne Brindley[631] also agreed that the profession had had very little influence generally but that it had had successes in specific areas, such as copyright. She suggested that rather than try to develop a stronger voice for the profession, it would be more effective to focus on individual issues, such as digital literacy and digital exclusion.

Moore[632] felt that some information professionals within government had made a considerable impact changing the way information is thought about within government. However both Guy Daines[633] and John Pullinger[634] made the point that libraries tended to suffer a downgrading when there were financial cuts, making it difficult to have an influence at the highest level. Griffiths reported some individual success as well but went on to refer to this reduction in services, echoing Daines and John Pullinger:

> There are a very small group of people who are surprisingly influential, the CKO people on the Knowledge Council, but they are having to shout very loud to be heard and slowly their viewpoint is being understood, but there's a lot more advocacy to be done where CILIP might be able to provide some support. In terms of the librarian profession, I think the influences are less and services are being reduced. We're back to where we were in the 1990s with the threat of outsourcing and cancellation of services. There's that law of diminishing returns that says that if you haven't sufficiently high profile and status you get ignored, which is a vicious circle and that winds down and you end up with a couple of assistant librarians and nobody listens to

[628] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[629] *Ibid.*
[630] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[631] Interview with Dame Lynne Brindley, 28 September 2009.
[632] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[633] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[634] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.

them at all. … At one end the influence has never been higher and at the other end the influence has never been lower.[635]

5.3.5.1 The role of information organisations

Information professionals were asked what role information organisations, such as the professional body CILIP and the government advisory body MLA, had or could have in influencing the debate on information policy and raising the profile of the information profession. Batt, Marcella and Sippings all stressed the importance of articulating what the profession does, "producing a narrative with demonstration of value".[636] Marcella recounted the frustration of discussing information issues with policy-makers and bureaucrats who: "glaze over with complete and utter incomprehension as you try to communicate."[637]

There was some criticism of CILIP. Brown[638] was positive about CILIP's participation in consultations and getting points across but Marcella[639] felt that it did not seem to be very dynamic and Moore[640] doubted whether it had much impact. Working with CILIP on the Framework for Qualifications c.2007 he was impressed by the approach that CILIP in Scotland had taken but described CILIP as: "defending your own patch, low grade politics, personalities intruding left, right and centre." He was equally unimpressed by the MLA. He felt that it was ineffectual, and was considered by DCMS to be ineffectual. Its work on library and information services was dominated by a bookish approach, of which the appointment of the ex-Poet Laureate as chairman was indicative:

> There isn't anybody within that organisation who thinks about information in a way that would be recognised by anyone concerned with public sector information. Chris Batt came closest to it but was just overwhelmed by the complexities of dealing with museums and archives.[641]

Dame Lynne Brindley[642] suggested that the Library and Information Commission (LIC) focussed on information policy but that the MLA had other priorities. A broad coalition would be required to make the case for national policy. Dr Valerie Johnson, Corporate Research Manager at The National Archives, also took up this issue:

> Clearly in a complex field such as information management there are a range of different views and opinions. There is unlikely to be consensus on every view across

[635] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[636] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[637] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[638] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[639] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[640] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[641] *Ibid.*
[642] Interview with Dame Lynne Brindley, 28 September 2009.

all the groups, but the recent amalgamation of several groups to form the new Archives and Records Association is a really positive step.[643]

Batt outlined the difficulty of coming to a consensus, based on his experience as chief executive of MLA:

> My recollection is that you can't get all of the public libraries in England to come to a common view about what they should be doing and why. … Public libraries and university libraries hardly talk to each other, and that leaves out all of the other information [sectors].[644]

Griffiths,[645] reflecting on his experience as President of CILIP, felt that the growing range of different issues that CILIP needed to address was problematical: CILIP itself needed educating in what it should respond to.

5.3.5.2 Information skills within government

Daines[646] reported on CILIP's work in co-ordinating the various players that were addressing the information skills required within government. TNA was managing discussions with CILIP, the Society of Archivists, the Records Management Society and the British Computer Society to map skills from the individual organisations onto the Government Knowledge and Information Management (GKIM) Professional Skills Framework.[647] The aim is to share good practice but also to break down the traditional silos of librarian, records manager or information rights person by multi-skilling people so that they can be deployed much more effectively. Wretham saw an increase in information management skills through the advice that TNA was giving to central and local government on public records management.

Although talking about the information sector as a whole, Dr Valerie Johnson's (TNA) comments highlight the importance of information management:

> Managing information is a complex and highly skilled operation. It is important that information professionals have the necessary training and experience to manage information. Given the importance of information – and one only has to look at the Coalition Government's announcements about information in the context of transparency – expertise and professionalism in this area has never been more important.[648]

[643] Email correspondence with Dr Valerie Johnson, 4 August 2010.
[644] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[645] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[646] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[647] Great Britain. HM Government. *Government knowledge and information professional skills framework*. <http://gkimn.nationalarchives.gov.uk/framework.htm>, 2009, [accessed 22.11.2010].
[648] Email correspondence with Dr Valerie Johnson, 4 August 2010.

In November 2008 the Knowledge Council published its strategy *Information matters*[649] and the senior staff member from TNA explained what it was trying to achieve:

> It's a lot about nuts and bolts. Our agenda was dictated to an extent by data loss and the Hannigan Review, so if you look at information management, if you look at the risk part and you look at the opportunity part, the bias has been around risks, but we are saying that a risk is only an unmanaged asset, a liability is just an unmanaged asset – so manage it. That's the kind of language we're talking and that's what we're doing with the delivery plan to help government start managing its assets.[650]

Risk management had been the focus of their work so far, but now that secure data handling processes were in place, more could be done to address the new opportunities that better information management could offer. The question of whether *Information matters* would make a difference was put to Griffiths and Batt. Griffiths[651] felt that it was essential that it did whilst Batt[652] considered that there needed to be some "cause celebre" to show the importance of information in the process of government.

Sippings[653] was supportive of developing competency frameworks to help develop performance within government but Sheridan, OPSI, felt strongly that establishing a knowledge and information management profession within government was not the way to proceed:

> It seems to me we are putting a huge amount of effort into professionalising the scribes just after the invention of the printing press. … Sadly I think that's my view of most of what is currently called the information profession in government, that they're the scribes and the world they are now confronting has changed beyond all recognition. They're poorly equipped to be able to cope, and in fact because it's attacking their professional role and power, they're resisting it quite strongly.[654]

5.3.5.3 New skills and posts within government

Various interviewees expressed the need to rethink what skills and posts were required within government to address citizen engagement. Richard Allan put it succinctly:

[649] Great Britain. HM Government. *Information matters: building government's capacity in managing knowledge and information.* <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/services/publications/information-matters-strategy.pdf>, 2008, [accessed 19.01.2009].
[650] *Ibid.*
[651] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[652] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[653] Interview with Gwenda Sippings, 1 September 2009.
[654] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.

This notion of digital engagement is essentially saying we need something new which is somewhere between PR and technology, or comms and technology, and I don't think that profession exists.

Brindley[655] came down firmly on the other side of the debate, seeing it rather as an issue of upskilling the current profession and accepting a hybrid set of new information management skills, not just in government but right across the profession. Daines saw more of a convergence of professions:

The skill set in the GKIM is converged, covers the archives, libraries and computing, so in that sense it's already started. If we want to not only survive but thrive, then I'm quite sure that we've got to change, and that might mean realignment or maybe merging, but that what we will look like in five or ten years time will be quite different to what we're looking like now.[656]

When asked about the potential for a new information profession within government, Brown[657] countered that it was difficult to draw the boundaries as it could be argued that almost **all** white collar workers these days were information professionals. He went on to suggest that PR professionals were more concerned to limit the spread of information or to deliver messages to certain groups, whilst IT professionals were focussed on technical systems for information delivery, both quite different from the role of information managers.

Rhind[658] saw people like John Sheridan in OPSI as core to the new breed of information professional but that is not quite how Sheridan sees himself, although he clearly has a strong grasp of information issues, as this quote demonstrates:

I'm really a technologist, though every time I talk to someone in government IT I think: "I'm nothing like you." … When I have a conversation with people, I think they've almost got the whole thing upside down because they're worrying about the artefacts and I say, no, no, no, by far and away the most interesting thing in an information space is not an individual item, unless it's massive, but how that relates to everything else – the network. It's the network that you want to understand, and that tells you whether this is important or whether this is trivial. … Lots of trivial information with computing power appropriately modelled and engineered is actually terrifically valuable and useful.[659]

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[655] Interview with Dame Lynne Brindley, 28 September 2009.
[656] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[657] Interview with Dr Ian Brown 25 August 2009.
[658] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.
[659] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.

5.4   Co-ordination of policy-making and implementation

Co-ordination of policy-making can be looked at in two ways, firstly as a co-ordinated framework of policies, and secondly as the structures needed within government to develop and implement policy in a co-ordinated manner. The concept of a framework of policies follows on from the earlier concept on a "National Information Policy".

5.4.1 Does the UK need a National Information Policy in 2010?

Most interviewees were asked whether they thought the UK needed an overarching set of information policies that would fit together to form a coherent whole. This issue was first raised with Professor Nick Moore who had been an advocate of a National Information Policy (NIP) for the UK in the past, and indeed had been commissioned by Unesco to undertake a review of NIPs in the Asia/Pacific region because of his expertise in this area. His view now was that an integrated set of information policies would be more likely to succeed:

> I think probably I was wrong because it's not in the British way of doing things, to
> have a single policy framework like that. We're much more likely, much more inclined
> to have a series of different policies that together form what could be construed as an
> information policy for Britain, and that any attempt to have one co-ordinated,
> integrated sensible policy or set of policies is almost doomed to failure. … The
> countries that have been most successful in developing a framework for policies are
> the ones that have recognised that it is to do with much more than the economics of
> the information industry. It pervades the whole of social, economic, political and
> cultural life and needs to be regarded in that light.[660]

This was echoed by Dame Lynne Brindley, a member of the Library and Information Commission (LIC) when it was considering a National Information Policy for Britain at the turn of the century:

> I think the notion of overarching frameworks in information policy is counter-cultural in
> this country, just as it was when we were trying to do this before. … I think therefore
> that the idea of an inter-related network of policies is more realistic.[661]

In a similar vein, Chris Batt[662] did not think that it would be possible to have one overarching framework of information policies within which work would take place as the internal information infrastructure tended to be siloised, although he later stressed that this was based

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[660] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[661] Interview with Dame Lynne Brindley, 28 October 2009.
[662] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.

on his experience of the previous government administration.[663] Andy Williamson also raised the problem of silos:

> Does the traditional government approach of silo in government departments work? My view is: no it doesn't. Obviously there are key topical areas where you need focussed expertise, focussed people, who have that expertise and subject knowledge, but equally there is work across the silos that has to happen and I think we in the UK are far too siloed in the way we approach policy and the way we approach government.[664]

He went on to suggest that he did see the need for an overarching information policy as part of a whole of government approach to policy-making and there was considerable support for the concept of a co-ordinated set of information policies from other information professionals and academics who do not have day-to-day contact with the workings of central government. However John Pullinger,[665] Librarian of the House of Commons and former senior official in the Office for National Statistics, warned of the consequences. While he could see theoretically the benefits of having a policy, he feared that in practice it would get mired in bureaucracy and the purpose would get lost.

But a concern of a different kind was also expressed by some of the information professionals and academics – government's lack of understanding of the concept of information and how information is used, as seen from their perspective. Without a clear understanding of the concept of information, how could a government formulate a cohesive set of information policies? As Professor Rita Marcella articulated:

> … this is something that non-information specialists do find difficult because it's a word that's so used in so many contexts to mean so many things, that actually there is that failure to understand crucially what an information strategy should be about. … if it's not understood clearly what it's meant to achieve, it won't achieve anything because it won't be well designed and thoroughly thought out. …people fail to distinguish actually what they mean by it [information] and they don't define it accurately, and information strategy, in particular, they don't define particularly well.[666]

Two of the lobbyists interviewed, Michael Cross and Michael Nicholson felt there was a need for government to develop a set of principles to decide which information should be available

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663 Email correspondence with Chris Batt, 10 July 2010.
664 Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
665 Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
666 Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.

free of charge for re-use and which should not. Nicholson sees the UK as being "in a complete muddle":

> …some PSI is available free, and some PSI, if government think they can get away with charging for it, is charged for, and that is totally philosophically and conceptually inconsistent. And what is not recognised is the dilemmas the charging of PSI creates. So the first thing I think government has to do is to decide whether marginal pricing is right or wrong … . At the moment it has no policy which is coherent though it has one which is fundamentally illogical.[667]

Cross felt that establishing a set of principles for which raw data should be made available free of charge was all that was needed for an information policy:

> I try to see things in terms of a spectrum from private data. At the one end, you are obviously identifying individuals in a sensitive way. Then in the middle you might have some categories of data where you can look at it but not manipulate, though there might be anonymous data that there might be good reasons not to share because of some sort of proprietal control over it, maybe when there is a genuine third party copyright involved. And then at the other end there's the free PSI which should be available to everyone. I think if you establish the principle that stuff should be at the free PSI end of the spectrum unless there's a very good reason why not, then you don't really need to do much more.[668]

Some interviewees, particularly some of those most closely involved with the development of government information policy, felt that the government was working towards a comprehensive set of information policies, even if it hadn't fully achieved it. Jim Wretham saw in the merger of OPSI with TNA a "cradle to grave vision of information."[669] Dr Ian Brown felt that the government had taken "positive steps" with the commissioning of the Power of Information review and the setting up of APPSI.[670]

David Pullinger,[671] COI, considered that the Power of Information Taskforce, combined with the EU Directive on public sector information, were driving forward public sector information being made more freely available and that, in general, there was a policy framework for public sector in formation. However he was not taking into account the possible wider information policies relating, for example, to the digital divide and intellectual property regulation. Indeed, most of those interviewed, probably not surprisingly, saw the scope of a framework of information policies as limited to their area of interest or expertise, whether it be the legal and

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[667] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[668] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.
[669] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[670] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[671] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.

regulatory aspects of policy, or the commercial exploitation of public data for example. Few had a breadth of vision for what could be included in a framework of information policies and how these elements could be co-ordinated.

Until we get to a situation where open access to data, presented in ways suitable for all users and re-users, including government itself, is the norm then there may be a need for cross-government mechanisms to encourage progress. Information management is not an unimportant issue to government, as Geoff Mulgan, a former head of the No.10 Strategy Unit, stated:

> Any government needs knowledge: about enemies, citizens, and options. How it is collected, organized, managed, and then either used for positional advantage, or shared with citizens, is one of the most important issues facing the state.[672]

5.4.2 Key relationships in government

Wildavsky considered that policy analysis was about: "the relationships between people".[673] To gain a greater understanding of how the main players worked together across government in the development of information policy, interviewees were asked which were the key relationships in public sector information policy in their opinion. Those working outside government expressed a considerable degree of uncertainty. For example, here are the views of Tom Steinberg, co-author of the Power of Information Review, and Richard Allan, chairman of the Power of Information Taskforce:

> I wish I knew, but I'm not sure anyone does. It ought to be strong ministerial leadership on this issue, but leadership is nothing if there is no money or capacity to deliver. I suppose like most things in government, a tight alliance between ministers, Treasury and the delivery civil servants is the key, but that sounds a lot like a truism to me.[674]

> The problem is I don't think they've quite figured it out. There seems to be a hierarchy where policy people are superior to delivery people in government, so I think somebody owning the information piece on the policy side would be helpful. At the moment I think its CTO [Chief Technology Officer]/CIO [Chief Information Officer]-type people who are seen to own this and that's where the problems in many respects lies, but I don't think those posts exist today.[675]

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[672] Mulgan, G. *The art of public strategy: mobilizing power and knowledge for the common good,* 2009, p.125.
[673] Wildavsky. A. *The art and craft of policy analysis,* 1980, p.17.
[674] Email correspondence with Tom Steinberg, 18 August 2009.
[675] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.

Worlock and Nicholson, not surprisingly considering their backgrounds in developing information services, made broadly similar points about government's lack of co-ordination and the role of the Treasury:

> Government simply does not work together. All these things that I've been involved with from 1987 onwards requires that someone in government takes a lead and others follow. Now, all the experience I've had since 1987 is that somebody in government takes a lead and nobody follows. … I just do not believe at the moment that the government is prepared to get its game together and do something across government if Treasury is in neutral or against. … As it is, with Treasury inclined to disengage or be averse, or passive, nothing happens.[676]

> Government is fundamentally dysfunctional, so PSI right across government is something that it finds particularly difficult to deal with. … The ministers of trading funds have a very important role and basically they see this as a tiny part of their job. … I think the other people who are influential are the sort of policy unit people, who come up with some good ideas, but if Ordnance Survey or Hydrographic Office or Land Registry or the Met Office want protection they head for the Treasury first and then the minister second. And so if someone like Locus[677] or APPSI wants to make progress, they tend to go to sympathetic ministers first and then move on from there. Very difficult to deal with Treasury.[678]

Other reaction from within the information profession was equally sceptical. Batt[679] thought that the COI and the Cabinet Office were the only ones doing anything at all and he suspected that most of the other departments were either ignoring it or trying to pull in the other direction. Moore[680] felt that joined-up government was essential for implementing information policy and that the Cabinet Office and No 10 should be doing the co-ordination, but the British system was not conducive to this way of working. Government departments were led by ministers who competed one with another, and by senior civil servants who took a very organisational view of their world and the system was not one that encouraged collaboration.

Even Peter Griffiths, who worked in the information profession within government for many years, regretted the lack of a formal structure for co-ordination of information policy:

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[676] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.
[677] The Locus Association was established to encourage the public sector to maintain a trading environment that is fair and equitable, in particular in relation to the licensing and re-use of public sector information. Its members are private sector companies who re-use public sector information. *See*: <http://locusassociation.co.uk/aboutus.php>, [accessed 30.03.2010].
[678] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[679] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[680] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.

In a sense it's almost a lack of relationships that strikes you. You've got the people who sit round the table in the Knowledge Council, you've got GCN [Government Communication Network] … but they're reporting in a different direction to different people, and presumably somewhere in the middle you've got all the policy-makers and the people doing evidence-based research to support evidence-based policy-making. … I don't think there is enough of a formal structure. Hopefully the Knowledge Council might create that but at the moment the simple answer is: I don't think there is as much of a formal structure as there needs to be. It relies on who knows whom, the old boy and girl networks and personal memberships [of clubs].[681]

John Suffolk, Chief Information Officer, explained his approach to making change happen across government through creating small teams:

The first thing that I recognise in government, being predominantly a private sector boy, is that there is no right or wrong answer. What's right in one area can be fundamentally wrong in another. Also people are at different levels of maturity and different levels of confidence, and they have different delivery pressures. … So you don't need to bully and cajole them to do X or do Y because they'll get on board when the time is right. What you need to do first of all is to create the nucleus of people who are going to act as the catalyst for doing some change.[682]

He stressed the need to support these teams even when their work was criticised and gave the example of the Number 10 ePetitions website, developed by one of his team. After some controversy, it was now the normal way of doing business.

Williamson[683] emphasised the importance of the culture of organisations in developing working relationships across teams: you had to have the right people that understood the issues and saw communication as part of their role. He went on to highlight the value of informal relationships across government departments, rather than formal ones, for information policy development. This importance of personal relationships within government was confirmed by Nickalls[684] and particularly Sheridan:

I've got lots of contacts in the community so I know how to make it happen. … Most of my work, in truth, comes down to personal relationships. I have a very good network of people who are good people to work with in government, who get what it's about. … I have very good working relationships with people working in the Cabinet Office and I'm almost part of Andrew Stott's [Digital Engagement] team. I work very

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[681] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[682] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[683] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[684] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.

closely with David Pullinger's team because of the work they're doing around web standards; that's really key. And then others scattered here and there. So those are good roots.[685]

Nickalls[686] explained how Directgov worked in collaboration with government departments, but being quite a new organisation, it was still developing links, especially since leaving the Cabinet Office, as being sited there provided *de facto* links.[687] It had links through Service Transformation, the Public Sector Reform Group through COI, as well as through its own Board. Directgov was an enabler of government information policy but was also an influencer on that policy and helped departments to implement it.

David Pullinger drew a distinction between the drivers and deliverers:

> The drivers include the campaigns – Free Our Data – and the European Union. Tony Blair was a strong driver because he set up the independent statistics function. … The key players in the delivery are something different entirely, and then you're looking at organisations like OPSI, like the COI, because we have a particular cross-governmental role that we play with respect to the Cabinet Office, which is why I'm driving a lot of this through, together with OPSI. Then you've got Cabinet Office itself in the policy-making and every department with its own responsibilities having to deliver it. In between the two is the ministerial layer that pushes or drags, depending on what they actually think about it. And we have a minister in this area at the moment who's really pushing [Tom Watson MP] and Hilary Armstrong, from before, really pushed in the Cabinet Office.[688]

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) also worked with a range of government bodies as and when appropriate. According to Steve Wood[689] it had strong links with Defra because of the environmental information policy area and now INSPIRE, and worked with other regulators if they had developed particular projects or were involved in particular regulatory activities which linked with the ICO's Freedom of Information and data protection areas of operation. The ICO also used TNA to audit a public sector body's records management.

5.4.2.1 Formal co-operative structures

Interviewees were asked their opinions of the effectiveness of the various cross-departmental councils that have been set up: the Chief Information Officer Council (CIOC), the Chief Technology Officer Council (CTOC) and the Knowledge Council, particularly in relation to the development of information policy.

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[685] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[686] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[687] *Note*: Directgov has since returned to the Cabinet Office.
[688] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[689] Interview with Steve Wood, 17 November 2009.

Griffiths[690] didn't feel that the CIOC had had much impact. Whilst some chief information officers understood information management very well, the content of their systems didn't impinge on most of them, and even less the public benefits of publishing that content. He thought the Knowledge Council would help but pointed out that:

> …a third of knowledge councillors are CKOs, a third CTOs and a third CIOs, so you've got a 2 to 1 bias against for starters. I think it's working reasonably well in practice but that's because the CKOs, the library and information people, are working very hard to make sure that it does. It's probably OK but it's not as good as I'd like to see it.[691]

Brown[692] hadn't seen much evidence of Knowledge Council and CIOC Council involvement in this area although there may have been less high profile work. He suggested that the CIOC was much more focussed on the delivery of operational systems within departments, not on these more policy issues. Batt[693] confirmed that the Knowledge Council had not had an impact on the policy environment from his perspective. "They may be doing a lot but it's not a policy thing." Moore[694] was equally pessimistic and David Pullinger, Head of Digital Policy, did not see a role for the Knowledge Council or CIOC in his work:

> From the CIO point of view, their [CIOC] primary concern should be about the technical infrastructure to enable things to happen. … The Knowledge Council is primarily interested in the knowledge in people's heads; that is the basis of knowledge management, as opposed to information management. They distinguish this themselves very carefully within their own *Information Matters* policy document last year where they cover both knowledge and information, but they say that the knowledge primarily applies to people, people sharing experience and expertise.[695]

The senior member of staff at TNA[696] did not agree that the Council was about knowledge rather than information and had heard exactly the opposite mentioned in various forums. They suggested that whilst the Knowledge Council had a cross-government role in information management, knowledge management was down to the individual departments to deliver internally. The Knowledge Council could only deliver a coherent message to departments about the benefits of better knowledge management. They went on to explain that the Knowledge Council came out of Transformational Government. It met every quarter and was composed of up to 30 at any given time, senior people from the knowledge and

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[690] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[691] *Ibid.*
[692] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[693] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[694] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[695] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[696] Interview with a senior staff member at TNA, 11 May 2009.

information management function. They did not see the Knowledge Council as a policy-making body:

> The Knowledge Council is not necessarily in the business of helping people create policy around knowledge management because it's so much about it being embedded in the culture of the organisation and organisations like UK Transplant, they seriously do it because they have to. Ordnance Survey is another good example with the trading funds; they do information so they are actually really good at it. So what we want to do is draw those examples out and help the departments that are not necessarily traditionally so strong in those areas.[697]

Asked about how the CIOC and CTOC worked with the Knowledge Council, they considered that there was a good dialogue. The CTO Council had a bigger remit than the Knowledge Council because it was concerned with the wider government circle, whereas the Knowledge Council was very much about Whitehall, however the KC hoped that the principles it followed and the ideas it generated would be cascaded down into the public sector. They also saw the CTO Council remit in terms of: how does government make its stuff available, whereas the Knowledge Council focussed on internal use. Jim Wretham [698] was positive about the Knowledge Council as it included senior people with real influence in departments. Dr Valerie Johnson,[699] TNA, was also optimistic about the Knowledge Council, highlighting the workstreams investigating particular issues which reported in to the Council. She felt that the feedback up and down the chain was working well.

5.4.3 Supporters and inhibitors of co-ordination

To ascertain a more in-depth perspective on co-ordination of policy on public sector information across government, interviewees were asked what they considered to be the supporting and inhibiting factors. Although the question was asked in a neutral way, it was the inhibitors that were prominent in the answers. Rhind and Steinberg were the most succinct:

> I think they're probably the usual ones, you know, resources, time, lots of other things to do.[700]

> Inhibiting factors are a lack of hard targets to meet, a lack of perceived public appreciation, low manifesto prioritisation, low ministerial pressure, lack of awareness

[697] *Ibid.*
[698] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[699] Interview with Dr Valerie Johnson, 23 February 2009.
[700] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.

of the whole issue and lack of ability to understand what the public are asking for. In terms of supporting, just take the opposite of these.[701]

Allan[702] raised the problem of departmental budgets being devolved. Also the cross-departmental communications network, which would be taking forward the digital engagement agenda, was still in its infancy and it was too soon to tell how a community of digital engagers would develop.

Suffolk and Griffiths both cited the influence of departmental culture. For Suffolk: "… one person's risk averseness is another person's gung-ho" [703] whilst Griffiths stressed the lack of a single culture across the civil service:

> … it's what we can do despite the cultural differences rather than what you can do because of the similarities in the way departments look after, and are charged with looking after, information. … It's difficult to get a single objective across government because no one is quite sure what the single shared objective is.[704]

John Pullinger[705] saw inertia as the biggest factor in resistance to change. Incentives to change were likely to come from up and down the chain whereas the information policy issues acted across. He felt that the response needed was to lower the barriers to change. From his perspective at the Office of the Information Commissioner, Wood[706] explained the need to balance being an independent regulator against working with key bodies who develop policy which the ICO needs to influence.

Sheridan[707] stressed lack of understanding of technical issues in publishing large volumes of data, even in big departments, and particularly amongst suppliers with whom the government may have long contracts. David Pullinger took up a similar theme in more detail:

> …we made it a standard that every website has an XML Sitemap so that Google can search and index things and so when people type in stuff to Google, Yahoo, Ask, they find it. Has it been easy to introduce XML Sitemaps? No it hasn't. The drivers have been strong: they have to do it, it's a requirement. Will they do it? Well, first, Cabinet Office has no direct authority. If they don't want to do it there's nothing we can do except persuade secretaries of state that this is a sensible thing to do. [708]

[701] Email correspondence with Tom Steinberg, 18 August 2009.
[702] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[703] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[704] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[705] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[706] Interview with Steve Wood, 17 November 2009.
[707] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[708] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.

He went on to discuss financial and skills inhibitors, as well as difficulties of negotiating with suppliers to make changes that didn't exist when the contract was drawn up, citing the example of XML Sitemaps. Taking that a stage further:

> Most people don't understand information structuring. The few that do in government are indeed in the Knowledge Council and librarianship fields … so you've got a major skills thing. You have even more of a cost thing because you're starting from scratch in this area. It's not routinely done so how do you cost it? And my third point was IT contracts. … most IT suppliers don't understand information. They supply technology; they don't supply "I" stuff. In fact the whole concept of information engineering … is in very, very short supply across the whole of government, and that's really what we're talking about with public sector information: how you structure it to allow it to be used and re-used. There are very few people who I know who I can have a coherent conversation with about how we do information structure and engineering online to enable the release of public sector information.[709]

Nickalls[710] was asked more specifically about the benefits and inhibiting factors on the work of Directgov as a result of its move from the Cabinet Office to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). She cited particular benefits being the full commitment of DWP and a very supportive permanent secretary. Directgov was lower on the priority list of Cabinet Office. It had been ring-fenced within DWP as it was a cross-government business but it had to do things for other departments as well: DWP owned it but it was also a customer of Directgov eServices. There was a need for co-ordination with the other super sites as well:

> I guess there is an issue that you still have things run from different power bases that need to be joined up, so you've got Digital Britain in Treasury and the Business Department, and then you've got the other super sites, Business Link owned by HMRC and Choices, and actually, you need to be doing common work there.[711]

She updated her comments after the move of Directgov back to the Cabinet Office in 2010:

> Since this point the relationship with DWP has proved to be very useful with much of the web convergence programme within the DWP being pushed by the permanent secretary. Directgov has evolved into a very successful business reaching up to 29 million visitors a month. In 2010 after the change in administration the direction and agenda of government has changed and it is appropriate for Directgov to move back to the Cabinet Office at this point. Directgov has a strategy to evolve in line with the

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[709] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[710] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[711] *Ibid.*

agenda and support the governments targets within the Efficiency and Reform Group.[712]

5.5 Policy champions

An issue that was frequently raised in interviews was the need for champions at the highest level within government to make things happen. For example Batt[713] suggested that this meant the Prime Minister or senior Cabinet ministers. Leadership needed to come from No.10 with our current form of government. He did not feel that the then ministers Michael Wills and Tom Watson had enough power and he had not heard policy pledges from Gordon Brown at the time of the interview, however that was before the appointment of Sir Tim Berners-Lee and the subsequent policies on unlocking data.

Both Richard Allan[714] and Guy Daines[715] raised the need for a ministerial champion in the context of rolling out a co-ordinated framework of information policies. John Pullinger also stressed that leadership had to come from the top:

> If we truly believe that information is the lifeblood of democracy and is the lifeblood of making government more effective, it's a top-tier level activity, and therefore needs to be led by the chief executive, which is Gus O'Donnell or permanent secretaries in individual departments. And success to me is an appreciation amongst that cadre that information is the critical asset they have to manage. And they should be at least as bothered about that as managing their buildings, their people, their finance, their IT, all the other things that are on the minds of the leaders.[716]

Michael Cross,[717] John Pullinger,[718] Jim Wretham[719] and Gwenda Sippings[720] all emphasised the influence of Natalie Ceeney in TNA:

> There was an element of "she isn't a librarian" but she is a very powerful voice and a very approachable person and also a very shrewd person. … I think she's very plugged in to government and how it works so I think hanging onto the coat tails would be the best thing people could do. … You need the voice of someone who will champion you and who doesn't need to know everything. … I think in government, people do stick to the successful ones, the high flyers.[721]

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[712] Email correspondence with Jayne Nickalls, 13 August 2010.
[713] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[714] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[715] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[716] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[717] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.
[718] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[719] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[720] Interview with Gwenda Sippings, 1 September 2009.
[721] *Ibid.*

Williamson reflected on the role of the Minister for Digital Engagement, held by Tom Watson until his resignation in June 2009:

> Nothing will happen without the right person. It's not a big enough portfolio, it's not sexy enough, exciting enough or visible enough but without a person having passion to drive it, it's never going to achieve anything. We have this new Martha Lane Fox who's the champion for digital engagement. If she gets enthusiastic and does something, great. I would have chosen someone who understood, and was passionate about, digital engagement.[722]

He went on to discuss Andrew Stott and his then new role as the Director for Digital Engagement. Williamson expressed concern that an insider had been appointed rather than someone from outside government, as the job advert had stipulated, but it was nevertheless a good appointment. He challenged Stott to recognise that digital engagement was an external, not an internal, function, and there needed to be evidence of progress in that direction within 12 months.

Nicholson[723] did not believe that the appointment of Andrew Stott would make a difference, stressing instead the importance of political leadership. It was a political issue and required a senior politician to demand change – as in fact happened with Gordon Brown in regard to re-use and data.gov.uk (*see* Chapter 7). However John Sheridan,[724] OPSI, felt that Stott would make a difference and was providing good and effective leadership, but he too demonstrated how the ministerial position was now diffused and that Stott did not have an obvious ministerial route as there was now no one in Cabinet Office with the portfolio.

Rhind[725] took a similar view on Stott, considering that he was an interesting and shrewd individual who knew his way around Whitehall, and referred to the roles of Professors Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Nigel Shadbolt. He went on to highlight the strengths of John Sheridan within OPSI, who worked with Berners-Lee and Shadbolt, describing him as "a coming man, very technologically able, very enthusiastic and intelligent." Sheridan himself gave an example of how the appointment of Tim Berners-Lee made an actual difference in getting the business case for the development of Uniform Resource Identifiers (URIs) accepted.

5.6 Changes in the last 10 years

This research was concerned to get a coherent picture of how policy-making had changed over the past ten years but this proved problematical as not many of the interviewees had

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[722] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[723] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[724] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[725] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.

been working in this area throughout that time. Chris Batt was one of the few who had and he was dubious about progress in information policy:

> Most of the time I think it's paying lip service to it if I'm absolutely honest. I don't think that there was a clear sense [that] information drives the government. … So long as the government actively restricts access to its own advice, or tries to, whether it's MPs expenses or things like that, they'll always be seen as a body that's trying to cover things up, whether they are or not.[726]

Jim Wretham[727] stressed the growing European perspective in OPSI and Jayne Nickalls[728] was positive about the greater efforts to join-up government she had seen since taking up her post at Directgov four years before. John Pullinger had seen benefits for users since he moved to his post at the House of Commons in 2004, and felt that the appointment of Gus O'Donnell as Cabinet Secretary had facilitated a higher profile for information:

> … you have someone at the head of the Civil Service who comes from a background where information has been crucial to them. I think the whole idea of citizen-focussed services has helped join things up across government and information has benefitted from that as well. … So looking at the problem from the perspective of the person using the information, rather than the person creating it, I think there probably has been a sea-change in attitudes. But I don't know whether that's necessarily been translated into a sea-change in the way information is managed.[729]

5.6.1 Changing patterns of policy-making

Chief Information Officer John Suffolk perhaps pointed the way to how policy-making and implementation in this area is developing without some of the previous constraints:

> There has to be a ministerial push but also you need other people. The people who have been leading on it for us have been the Power of Information team, to actually begin to say: "Let's take that ministerial impetus and translate that for policy issues in terms of: What will you do differently?" … They do need their hands holding to get them through the first gate but also you've got to create the culture where people can be let free. So we basically gave them their head and said: "Get on with it." So I can give them that kind of freedom. I could have taken the other approach and said: I want to see every document, I want to review it, I want to make sure it's in line with what we do today, which of course would have killed it at birth. So I think it's a team

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[726] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[727] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[728] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[729] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.

game that everybody has to play both internally and externally to make something like this happen.[730]

This sounds very like Parsons's point that freedom is preferable to control:

> …good policy-making in complex social, economic and political systems is about *letting go*, fostering innovation, creativity and diversity rather than just improving steering and weaving capacity.[731] [original author's italics]

John Sheridan[732] agreed that a new way of working was necessary and this could be done reasonably quickly at low cost. The UK had centres of excellence in academia and in terms of what the supplier community could now deliver, coupled with a growing awareness in government. As a result, he had been excited to see legacy artefacts being worked through: "It's just enormous. … We're just doing this stuff and it's being incredibly powerful." This is echoed by Heath, suggesting how he would like to see initiatives being developed:

> I think one of the best hopes is that you can set these things up in principle before anyone running the show really understands what the implications of it are.[733]

Finally, Sheridan demonstrated the benefits of small projects:

> You're not allowed to fail. As long as you are able to operate at a sufficiently small scale initially and prove what you're doing to be successful, I don't think that's so much of a problem. Failing big you can't do. Actually if you do something at a small enough scale it almost gets quite hard to fail too. It's a case of: "Now we know. We've learnt X, which is all we were ever always going to try to find out, so now we're going to do this instead." … This is not a world where there's two camps with two different views. We've got one group of people who want to go this way and another group of people who don't know. That's fine, because the group of people who want to go this way have seized the reins and pull the don't knows along.[734]

5.7 Meeting objective OB4

In considering objective OB4: to assess how policy on PSI is developed and governed, the emphasis in this chapter has been on investigating the mechanisms at work in policy-making through the interviews with key opinion-formers and other experts in the field. The

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[730] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[731] Parsons, ref. 163, p.47.
[732] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[733] Interview with William Heath, 7 September 2009.
[734] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.

mechanisms include the power structures in place for governing and co-ordinating the policy development and implementation, and the influence of outside forces.

The interviews took place during 2009 and at the time the general view was that PSI policy was not very important to government but was becoming more so. However various interviewees suggested that it *ought* to be important since a core role of government was to provide information that would help citizens to make decisions, including about who to vote for. Had the interviews been undertaken in 2010 there may have been a different view expressed: some commented that PSI policy was not an election issue but in fact opening up government data became a theme in the manifestos of both main political parties in the 2010 general election. Interviewees suggested that drivers for this opening up of data were: the Freedom of Information Act and transparency agenda; the potential use of new electronic ways of providing services; and the growing expectation of citizens that government would communicate using social networking.

The answers to the question: "Who makes information policy?" demonstrated the lack of agreement on the subject. The was no clear picture of where responsibility lay for initiating and developing policy – with ministers or civil servants – although ultimately ministers had to sign off any policy before it was formally adopted. However there seemed to be a trend for informally trying out ideas and scaling them up if they were successful, until they were the accepted way of operating. A concern expressed by many interviewees was the lack of any centralised responsibility for information policy. Different elements were run by different departments in Whitehall but no one had overall responsibility for co-ordinating policies to ensure that they fit together as a cohesive whole. Also information policy tended to be part of a wider policy, say for improving health, and so was not identified separately with its own targets.

Turning to those who influence the development of information policy, various interviewees outside government identified HM Treasury as a key blocker by withholding funds or insisting on revenue generation through the sale of information products by the trading funds. Those inside government took a rather different view. Treasury's influence impacted on the drive to be more efficient but on the whole information policy did not require large, specific resources from Treasury. As indicated above, most information policy is part of some larger policy and does not have its own budget to be fought for.

The part of government with the most influence on PSI policy is the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI), which has responsibility for publishing all legislation, regulating copyright on Crown documents and also regulating the re-use of government data. OPSI reports to the Ministry of Justice through The National Archives whereas it is the Cabinet Office that has

responsibility for policy-making on re-use and has made the running on implementing the recommendations arising from the Power of Information work and on government websites.

Turning to outside influencers, there was the suggestion from some interviewees that the *Guardian's* Free Our Data campaign had had considerable influence on government regarding opening up its data but a strong message was the lack of influence of the information profession and information professional bodies on this area of information policy. The Web 2.0 activists had had much more impact. The information profession was fragmented and lacked leadership: government did not have one place to go to get advice and the profession was not outward-looking and pro-active.

Related to this was the lack of influence of the information profession within government on this new agenda of making government data available. Again, it was Web 2.0 activists who were taking things forward rather than information professionals, and this led to suggestions that there needed to be a new profession within government capable for implementing PSI policy – or at least an up-skilling of information professionals to meet the new demands of working with Web 2.0 technology and social networking but also addressing user needs.

Co-ordination of policy-making can be considered in terms of both the incorporation of policies into an overarching whole and the structures needed within government to make implementation of policy happen across the board. The consensus was that the concept of one co-ordinated "national information policy" would not work in the UK; rather a coherent framework of information policies was required which conformed to a set of governing principles. At present there is no one structure within government which could own such a framework. There are cross-government structures but these have other functions – information management (Knowledge Council) and information systems (Chief Information Officer Council and Chief Technology Officer Council) – and these do not have a focus on the needs of citizens as users. Although there are no formal mechanisms, however, it was clear from the interviews that personal relationships across government were important for making progress.

There is no single Whitehall department which leads on information issues in general, and no longer any minister with an information brief. The nearest has been Tom Watson MP, who was a Labour minister for digital engagement. Interviewees stressed the need for leadership within government to drive implementation across departments. Tom Watson had been able to achieve a certain amount but it really needed an impetus from the highest level; if the Prime Minister or Cabinet Secretary issued a decree, action happened. However policy champions from outside government could have a significant impact if they had a sufficiently high credibility, as demonstrated by the impact of Sir Tim Berners-Lee on government policy on open data.

Through an analysis of the interviews, this chapter has looked at the big picture of how information policy is developed, by whom, and considered some of the main issues such as the need for co-ordination of policy across government and the lack of influence of the information profession in this area. The intention has been to let the voice of the interviewees come through; the more detailed consideration of the issues raised is in chapter 9: Discussion.

The next chapter focuses more specifically on how policies on citizens' access to PSI are working in practice, including the channels used, use of intermediaries and content.

Chapter 6: Findings: Access to public sector information

6.1 Introduction

Based on the interviews, this chapter addresses objective OB5: to examine how the policies on citizens' access to public sector information are working in practice and identify gaps in the policies. The chapter starts with a consideration of the development of citizen-centric services; Tom Steinberg[735] made the point that most citizens are asking for services, not for public sector information as such. It then concentrates on the mechanisms that affect citizens' access to information, content and information literacy. The chapter is structured as follows:

6.2 Citizen-centric services

The transformational government policy agenda has the development of citizen-centric services as one of its three main goals. Answers to the question about how successful the government had been in making its services citizen-centric showed the largest difference between the perceptions of interviewees from inside and those from outside government.

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[735] Email correspondence with Tom Steinberg, 18 August 2009.

Those working within government felt that they had achieved a considerable amount, although recognising that there was more to be done, whilst those from outside government were much more critical of progress. This may be partly down to the differing expectations of the effort required to effect change, a point well made by Dr Ian Brown of the Oxford Internet Institute:

> People in government have a better appreciation than people outside government of how hard it is to change what government does, and so they may feel they've won some important battles but they're not quite so impressive outside government.[736]

One might speculate that it could also reflect the time it takes for new plans to be fully realised, with much internal work being undertaken before commentators and users perceive obvious external improvements to services.

6.2.1 Progress in meeting user needs: the external view

Various academics and information professionals raised the problem of government not understanding the citizens' needs for information and services and therefore not designing services to properly meet those needs. Professor Stephen Saxby,[737] Southampton University, had studied information policy documents for many years. He was concerned that too many of them suggested that the motivation for making services citizen-centric was to save money. There was no stated focus on improving the quality of the information actually being received and there could be a situation where excellent communication arrangements through the government website were in place but what the citizen was getting had not been properly thought through. Professor Nick Moore[738] also felt that systems that had been set up were not truly client-purposed, whilst Professor Rita Marcella, drawing on her research on citizenship information, emphasised the need to understand the citizen's perspective:

> Any information service or function that's not based on understanding of why people would want to engage, why they need information, how they use it, what they do with it, why it matters to them, it will not be utilised, and if it is, it will only be in frustration often.[739]

Peter Griffiths,[740] a former President of CILIP, raised a note of caution about citizens thinking differently from the way in which the developers in government had set up the system. Simple enquiries about specific services were easy to find the answer to but more complex requests for information around a topic – the "is there anything I need to know about X" soft

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[736] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[737] Interview with Professor Stephen Saxby, 9 September 2009.
[738] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[739] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[740] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.

question for example – were much more difficult to satisfy using the resources that were available. This was taken up by Dr Ian Brown[741] who felt that government in general was not good at ascertaining user needs and that much information policy was discussed in purely technological terms. William Heath,[742] a leading lobbyist through his Ideal Government blog and the Open Rights Group, was very critical of systems design, suggesting that IT projects going over time and over budget resulted from a failure to take into account the needs of users rather than a poor procurement process. It is worth noting that responses to the Directgov review[743] undertaken by Martha Lane Fox in August 2010 were overwhelmingly critical of the design and search capabilities of Directgov. She reported later in the year[744] and the government largely accepted her findings.[745]

The above reflections reinforce the conclusions of the work of Olphert and Damodaran[746] in 2007. In their research into citizens' engagement with local government in the UK, they found insufficient involvement of citizens in the design of eGovernment services. Their review of case studies worldwide found many examples of citizen participation in projects to increase engagement in policy-making but little in information systems design, and scholars had cited this as a major reason for eGovernment falling short of its targets and desired progress. Engagement proved most effective when citizens were involved in all stages of decision-making. This suggests that the current evaluation of UK government websites through online pop-up user surveys is not sufficient to ensure the best-designed systems. Only those already using the websites are being targeted and those who respond to the survey are self-selecting. According to Jayne Nickalls, Directgov's Chief Executive, Directgov did involve users at all stages of design of its services but the research of Damodaran and Olphert concluded that government needed to teach participants certain skills in order to contribute effectively. This was essential where they lacked formal education: they might lack basic literacy and not have the confidence and ability to articulate their experience and views.

Power of Information Taskforce chairman Richard Allan considered that government was just starting to understand the full implications of citizen-centric services but it had a long way to go:

> I think we're still at a critical juncture because historically it's still been a case of government thinking largely in terms of: "We control the journey, we control the citizen experience. They come to us, we direct them through the web portal." The

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[741] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[742] Interview with William Heath, 7 September 2009.
[743] Lane Fox, M. *Directgov review.* <http://directgovreview.readandcomment.com/>, 2010, [accessed 21.08.2010].
[744] Lane Fox, M. *Directgov 2010 and beyond: revolution not evolution.* <http://raceonline2012.org/sites/default/files/resources/martha_letter_to_francis_maude_directgov_2311_acc.pdf> 2010, [accessed 25.11.2010].
[745] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Digital by default proposed for government services.* Press release 22 November 2010. <http://raceonline2012.org/sites/default/files/resources/208-10_-_channel_shift_announcement_final_version.pdf>, [accessed 25.10.2010].
[746] Olphert, W. & Damodaran, L. Citizen participation and engagement in the design of e-Government services: the missing link in effective ICT design and delivery. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 2007, 8(9), 491-507.

notion that for most people the first point of access is going to be Google I don't think they've really got hold of, which means they're going to arrive at all kinds of points that were not the ones you wanted them to arrive at. … And then the notion that if you're going to be citizen-centric, the citizen may want to do things differently. … I think what government is lacking is a really sophisticated understanding of its customers and what they want to do on the Web.[747]

David Pullinger, Head of Digital Policy at the Central Office of Information (COI), is starting to address access through Google, however the issue was highlighted on Radio 4[748] when it was reported that many users had complained to the programme that when they used search engines to find government services that should have been free, at the top of the search results were companies that offered the service for a fee – although they were charging for their work as an intermediary rather than as the provider of the service. The public showed a lack of awareness of Directgov or the .gov.uk suffix for government departments, using search engines to find the appropriate services instead, raising concerns about the level of information skills but also about government's promotional campaign to raise awareness of the Directgov website.

Dame Lynne Brindley,[749] the British Library, had the impression that local government seemed to be moving more quickly on the provision of PSI around user needs than central government, although she did feel that the Health Service was making progress. However she again referred to the need to champion the skills of information professionals to help government develop suitable information services.

Professor David Rhind,[750] Chairman of the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information (APPSI), raised a variety of interesting issues. He was concerned that some government websites were essentially populated by pdf documents but his comments also reflected the dichotomy of information provision between the push of specific information through the Directgov portal – aimed at the public – and the huge number of datasets now being made available through data.gov.uk – aimed at developers but which will ultimately provide information services to benefit the citizen.

Reactions to the implementation of specific services was mixed. Whilst the general consensus from outside government was that progress had been slow, successes were recognised, but mostly it was the online renewal of car tax discs that was referred to. John Pullinger,[751] House of Commons Librarian, commented on the frequent citing of this service and expressed concern that there were as yet few other examples.

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[747] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[748] *Money Box*, BBC Radio 4, 29 May 2010.
[749] Interview with Dame Lynne Brindley, 28 September 2009.
[750] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.
[751] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.

Dr Andy Williamson,[752] Hansard Society, suggested that individual departments ought to be able to deal with all the needs of a citizen rather than the citizen having to approach many different departments. Australia had achieved this 20 years before so it was possible. He cited an example for parents of a disabled child who would need help with, amongst other things: tax benefits; health and social care; school reports and relationships; getting their child into a mainstream school; or getting a flat for their child's personal assistant:

> How is that co-ordinated? You have to do that yourself, it's not even down to government. They say you can have it but that's your job and they don't provide you with any support to get it. ... Why can't there be a conduit; why can't there be a Directgov in real life? Why does it have to be virtual?[753]

These answers raise the question of whether the citizen has the skills to find and obtain the services he or she needs, and whether they are given support if they need it, rather than left to fend for themselves. For those that have the skills, the knowledge and the application, providing the budget and allowing citizens to sort for themselves the services they wish to use is empowering, but a service such as that suggested by Williamson will be needed for all the citizens who are not able to cope with organising everything for themselves.

6.2.2 Current work on addressing user needs

John Suffolk[754] and Jayne Nickalls[755] both stressed that work is now much more focussed on understanding customer needs and designing services to meet those needs, although this is an ongoing process. However Suffolk explained the complicated issues involved in this transformation:

> Are we there totally? Absolutely not, because of course the more you know, the more you realise what you don't know. … So we know what we have to do, and it's not just the people who are designing services, it's the people who created the law to create a department, it's dealing with the lawyers, it's working your way through the European Union legal framework, it's about working through the data protection, it's about working through the boundaries of data sharing and civil liberties. So actually the issue is a lot more complicated than saying: "Let's put citizens at the heart of what we're doing."[756]

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[752] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[753] *Ibid.*
[754] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[755] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[756] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.

Directgov undertakes customer research at the proposition stage and the design stage as well as employing user satisfaction surveys – perhaps an example of internal work on meeting user needs which is not obvious to outside commentators. Directgov is currently arranged around topics and audiences. Originally it was organised around life events but that did not work well, however Directgov is moving to a metadata driven model which will have a less restrictive information architecture, with a mixture of topics and life events.

According to Nickalls,[757] the Directgov team considers itself to be an enabler of government on the Internet policy across departments, aiming to have all information for citizens accessible through a common interface with a similar look and feel. The next stage was to design transactions to be citizen-centric as well as information: there had been too much built around systems without giving any thought to the end user, so part of Directgov's role was to act as a change agent across government to encourage citizen-centric design.

In summing up his vision of how the provision of citizen-centric services needed to be taken forward, John Suffolk explained how difficult it was to predict what changes there would be in future years:

> Because some of this stuff is too new. … You've got to let it run and see where it goes and then mould it downstream. And that means you *do* need to bring the external people in, the early adopters in terms of these; you *do* need to bring the sceptics in saying maybe that's not the wisest thing that you can ever do, and you *do* need to give people their head just to make it happen, but always keep going back and testing by saying: what have we learnt? What of that learning should we take into the way that we do business? … It's about saying: So what way does that fundamentally change the way we do things, if at all – and that's where the real power comes in. … I think the public sector has the true values of serving citizens.[758] [interviewee's emphasis]

6.2.3 Consolidating websites through the Directgov portal

The drive to centralise UK government websites through Directgov and Business Link stems from the Varney Review of 2006, which also recommended that responsibility for Directgov should move to the Department for Work and Pensions.[759] David Pullinger, Head of Digital Policy, is responsible for the strategy and therefore understandably supportive of the consolidation:

[757] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[758] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[759] Varney, D. *Service transformation: a better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpayer.* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.hmtreasury.gov.uk/media/4/F/pbr06_varney_review.pdf>, 2006, [accessed 03.04.2010], pp .51-51.

The first and most important thing it's doing is making it audience-focussed. The argument against it is that Google does the job for you. Google does not do an editorial job for you. Secondly it puts information in a language that ordinary people understand into the context of other relevant material. Google will not do that either. You need to actually co-locate it and change the bits to fit together well. Thirdly, by putting all the information into a place that they [citizens] have come to recognise, they know instantly that they can trust it because it's authoritative. … Research says that they do. ... From the other point of view, it's cost-effective, because we're no longer running multiple websites with multiple brandings. You don't save any money on hosting but you do save money on setting things up, marketing them.[760]

Dr Andy Williamson gave his thoughtful view on the success of Directgov, which provides an interesting comparison with the above comments from David Pullinger:

I think Directgov is probably one of the best things that the Government's done here, but Directgov is limited. It's a pseudo information repository in that it does provide an awful lot of information but it doesn't provide anything that isn't already there. [761]

He cited five conditions for an information access model in the digital age:

1. users must be able to access information online
2. users must possess information literacy skills
3. the information must be useful to the user in order to motivate them to stay connected
4. the user should be able to create and add their own information
5. and if information is on Directgov there is an assumption that it is appropriate, right and official, and it's the one place to go.

He concluded that Directgov was an excellent portal to government services but that it was not a suitable channel for citizen engagement or consultations and it did not make government departments communicate with citizens but merely provided a conduit, should they wish to communicate.

Professor Nick Moore[762] was less positive. Whilst he considered Directgov to be a big improvement on previous portals, he did not think it had fulfilled its potential and felt that the decisions in the planning were: "undertaken by people for whom it wasn't a natural thing to do." He particularly cited the lack of contact information: who to direct an enquiry to and where. Worlock also commented on the civil service culture of keeping this type of information private. This appears to be in contrast to the plans of the new Coalition

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[760] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[761] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[762] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.

government. Although the wording is imprecise, its programme for government[763] includes, under its commitment to transparency, an undertaking to compel public bodies to publish job titles and organograms for all staff. It is not yet clear how much, if any, personal information will be included and what impact this might have on the civil service culture.

Batt[764] and Griffiths[765] expressed concern at the cost of closing most government websites, but Batt suggested that rather than worrying about the number of websites, we should be: "worrying about what you're trying to achieve and then invent ways of doing it."[766] Griffiths felt that many departments had ignored the instruction, ending up with "the worst of both worlds."[767] David Pullinger is responsible for the website closure programme and when asked what had been the main factors affecting progress in implementing this consolidation, his answer highlighted the inertia inhibiting change:

> The number one reason given by the departments is lack of funding and resources. We're dealing with that right now and Directgov are contributing some of theirs to doing it. The number one reason in practice is they thought that by hiding away and pretending it wasn't happening, it would go away, and it hasn't gone away. [768]

At the time of the interview in April 2009, over 700 websites had been closed and the target for closing all those scheduled for consolidation was March 2011. Regulators and ombudsmen would retain their corporate websites to indicate that people could have confidence that they were acting independently. However funding could be used as a lever to persuade other website managers to comply with the consolidation instruction:

> In general, there is no reason for having separate web presences just because you perceive that. People are confused by them; people have never heard of them. What they want to know is one place and they treat the government as a collective whole and say: "I want to interact with government. Get me to what I need easily and effectively."[769]

A further round of cuts to websites was initiated by the Coalition government in June 2010.[770]

John Pullinger, Librarian at the House of Commons, had experienced problems with data being lost as a consequence of the consolidation. This could be a result of a change in URL with no link back or because departments used the consolidation as an opportunity to delete

[763] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *The Coalition: our programme for government. Section 16: Government transparency*. <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf>, 2010, [accessed 14.05.2010].
[764] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[765] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[766] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[767] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[768] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[769] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[770] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 14.

information that they felt would no longer be useful to them but which may be a critical piece of information or evidence that a select committee or someone else might need. Government and Parliament were now trying to address this through the Web continuity programme but Pullinger felt that much had already been lost:

> I think the last 15 years are going to be the dark age of information. Hopefully in the next 15 years we'll realise and do something about it. Before that we had librarians who faithfully catalogued everything and put it on shelves and that can still be found, but in the meantime this Web mess is not very good.[771]

This researcher also found that many policy documents were no longer available electronically and that the change of government, with its concommitant replacement of website content referring to the previous government, resulted in many broken links despite the work of TNA in archiving the sites.

Richard Allan[772] also raised this issue of loss of data that may disadvantage some users, however he thought the profusion of websites was not helpful either. But the answer was not simply to centralise all the information in one place; the data needed to be standardised and formatted to optimise its use and re-use. Jayne Nickalls[773] concluded that the move to consolidate websites through Directgov had already had a positive benefit as it had forced officials to appreciate that government information was not joined-up but needed to be in order to create citizen-centric services.

6.3   Access to information

> The main stages of democratic activity – deliberation; negotiation; decision-making through voting; and accountability – boil down to access to information.[774]

Interviewees were asked how successful they felt the government had been in providing *all* citizens with access to public sector information, regardless of the channel used for dissemination. Dr Andy Williamson[775] felt that the government was doing a good job but it was failing to educate people on their rights and responsibilities, making them aware of what was available and what they were entitled to. Meanwhile Chris Batt[776] stressed the importance of packaging information so that people who needed it could use it in productive

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[771] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[772] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[773] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[774] Peña-López, I. quoted in: Jellinek, D. Presentation at the EDEM10 Conference, Danube University Krems, Austria, May 2010. *E-Government Bulletin*, 17 May 2010, (312). <http://www.headstar.com/egblive/?p=475> [accessed 18.05.2010].
[775] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[776] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.

ways and understand it. John Pullinger[777] considered that government now recognised that there were different communities and was using different strategies to provide them with information. Reaching everyone was impossible and people's awareness of what government did was extremely low, but government needed to keep being creative about what channels were going to reach the largest number of people.

6.3.1 Electronic *versus* print and other channels

There was considerable comment on the impact of the development of digital channels on the more traditional routes of dissemination. To what extent could and should the government run parallel systems of dissemination? Professor Nick Moore[778] described research he undertook in the late 1990s to find out how receptive members of the public would be towards government services provided over the Internet. A large proportion of the public would use transactional services provided over the Internet and would use it as a source of advice, but there would be a diminishing but still sizeable minority of people who either did not have, or were not inclined to have, Internet access. He concluded that in the long term money could be saved by using digital information, but in the short term costs would grow because it would be necessary to run two systems in parallel: direct face-to-face services as well as digital services:

> That message was just completely ignored. Nobody was prepared, in my view, to bite the bullet and take on the extra cost of running transactional services in parallel and so what we ended up with was sub-optimal.[779]

Professor David Rhind, a previous Chief Executive of the Ordnance Survey, saw the same problem but from the opposite perspective:

> For years, before my time and after my time, where local authorities might have some of their mapping in computer form and some of their mapping in paper form, you're running two different systems which is very expensive. You have great difficulties keeping everything up-to-date and synchronous. You're much better to go for one system and then find patches on the back of that one system rather than running two separate systems.[780]

However the issue is not one of having two sources of information – digital and print – but rather one digital source but with access available either directly to the digital version, to a paper copy of the digital version, or through an intermediary who is using the digital version.

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[777] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[778] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[779] *Ibid.*
[780] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.

Jim Wretham[781] considered choice to be quite important. OPSI publishes legislation in print and electronic formats, although the print version is charged for, but he reported that some departments now see the Web as being the means by which they get their message across, with the consequence that people who aren't linked to the Web cannot get the information. Graeme Baxter,[782] Aberdeen Business School, was also concerned about this issue as one particular Scottish government department had stated that, with very few exceptions, it was now only going to make information available electronically. A significant part of the Scottish population either did not have Internet access at home or had never used the Internet and he felt that they were being bypassed. (The Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition government is now planning to make some services available online only following a review of DirectGov.[783])

David Pullinger[784] actually saw the issue the other way around – that the use of digital technology was increasing, rather than decreasing, people's access to public sector information and had led to a demand for more information. Print exclusion disenfranchised sectors of the community as well; he cited the example of statutory notices only being published in newspapers. However he was also aware of the need to provide information to citizens without Internet access:

> We know that there's an additional inclusion problem with some sectors of society and there is a digital inclusion policy and strategy and there's a minister for that. The way you can address it is by making available call centres with information, face-to-face ways, but it isn't necessarily carrying on printing things or doing things that people naturally think of as the old ways of doing it.[785]

Jayne Nickalls[786] agreed that the move to digital services was necessary, whilst acknowledging the need to keep some level of service through other channels for the most difficult cases. Departments would have to decide which services were to be provided predominantly online, with support for other channels reduced. The *Digital Britain*[787] report recommendations had been helpful in pushing this forward and Directgov would be working with the Cabinet Office on implementation.

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[781] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[782] Interview with Graeme Baxter, 15 July 2009.
[783] Kable. Government to make some services online-only. *GC Weekly,* 22 November 2010. <http://www.kable.co.uk/government-services-online-only-francis-maude-22nov10>, [accessed 25.11.2010]. [Reproduced from *The Observer,* 21 November 2010].
[784] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[785] *Ibid.*
[786] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[787] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, ref. 24.

6.3.2 The use of intermediaries

Dr Valerie Johnson,[788] TNA, as well as Jim Wretham[789] and John Sheridan[790] of OPSI, all suggested that people who could not or did not wish to use the Internet to obtain public sector information could get help from their local public library. Peter Griffiths,[791] who was interviewed before them, took issue with what he saw as this common view in government that everyone could use the People's Network in public libraries. Some public libraries were being closed down[792] or were remaining open for shorter periods and rural communities only had limited public mobile library visits. Also access to computers might be restricted by children using them to do their homework.

Marcella[793] sounded a similar note of caution and added the point that many people would never go into a public library, also acknowledged by Johnson.[794] Nevertheless, Dame Lynne Brindley believed that there was a strong new agenda for public libraries which had been underplayed:

> I think that public libraries ought to be thought of as key agents of social and digital inclusion. This role needs to be championed by public libraries speaking with a single voice and the MLA on behalf of public libraries.[795]

Guy Daines[796] provided an example of where the public libraries might be able to act as agents of change. CILIP and others on the NHS Choices advisory board pushed the message that technology could not reach many of the citizens at which the service was aimed. This had resulted in discussions with public libraries to offer a mediated NHS Choices service.

Whilst recognising the great increase in the amount of public sector information now made available, Moore stressed the need to strengthen funding for the Citizens Advice Bureaux to act as intermediaries:

> Every Citizens Advice Bureau that I know of is scratching round desperately for funding, staffed by volunteers in the main, working under enormous pressure. There's scarcely a single citizen's advice service that has not had to impose some sort of rationing on their customers, otherwise they would be completely swamped. Every sane person would realise that in an information-based, knowledge-based

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[788] Interview with Dr Valerie Johnson, 23 February 2009.
[789] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[790] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[791] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[792] Page, B. Library cuts and job losses condemned by leading authors. *Guardian*, 22 November 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/nov/22/library-cuts-leading-authors-condemn>, [accessed 26.11.2010].
[793] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[794] Interview with Dr Valerie Johnson, 23 February 2009.
[795] Interview with Dame Lynne Brindley, 28 September 2009.
[796] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.

society a service like citizen's advice, and the other specialist ones that go along with it, is absolutely essential and has to be well-funded right from the outset. Who's arguing for it? There's no political imperative for it, no understanding at the heart of government what information's all about.[797]

Griffiths[798] agreed there was a lack of intermediaries providing advice and cited the example of Northamptonshire Libraries' paid consultancy service filling this gap, undertaking more support than the People's Network could offer. Allan[799] identified a role for government in funding intermediaries to develop innovative information services because there might not be a market. He provided a vision of how he saw that working:

The intermediaries may be somebody developing a mobile phone application or a TV application or a Citizens Advice Bureau application based on those data. The biggest challenge in getting to those people is having a platform on which people can innovate. You may then need some money to do that. I would say working with someone like Channel 4 would be a fantastic way of doing that, where Channel 4 have some traditional TV content mixed up with some web content, all round a piece of public sector information. [800]

Jayne Nickalls,[801] Directgov, saw a role for intermediaries to help those who were not comfortable using online services and said that this would need to be expanded when government services were only available online. More effort needed to be put into designing systems so that they were understandable to a larger proportion of people, but she recognised that there would always be some citizens who would not be able to engage directly with digital information services, however well designed.

6.3.3 Citizen engagement

The Directgov digital television service on Freeview did not get a positive reception from information professionals Griffiths[802] and Batt,[803] although it should be noted that the interviews took place in early 2009. Griffiths was concerned that many pages listed a phone number to ring rather than providing the information onscreen and the system did not enable electronic transactions. Batt did not feel that there was sufficient content but also suggested that targeted information should be provided through special interest channels, for example on home improvements. Directgov and NHS Choices no longer seem to be available on Freeview at the time of writing in 2010 so perhaps the decision has been taken to focus on mobile telephone applications instead.

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[797] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[798] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[799] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[800] *Ibid.*
[801] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[802] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[803] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.

Batt was encouraged by progress so far in support for social networking groups such as NetMums but felt there needed to be more effort in this direction. Both he and Daines[804] stressed the need to get information to where people were having the discussions rather than government just holding information on its own websites:

> You need to have your information on Facebook or wherever, and actually it's another reason for government giving free information isn't it, because if they want to achieve their policy objectives about a healthier Britain with a greater sense of well-being, then one way is to ensure that some of the content on NHS Choices doesn't remain on NHS Choices but gets onto other people's networks.[805]

In much the same vein, John Pullinger[806] suggested communities could empower themselves if government made information available. John Sheridan,[807] a voice from within government (OPSI), also agreed with this; in his view access to information was a much wider issue than consolidating government websites through Directgov:

> So public services all in one place yes, but what about public services in any place where they need to be, which is potentially in lots of other places too, where people are, which is where they choose to be rather than where we choose to send them? If people are on Facebook or NetMums, that's where the public services need to be provided.

He reported that the UK's work on consolidation was well-regarded in other countries but also warned of the risk that that was considered sufficient to engage citizens. He went on to describe how the W3C eGovernment Interest Group, which he co-chairs, was addressing citizen engagement and enablement. Three modalities had been identified:

- firstly "provide" relates to the scenario of Directgov
- secondly "engage" which is about engaging in conversations with people, and that's going to be in many other places where people are, for example on Twitter or Facebook
- and thirdly "enable" is about allowing people to access government in ways that suit them. It can be for products, services, solutions that millions of people have both the means and the knowledge as well as the ability to be able to consume, use and create things for themselves.

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[804] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[805] *Ibid.*
[806] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[807] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.

So you need all three, and at the latter end of 2006 we were in danger of being only in a provide-only mode. I think the great contribution of the Power of Information and what's happened since has been it's added "engage" and "enable" to that. And the data work is "enable" and the digital engagement stuff is all about having those conversations.[808]

Community engagement is affected by people's culture and religion as well as their access to information services, whether on the Web or digital television, as Hahamis[809] observed. He had done research which showed that local authority kiosks using graphics had been successful in helping people who had reading difficulties or did not speak English.

Batt[810] and Brown[811] advised caution in assuming that all citizens wanted constant direct access to information. This was an issue important to information professionals but not necessarily to the general public. Some might have needs for very specific information in very specific contexts but it needed to be filtered and interpreted to make it relevant. Brown suggested that many people wanted the news media they use day-to-day to have access to the public sector data and to report on important things but Batt cautioned that the news media had a partial view of the world. This is an area where information literacy would help the citizen in distinguishing the fact from the "spin".

6.4 Making content available

6.4.1 Who decides what is published?

Interviewees were asked who made the decisions about what public sector information to release. This was to gauge the level of ministerial control over what information was made available – how open government had become. Responses were very mixed and inconclusive. Since asking the questions in 2009, the government has done much to open up datasets for use by the public and third parties (*see* Chapter 7) but there is still much other *ad hoc* information collected and compiled by government which may or may not be released, as evidenced by Labour MP Tom Watson's failure to persuade the Coalition health minister Simon Burns to publish a research report on the health databases compiled for the previous administration.[812] By contrast, the Public Sector Transparency Board published its minutes.[813] Commitments to open data refer to datasets to be made available on request but

[808] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[809] Interview with Panos Hahamis, 30 July 2009.
[810] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[811] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[812] Watson, T. *Live NHS websites.* Tom Watson's blog, 5 August 2010, <http://www.tom-watson.co.uk/2010/08/live-nhs-websites/>, [accessed 22.08.2010].
[813] For example, Great Britain. HM Government. Data.gov.uk. *Public Sector Transparency Board: papers from the meeting held 15 September 2010.* <http://data.gov.uk/blog/public-sector-transparency-board%E2%80%93papers-15-september-2010>, 2010, [accessed 24.20.2010].

there is also a commitment to widening the scope of the Freedom of Information Act. [814] It remains to be seen whether this will increase access to this *ad hoc* data, for example correspondence and research reports, or the number and range of bodies to come under the Act, or both. This research is addressing making information available proactively rather than on request, but who controls the flow of information is nevertheless an issue.

Professor David Rhind,[815] a former Chairman of the Statistics Commission and a board member of the UK Statistics Authority, in addition to his APPSI role, observed that the publication of official statistics was much more straightforward than other types of public information. The professional lead of the National Statistician, reporting to Parliament, meant that the public could have confidence in the data and it met various needs, not just those of the government.

John Pullinger[816] felt it was largely going to be the minister and the policy officials who decided which information should be made available that was relevant to the decision they were currently making, and that brought with it a bias. They would put out information which reflected their position, as would a non-governmental organisation or a lobby group. The House of Commons Library and the UK Statistics Authority were two organisations that were required to put out impartial information that covered the public interest, but he saw them as the exception rather than the rule.

Batt[817] commented that information was vetted before publication, whilst Saxby[818] believed that the Freedom of Information Act allowed government to avoid publishing anything it did not want to be released. Griffiths, speaking as a former information manager within government, felt that publication was related to "ministerial desire":

> My sense is that not a lot gets out that private offices don't want to be published in that form. … But I don't feel it is really about what they want to go out rather than what can go out.[819]

These answers all suggest a level of control and restriction over what is made available, with ministerial involvement. Jim Wretham[820] considered that responsibility for what was published lay with the individual ministries but wasn't specific about who within ministries. For Worlock, civil servants were responsible for deciding what to release but that the process was very haphazard. He quoted an example of the Environment Agency:

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[814] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 763, p.11.
[815] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.
[816] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[817] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[818] Interview with Professor Stephen Saxby, 9 September 2009.
[819] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[820] Email correspondence with Jim Wretham, 18 July 2010.

a partial release of content, not releasing the same content to all third parties, and then trying to build, sometimes with third parties and sometimes not, its own services to knock down the people to whom it's licensed its content. That way lies madness.[821]

Nicholson and Cross both suggested that it was nobody's job to make information available.

If you look at Land Registry, then there is a statutory obligation about what is collected, broadly speaking, which is helpful, but if Land Registry decides that it wants to go an extra mile it can do so. It's a trading fund; if it can make commercial sense of it then it can do so. Who should decide? Well that debate is now starting isn't it?[822]

You always get into more trouble for making something available that shouldn't be made available than for not making something available that should be. So that culture has to change.[823]

In email correspondence in 2010, Wretham[824] indicated that the culture across government was indeed changing. The emphasis was moving from "What information wouldn't we have any objection to people re-using?" to "Let's make as much available for re-use as we can." He cited the increasing ease of publication that the Internet had brought as a major factor in this change of culture. In the past a publications team would have had to organise printing and publishing:

But now somebody writes an article about something and clears it with their manager and next day it's something on the Web. The process is that much easier, not because civil servants have become more intrinsically democratic or anything but the means of publishing information is so much easier. This was amply illustrated by the launch of www.data.gov.uk earlier this year. To date there are over 3,000 datasets from across government which are available for access and re-use via this portal. Linked to this is the Unlocking Service where developers and others can request datasets that they think may be useful.[825]

The overall impression from the answers to the question of who decides what to publish is that there is no pattern and no clear responsibility. A topic for future research may be to address what information should be made available and what mechanism would be suitable for making decisions.

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[821] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.
[822] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[823] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.
[824] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[825] Email correspondence with Jim Wretham, 18 July 2010.

6.4.2 Impetus behind the move to more transparent government

It is perhaps not surprising that the government's commitment to opening up its data came at a time when trust in government as a whole, and government information, was at a low ebb after the scandal of MPs expenses and there was an election on the horizon. John Sheridan[826] heralded changes in attitudes towards the public's right to access government information, both the textual information and the underlying data. The work he was undertaking with Sir Tim Berners-Lee was driven by this new transparency agenda.

Nicholson, as a commercial re-user of public sector information, agreed that the government had made a real effort to be open:

> … although it has tended to be open about what it wanted to be open about and only by accident has it been open with things that it regrets afterwards.[827]

David Pullinger[828] felt that this opening up of data had been developed much further than people realised and cited the decision to create National Statistics with its regime of production more independent of ministerial control. However Batt[829] countered that all statistics from government were tarnished by scandals such as the assessment of the quality of children's services before and after the Baby P situation, despite all the work to build their credibility.

Steve Wood, Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), explained the implications for the ICO of the trend towards more openness in the provision of public sector information:

> For us it's how the full package fits together with a vibrant, regularly updated publication scheme, very helpful information on the website, a professional and timely focus on freedom of information requests, set procedures on policy, a very good mechanism for internal review to help timely reviews of complaints which people make to public bodies when an initial refusal is made. [830]

He judged that some public bodies were making greater efforts in those areas than others but he hoped that public bodies would see a real commitment to publication as a way to rebuild trust. He went on to warn that it was still early days in this change of direction There needed to be a sustained and really comprehensive programme of information disclosure for people to see that there had been a real change in attitude, with new generations of public servants coming forward who had an approach to openness as being the norm.

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[826] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[827] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[828] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[829] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[830] Interview with Steve Wood, 17 November 2009.

It was also important that the public could trust government to handle their personal data; openness and privacy went hand-in-hand. Wood reported that the Information Commissioner's Office was monitoring closely the work that Heath[831] and others were doing around the world on developing systems whereby the citizen owned their own data and authorised access to it:

> It's where freedom of information and data protection come quite closely together. If government respects citizens' information rights on both sides then things should improve. *…* I think what is important to us is that sometimes putting the power of information rights on the agenda is a joint thing rather than just data protection or freedom of information.[832]

Moore[833] took up the freedom of information (FoI) theme in response to being asked his view on the possible impact of lack of trust in government on the take-up of public information services. He felt that FoI legislation had been enormously valuable because it brought information out into the public domain, however he suggested that successful FoI requests raised the implicit question of why the information had not been available before. Government had to do much more to show that it was trustworthy but it was a long-term process. He believed that the adversarial system of government in the UK inhibited this process, quoting the example of Singapore, which he described as a more stable regime, where there was a much higher degree of trust in information that came out of the public sector.

For Chris Batt[834] the question was:

> Can you trust the information that comes to you to be accurate and reliable to help you to lead your life better, and how much of that information comes from government?

It is interesting that the Audit Commission consultation document *The truth is out there: transparency in an information age*[835] released in March 2010 put considerable emphasis on the need for information to be of high quality and reliability – and to be independently judged to be so – if the public were to trust the data and use it for decision-making.

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[831] William Heath described the work of his company Ctrl-Shift in the interview, 7 September 2009.
[832] Interview with Steve Wood, 17 November 2009.
[833] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[834] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[835] Great Britain. Audit Commission. *The truth is out there: transparency in an information age: a discussion paper, March 2010*, 2010.

People's trust in government was influenced by their perception of government behaviour in other areas, and Batt saw trust in the filtering sometimes being as important as the information itself. The work of David Weinberger and others in the *Cluetrain manifesto*[836] about the inverse relationship between control and trust – you least trust the organisations that have the most control over you – was quoted by John Sheridan: [837]

> Now this is quite profound for government. If there is a relationship between control
> and trust one might imagine that a reasonable tactic is to give up some control on the
> premise that you hope to buy some public trust. It's something to do with the
> relationship between transparency, control and trust that is pretty deep in terms of the
> citizen and the state, what the citizen is expecting of the state in order for the citizen
> to acquiesce to the decisions that the state is making.[838]

Jayne Nickalls[839] agreed; the need to give control back to the citizen informed the work of Directgov and services such as identity management. Daines[840] further speculated that this might be a factor in the high level of trust that the public had in public libraries. It also has implications for public trust in government information: the more the citizen has control over government information, the more the filtering is done by trusted third parties such as social networking groups, the more likely they are to trust it.

6.5   Information literacy skills

In order for citizens to find and use information to make decisions about their lives, not only does the content have to exist, but they need the information literacy skills to be able to find and use the most appropriate and reliable information. Daines[841] agreed but suggested that you could not teach information literacy in isolation; you could help people learn when they had a specific need for information, for example about their health.

John Pullinger[842] and Dr Andy Williamson[843] also stressed the importance of people seeing the value of information skills in helping them meet a requirement specific to them. It was up to the individual to find what piqued their interest and motivated them to learn how to find and use information. It was a very personal thing and government could not do it for them:

> We're not doing enough at all to build up that confidence and to look for the individual
> motivations. It's very hard to write policy that deals with individual motivation. Policy

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[836] Levine, R. *et al. The cluetrain manifesto: the end of business as usual*, 2000.
[837] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[838] *Ibid.*
[839] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[840] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[841] *Ibid.*
[842] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[843] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.

works at a bland level. This information literacy doesn't. It works on a very personal level for a lot of people. [844]

Williamson felt that much more could be done to train people in information literacy skills. There was a need to reach people through a variety of routes – through schools both for the pupils and the parents, through community settings, through the workplace or through the social security system for those not employed. Daines[845] saw it as a role for the public libraries and the voluntary sector but expressed concern at what he perceived as a lack of information literacy teaching skills within the public library service. There needed to be the same level of funding and commitment as there had been in developing reading support. It is worth noting, however, that the Information School at the University of Sheffield now runs a Masters course on information literacy.[846]

Griffiths[847] identified a gap in provision for helping citizens to interpret information. Citizens Advice Bureaux did this to some extent but the public saw libraries as places to store information but not often to interpret it. He felt that there was not a profession that helped people to seek and interpret relevant data and it was not something the government was interested in. His comments, taken together with those of Daines, suggests that information literacy skills are lacking in the professional information providers, not just the public.

Nicholson, by contrast, saw information literacy as:

> … a non-issue. I think that educating the entire population is a tough thing to do. I think trying to convince the population that you can trust some sites and not others is something which is put out by PSI producers, but the quality of PSI is frequently rubbish and the problem that you have is that there's no health warning against it.[848]

He makes a valid point that not all public sector information is of good quality but surely part of the purpose of information literacy training is to help people assess the quality of the information, whether it is fit for their purposes and how much they can trust the source.

Sheridan[849] suggested that lack of information literacy skills was not a long-term problem: for the born digital generation, a world without ready, easy access to information would be as hard to imagine as a world without easy transportation was for us. This analogy only takes you so far. This researcher is good at navigating around using public transport but cannot ride a bicycle or drive a car. For many, it is the other way around. Just because you are

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[844] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[845] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[846] University of Sheffield. Information School. *MA in information literacy.*
   <http://www.shef.ac.uk/is/prospectivepg/courses/il>, 2010, [accessed 22.11.2010].
[847] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[848] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[849] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.

familiar with the existence of something doesn't mean that you know how to use it to its full potential.

For those who are constant users of new information technology there is a danger of lack of understanding of what it is like to be excluded from the current digital world. Sippings cautioned against information professionals assuming that others had an understanding of how to manage information:

> Most people have got mobiles but they haven't got laptops and stuff and we tend to assume that they have. It's easy to update the electoral roll, but when doing complex transaction that people are nervous about, what you need is someone at the end of the phone. Nobody understands information skills. Although people are using them, they don't articulate it. If you say: "What are you good at?" they don't say: "I'm good at managing information".[850]

6.5.1 Design of information systems

How you design information systems will have an impact on how easy they are to use. Batt emphasised the importance of designing information systems for people so that they were as intuitive to use as the telephone. He saw the need for training in learning skills rather than information skills:

> With environments like the Web, we shouldn't be training people to find things, we should be training them in the skills of how to assess the quality of the information and how it relates to their lives and how they use it and how they can contribute to it and all the rest of it, which is learning.[851]

On a similar note, Worlock[852] suggested that if systems were designed well enough, people did not need information literacy skills and would find out how to use the service if the benefits were large, citing SMS text messaging as an example.

Richard Allan[853] felt that there was more that the government could do to design its websites to be user friendly, talking to experts who were used to trying to design the channels that reached large numbers of people. He suggested the need to adopt automatic surveying software to assess the user's experience:

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[850] Interview with Gwenda Sippings, 1 September 2009.
[851] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[852] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.
[853] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.

I think government can go as far as saying: "Did the person get the right information at the right place at the right time?" The starting point is going to be evaluating against those metrics as far as you can, and then that will unpick frequently some issues around: "Was it you that structured the stuff wrong, or was it the citizen who didn't understand enough about how to get what they wanted?" I don't think we're in a position to understand that, that's the bit you've got to unpick.[854]

6.5.2 Government understanding of information skills

Griffiths[855] and Moore,[856] both information professionals, did not consider that the government had much understanding of the information literacy skills required by the public. Another information professional, Professor Rita Marcella,[857] reported on research she had undertaken and supervised at the European Parliament and elsewhere which suggested that parliamentarians and their staff were: "often very unskilled themselves and almost totally reliant on researchers and unable to actually evaluate the information." Her colleague Graeme Baxter[858] concurred. MEPs overestimated their own research capabilities and had an over-reliance on Google and other search engines as opposed to using the Parliament's own internal system. Marcella found that the only people who were able to assess critically their lack of access to information were conversely likely to be the most successful people, because they understood what they did not know and that they needed to go and find it.

Sheridan[859] was also concerned that policy-makers in the UK had little understanding of what was possible to support them in their deliberations: "so they're tackling some very difficult public policy questions with a pretty antiquated toolbox."

6.5.3 Government policy on information literacy skills

Interviewees were asked how they considered that government policy on information literacy was being taken forward. Daines[860] suggested that policy was a "patchwork of unconnected initiatives" with a heavy bias towards ICT, of which the UK Online Centres and the People's Network formed a part. Moore[861] felt that policy was split between what, at the time of writing, was the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills(BIS), and was not adequately addressed by either as a result.

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[854] *Ibid.*
[855] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[856] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[857] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[858] Interview with Graeme Baxter, 15 July 2009.
[859] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[860] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[861] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.

David Pullinger.[862] COI, did not feel it as the job of his department but rather a policy job in the DCSF and the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (subsequently BIS). The sector skills councils had been set up to drive this policy forward. He saw his task as rather the opposite, responding to the skills levels of citizens in the way services were designed. The COI did a considerable amount of usability testing and had developed a usability toolkit to make sure that there was a minimum standard of quality of websites to enable people to access them effectively. This ties in with Richard Allan's comments about the need to assess the user's experience (*see* 6.5.1).

6.5.3.1 Role of education

The role of education in developing information processing skills was specifically raised by several interviewees, as well as by Sir Tim Berners-Lee[863] in answer to a question from the researcher. Regarding education at school level, Griffiths[864] suggested information literacy had been included in the early cross-cutting citizenship section of the National Curriculum but he did not think that was still the case. Williamson[865] was also concerned that teachers did not themselves have the skills to be able to teach information literacy. However Sheridan, a chairman of governors of a children's centre, was more optimistic:

> … part of education is now about, I'm sure, for purposes of ensuring some sort of academic rigour, how do you use the Web? How do you write your essay for your GCSE and how do you refer to web sources and how do you evaluate those sources? That conversation is one that happened now in the classroom, so I think there is a generation being brought up with those issues.[866]

John Pullinger [867]developed this further and suggested the move to a more critical thinking approach to education was teaching children to look at different sources of information and evaluate them. Information literacy was one of the core foundations of getting this approach to succeed and he did not feel that there was sufficient emphasis on it. Rhind, a former university vice-chancellor, saw the necessity to inculcate some sort of understanding in students, whatever discipline they were in, about how to use the information resources and what to trust, especially when they could reach out to some of the best libraries in the world through digital channels – and cut and paste. Rhind also considered the implications of the wider sources now available in higher education.

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[862] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[863] This was in answer to a question posed by the researcher at the Open Gov Data Camp, London, 19 November 2010.
[864] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[865] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[866] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[867] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.

6.5.3.2 Digital inclusion

John Suffolk, Chief Information Officer, addressed the question of government information literacy policy in terms of digital inclusion and the work that Martha Lane Fox had been appointed to do in bringing the six million most disadvantaged people into the digital economy:

> Part of that clearly is about getting people to understand information, what the information is telling you and how do you use that information to satisfy your personal need at that moment in time. ... How can people source the information they need to make the decisions? Much of that is about the hand-holding and the support.[868]

He saw this "hand-holding and support" being through the UK Online Centres and the public library system, but this takes one back to the comments by Griffiths and others about the lack of availability of open public libraries and the skills shortage amongst staff in training the public in information literacy (*see* 6.1.3 and 6.5).

Batt was critical of the government's progress in this area:

> They think they're doing it well and they're not. The issue is not about technology. It's about what goes on behind the screen. There needs to be a much greater understanding about how you reinvent that information and knowledge environment that you want people to interact with in ways that they find natural and convenient.[869]

John Sheridan[870] hoped that the work of Martha Lane Fox would make a difference but he saw digital exclusion as a subset of social exclusion and suggested that you could not be successful in solving their digital exclusion without tackling their social problems first, be they to do with education, housing or health for example. But he also felt it was important to understand that the technology can be empowering as well because it does allow people to express themselves in ways that they would not have been able to in the past:

> The digital camera in the hands of a child who has problems still learning how to speak is a method for them to open up and start expressing themselves, can be liberating.[871]

Dame Lynne Brindley referred to the work of Ofcom on media literacy as a result of the *Digital Britain*[872] report:

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[868] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[869] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[870] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[871] *Ibid.*
[872] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, ref. 24.

Ofcom has been given a brief to lead on "media literacy" from the *Digital Britain* report. Our profession has to work hard to ensure that our perspectives on digital literacy are considered as part of their strategy.[873]

Daines was positive about Ofcom's work on media literacy but thought that we shouldn't lose sight of "information literacy". He suggested that there needed to be a debate about the overlap between "digital literacy" and "information literacy" in the context of learning skills. Ofcom had not involved librarians on the board for its work on digital literacy:

It clearly is something that we, if we're going to make this a major thing, need to address and actually get ourselves better known and much more active in that whole debate.[874]

It is worth noting that Guy Daines did not think that CILIP was a member of the Ofcom consortium set up to take this work further.[875] Michael Cross was also unconvinced about the role of Ofcom in addressing media and digital literacy and that this reflected the tenor of the *Digital Britain*[876] report:

Its entire culture is based around local loop unbundling and number portability and other monopoly/competition issues isn't it? I mean there's an institutional culture there.[877]

6.6   The impact of the Digital Britain report on access to PSI

The *Digital Britain*[878] report was published in June 2009, during the interviews, and covered much wider issues than information literacy. Those interviewed after its publication were asked to comment on how much impact they thought the report would have on the provision of public sector information. Cross,[879] Brown[880] and Heath[881] thought that not a lot would happen to the report before the impending election as it was very detailed, however elements were incorporated into the Digital Economy Bill, which passed into law in April 2010 at the very end of the last Parliament with Conservative support.[882] Brindley acknowledged the effort that had gone into preparing the report but was less convinced of the digital literacy

[873] Interview with Dame Lynne Brindley, 28 September 2009.
[874] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[875] *Ibid.*
[876] Great. Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, ref. 24.
[877] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.
[878] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, ref. 24.
[879] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.
[880] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[881] Interview with William Heath, 7 September 2009.
[882] Great Britain. House of Commons. *Hansard* 7 April 2010. Column 1142.
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100407/debtext/100407-0032.htm>, [accessed 09.04.2010].

aspects. She felt that the reports focussed on technology infrastructure, regulation and media competition issues:

> I think it was disappointing that the report didn't really cover issues that are more central to our profession, namely national digital content strategy and digitisation, digital inclusion and digital literacy.[883]

This echoed her earlier comments on digital literacy (*see* 6.5.3.2). Dr Ian Brown came to the same conclusions:

> Trying to reduce file sharing, how you fund universal service on broadband and next generation access, they're the things that have got all of the attention, so I'm not sure how far *Digital Britain* will have taken this forward. [884]

He felt that considerable effort had gone into addressing issues such as universal service and copyright but the report had not looked in any detail at some other information policy issues. But he went on to comment that this was perhaps preferable as the report did not overrule the Power Of Information work. Rhind[885] agreed that the report did not include much provision for public sector information and was focussed on broadcasting. Williamson put the case even more forcefully, stressing that it was a broadcast, one-to-many, strategy whereas the Internet was a many-to-many strategy:

> There's massive opportunities for that peer-to-peer model that's completely ignored by looking at the potential bandwidth needed and how we might support that. … So I think *Digital Britain* is five years out-of-date before it hits the shelf and it's such a subset of what really matters that I think it's largely irrelevant, and as for where it impacts on government information, I just don't think it does, unless we're talking about public service broadcasting as government information.[886]

Sheridan[887] was rather more hopeful that the report would lead to improvements in the provision of PSI although he acknowledged that officials had not considered this as much as they might. Daines viewed progress in this area as mixed but was pleased how the report addressed digital literacy. He acknowledged that its proposed broadband infrastructure could be extremely valuable:

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[883] Interview with Dame Lynne Brindley, 28 September 2009.
[884] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August, 2009.
[885] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.
[886] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[887] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.

It's like building the road infrastructure really, or indeed the Public Libraries Network. It's an essential piece of ensuring that everybody has access and is able to engage in a digital society.[888]

Nickalls[889] echoed this and saw the provision of broadband access for all houses as a further enabler of Directgov's agenda, although she recognised that it was only part of the solution to ameliorate digital exclusion. She went on to caution about measures to restrict illegal file sharing, which caused much controversy in the passage of the Digital Economy Bill and has been referred back to the next Parliament for further scrutiny:[890]

Government needs to be careful because there are two opposing aims: we could impact our desire to increase channel shift with the threat of cutting people off for abusing file sharing systems.[891]

These comments paint a mixed picture, although there is agreement that the report does not address information access sufficiently. It remains to be seem to what extent the new Coalition government takes forward the recommendations of *Digital Britain*.

6.7   Meeting objective OB5

This chapter has set out to address objective OB5: to examine how the policies on citizens' access to PSI are working in practice and identify any gaps in the policies. Making its services citizen-centric has been one of the main goals of the transformational government agenda, although key stakeholders outside government who were interviewed felt that government had made less progress in achieving this than those inside government believed. The external view was that insufficient attention had been paid to the needs of users when designing electronic services, however those within government were not complacent and recognised that more needed to be done.

One of the manifestations of the government's efforts to make services citizen-centric had been the setting up of portals for access to government services: Directgov aimed at citizens and BusinessLink for the corporate sector. Directgov did involve citizens in its design but a recent review of the portal by Martha Lane Fox was critical of the design and search capabilities, as were various interviewees. The government had also been committed to closing down hundreds of its websites and channelling access to information still further

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[888] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[889] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[890] Great Britain. House of Commons. Hansard 7 April 2009. Column 1142.
   <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100407/debtext/100407-0032.htm>, [accessed 09.04.2009.]
[891] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.

through Directgov and BusinessLink, but interviewees suggested that there had been some loss of data as a result of the consolidation.

For those without internet access or the skills to find what they need, or whose needs were complex, one-to-one access was still necessary, for example through one-stop shops and call centres. Opinion was divided on the extent to which government should move to electronic delivery of information; those within the information profession were concerned that people without the skills and access would be disenfranchised whilst some within government felt that the move to electronic versions over print would actually increase the number of people who could access services.

The question would seem to be not whether government should maintain print and electronic services but rather that there should be intermediaries who would provide the access for those who were unable to use the electronic services, for whatever reason. Many within government felt that the public library service was fulfilling that role, however others pointed out that the library service was being cut back, opening hours were being reduced and many places only had mobile public library access for a very limited time – and that was assuming that the citizens would use a public library in the first place. By the same token, information professionals interviewed felt that the public library service had the potential to do more in its capacity as an intermediary.

Various interviewees raised the issue of citizen engagement, a more interactive approach to providing information. This research addresses particularly the one-way government-to-citizen (G2C) communication of information, however there is a growing recognition within government that the information should go to the people rather than the people be expected to come to the information. This means that government needs to share its information with, for example, relevant social networking sites and develop a dialogue with the public.

This leads us to the question of: "What information should be made available and by whom?" Answers to this question were inconclusive: there seemed to be no standardised procedures for deciding what information should be made available, what information users actually needed, nor whose responsibility it was to decide – possibly a topic for future research. However there was a definite trend towards making more information available as a matter of course, aided by the ease of publication brought by the Internet. Subsequent to the interviews both the Labour administration and the new Coalition government scheduled the release of specific datasets, at a time when trust in government was low and there was a need to appear more open and worthy of trust. This is considered further in the next chapter.

Apart from the issue of whether the right information is available, the interaction between the user and the information system can be considered in two ways: how well the system is

designed to meet the needs of the user and whether the user has the required skills to find and manage the right information. Some interviewees suggested that if the systems are well-enough designed then the information literacy skills are not needed, but even Sir Tim Berners-Lee agreed that much more needed to be done to educate users in handling information. The policies of government referred to IT skills, not information literacy skills, even policies aimed at combating social exclusion. Schools and the public library system ought to be central players here but various interviewees felt that public libraries were not sufficiently engaged with information literacy and more needed to be done by the information profession to address what was seen as a deficit.

Whilst the interviews were being held, the government's latest digital strategy report *Digital Britain* was published. The focus of the report was on digital broadcasting and broadband access, and although the latter was welcomed, various interviewees were critical of the lack of attention to the provision of information or the need for information literacy skills in ameliorating social exclusion.

This chapter has looked at the various policy elements relevant to citizens' access to public sector information: the channels, the content and the skills needed. Gaps in policies were shown to be a strategic approach to the choice of information to be provided and, particularly, mechanisms to address the development of information literacy skills at all levels. The next chapter addresses what has been achieved in opening up UK government data for use and re-use for public benefit, particularly though implementation of the EU Directive on the re-use of public sector information, the *Power of Information Review* and the work and legacy of the Power of Information Taskforce.

Chapter 7: Findings: Opening up UK government data

7.1 Introduction

As the research proposal was being developed, re-use of public sector information was not identified as a particularly significant issue: the focus of the research was on the direct provision of public sector information (PSI) to citizens. However during 2009 comments from interviewees and policy initiatives by government, particularly its responses to the Power of Information reports, made it clear that this was growing in importance, not just for the information economy and social networking sites but also for government. Third parties, both commercial and non-commercial, could translate raw datasets from government into useful information for the citizen more quickly and imaginatively than government could itself. A further research question therefore became evident: What has changed in the policies in 2009-2010 in the light of a move to more open and transparent government and why? As a result, objective OB6: to explore the opening up of government data since 2009, was added and it is this objective which is addressed in this chapter, which is divided into the following sections:

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Re-use of public sector information

    7.2.1   EU Directive on the Re-use of public sector information

    7.2.2   Charging for information

    7.2.3   Quality and structure of data

7.3 Impact of the Power of Information Review and Taskforce

    7.3.1   Impact of the Power of Information agenda on the work of government: the external view

    7.3.2   Impact of the Power of Information agenda on the work of government: the internal view

    7.3.3   Skills needed in government to take forward the Power of Information agenda

    7.3.4   How the recommendations are being carried forward

    7.3.5   Main achievements of the Power of Information agenda

7.4 Meeting objective OB6.

John Pullinger, Librarian of the House of Commons, when interviewed in April 2009 felt that: "It's quite a stretch to see someone being elected simply because they want to improve information."[892] This may be true, but by the time of the 2010 general election, opening up government datasets had become an electoral pledge from both the big political parties. By November 2010 transparency was at the heart of the government's agenda and it was aiming

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[892] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.

to become the most transparent administration in the world.[893] This opening up of data had become central to government policy.

Michael Cross,[894] co-founder of the *Guardian's* Free Our Data campaign, was interviewed in November 2009, by which time the debate had moved on and political parties were considering how to implement changes, before the general election in the case of the governing Labour Party, and after the general election in the case of the Conservative Opposition. In order for government to become more open, Cross suggested:

> It needs someone at the top like the Home Secretary to come in with an electoral pledge, to say this is what will happen. One of the good cultural shifts in the shadow cabinet is the sense that they're publishing every contract over £25,000. If a government is elected with this on its manifesto, that's the kind of cultural shift you need.[895]

This has indeed now happened. Before the end of his first month in office, the new Prime Minister David Cameron had written to all Whitehall departments instructing them to publish various government datasets, with timeframes, including all new items of government expenditure over £25,000 from November 2010.[896] The rhetoric about the need for "open government" and public accountability may not have changed to any great extent in the last 14 years but the actions certainly have.

Significant milestones in this move to more open government were the appointment of Tom Steinberg and Ed Mayo in 2007 to review how government could use new technology to engage citizens[897] and the subsequent setting up of the Power of Information Taskforce[898] to consider how their recommendations could be turned into actions, both supported by Labour Cabinet Office Minister Tom Watson MP. Tom Steinberg became an advisor to the Conservative Party in the run up to the 2010 general election[899] and was later appointed to a new Public Sector Transparency Board chaired by Conservative Minister for the Cabinet Office Francis Maude.[900] As well as supporting the government's plans to make its data more

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[893] Speech by Francis Maude MP on 19 November 2010 to launch the first publication of data on government spending over £25,000, attended by the researcher. *See:* Great Britain. Number 10. *Government spending data published.* Press release 19 November 2010. <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/topstorynews/2010/11/government-spending-data-published-2-57257>, 2010, [accessed 22.11.2010].

[894] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.

[895] *Ibid.*

[896] Cameron, ref. 30. *See also* ref. 893.

[897] Mayo & Steinberg, ref. 21.

[898] Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce, ref. 22.

[899] Conservative Party (Great Britain). *Maude: Tom Steinberg working with Conservatives review of ICT*. Press release 5 October 2009. <http://www.conservatives.com/Activist_centre/Press_and_Policy/Press_Releases/2009/10/Maude_Tom_Steinberg_working_with_Conservatives_Review_of_ICT.aspx>, [accessed 26.11.2010].

[900] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 32.

accessible, the Board's responsibilities include developing a Right to Data[901] and public data transparency principles.[902]

The final key player was Sir Tim Berners-Lee, appointed in 2009 by Prime Minister Gordon Brown to advise the then Labour government on how to make public sector information accessible and re-usable, building on the work of the Power of Information Taskforce.[903] The first concrete progress was the formal launching in January 2010 of the data.gov.uk service which provided a channel for accessing government datasets in re-usable formats.[904] In the course of his work with officials on data standards, Berners-Lee became convinced of the need to make geospatial information held by trading funds available free of charge as this data underpinned so much public sector information.[905] His influence led to a public consultation on free access to Ordnance Survey data at the end of 2009, the outcome of which was a government commitment to make the less detailed maps available free of charge for re-use by anyone and all mapping data available for re-use free of charge within the public sector.[906] This was a major change of policy and one, though much desired, not predicted by the interviewees, as will be shown later in the chapter.

It is for future research to assess progress on implementation of the new Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition government's plans to make government more transparent.

This chapter charts government progress in facilitating re-use of its data, touching on technical developments as described by those working within government. It goes on to describe the influence of the Power of Information (PoI) agenda, which has driven much of government's work in this area. The findings were drawn in the main from:

- interviews held during 2009, including with Power of Information (PoI) review co-author Tom Steinberg and PoI Taskforce chairman Richard Allan, chairman of the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information (APPSI) and senior officials in the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI)
- government policy documents
- government blogs and press releases
- Open Knowledge Foundation blog and newsletter
- *GC Weekly* newsletter.

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[901] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 32.

[902] Great Britain. HM Government. Open.gov.uk. *New Public Sector Transparency Board and public data transparency principles.* <http://data.gov.uk/blog/new-public-sector-transparency-board-and-public-data-transparency-principles>, 2010, [accessed 25.11.2010].

[903] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 25.

[904] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Digital Engagement blog. *Government launches one-stop shop for data.* <http://blogs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digitalengagement/2010/01/21/default.aspx>, 2010, [accessed 30.01.2010].

[905] Chatfield, T. *Prospect talks to the father of the world wide web.* <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/2010/01/tim-berners-lee/>, 2010, [accessed 02.02.2010]. p.3.

[906] Great Britain. Department for Communities and Local Government. *Policy options for geographic information from Ordnance Survey – consultation: government response,* 2010.

Because the subject was so new, research had not yet started to appear in academic journals about the UK government's activities but it is worth noting that many contributors to the Open Knowledge Foundation blog are academics.

7.2 Re-use of public sector information

7.2.1 EU Directive on the Re-use of public sector information

Government policy on the re-use of public sector information (PSI) has been shaped in response to the requirements of the 2003 EU Directive on public sector information,[907] which requires European governments to provide arrangements to regulate the licensing of PSI, facilitating its re-use. OPSI, incorporating the government's publishing arm Her Majesty's Stationery Office, was set up under Statutory Instrument[908] in 2003 to manage the process but it does not have the power to enforce the publication of data; the Directive does not make provision for enforcement.

David Worlock[909] provided some background to the development of the Directive and Statutory Instrument. He was involved in making a video for the Department of Trade and Industry (Dti, now Business, Innovation and Skills, BIS) on tradeable information rules. The EU showed an interest and in 1989 Worlock was invited to join a taskforce to develop guidelines for member states. This guidance was ignored and he therefore pressed the EU, in his capacity as President of the Confederation of Information Communication Industries, to turn the guidelines into a mandatory directive on the release of the government information store, thereby promoting competition in the information industry and serving the consumer more effectively. The arguments were eventually successful and he was invited in 2000 to Stockholm to launch the campaign for a directive.

> By 2005 we had our wish. The directive was passed, not in the terms that we would entirely have liked. It was loose and baggy around certain areas that we thought were particularly important, like enforcement. It was extremely vague in the one area that we thought had to be absolutely defined and that was marginal cost. But at least we had a piece of legislation for the first time and therefore we could begin to work with that and with the UK government.[910]

He subsequently worked with the Dti to put the directive into effect using a statutory instrument, but remained concerned about enforcement and what constituted the marginal cost of production. As well as OPSI, the SI provided for the setting up of APPSI to advise

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[907] European Parliament & European Council, ref. 45.
[908] Great Britain, ref. 16.
[909] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.
[910] *Ibid.*

government on the provision of PSI and to arbitrate on disagreements between information providers and re-users. Worlock was critical of arrangements that were put in place:

> First of all, OPSI was set up, underpowered, in the wrong department, reporting to the wrong people, with insufficient legislative or coercive strength of its own. And then an advisory panel APPSI was set up. I was one of the founder members and we believed it when we were told that a cost-effective arbitration scheme run by APPSI could replace a full-fledged tribunal. We should have gone for the tribunal; we should not have gone with the civil servants who said: "the industry doesn't need that".[911]

He felt that, despite the legislation, there had been little action and that the culture within government departments had not changed:

> Information culture is still retentive: as soon as you let the stuff go you lose power, you lose your ability to coerce, and other people sharing the information leads to dangerous queries, people knowing more than they should.[912]

Worlock may have had reservations but other interviewees stressed that Britain was doing more than other EU countries to implement the directive. Jim Wretham, Head of Information Policy at OPSI, discussed take-up across Europe:

> Take-up of the PSI re-use agenda has proceeded at a varying pace across member states but increasingly many member states are beginning to realise the benefits that could arise from the re-use of PSI. The European Commission are working hard to promote the benefits and encourage initiatives that promote re-use.[913]

Professor David Rhind,[914] chairman of APPSI, also made the point that the EU considered the UK to be an exemplar in how it handles PSI and was taking court action against some other member states for non-compliance with the directive. Not that he was complacent, he stressed. There had been some evidence that local authorities and the NHS were not as good at publishing data for re-use as central government and APPSI felt this needed to be tackled. Wretham[915] concurred: the directive included no power to enforce publication of data for re-use, however OPSI had been more successful in getting central government to open its data as it had control through crown copyright, whilst local authorities had their own copyright. Rhind[916] and Worlock[917] both made the point that there was no consistent practice across

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[911] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.
[912] *Ibid.*
[913] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009. *See also*: European Commission. *Information Society thematic portal.* <http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/psi/facilitating_reuse/exlusive_agreements/index_en.htm>, 2010, [accessed 14.06.2010].
[914] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.
[915] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[916] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.

local authorities as to which data should be charged for, and what the level of that charge should be.

An area of ambiguity in the directive identified by Michael Nicholson[918] was what constituted the "public task": information that the government needed to collect for its own purposes in running the country and therefore subject to the directive on PSI re-use. His concern was that government should not have an unfair competitive advantage in deciding which data it would make available for re-use and which it would sell for commercial gain. The commercial trading of public sector information by government and other public bodies did not form part of the public task and was not covered by the directive.[919] Janssen also found this ambiguity in her comparison of the PSI and INSPIRE directives and concluded that: "a clear distinction between the public task and commercial activities is indispensable for the proper functioning of both frameworks."[920] APPSI chairman Professor David Rhind[921] also raised this problem with Justice Minister Michael Wills as a "roadblock" to wider use of PSI. Nicholson suggested that guidelines as to what constituted "public task" should be drawn up by a combination of private and public sector individuals and he felt that APPSI had too few public sector representatives to take on this role. There was subsequently recognition of this problem within government and Gordon Brown[922] announced on 22 March 2010 that The National Archives had been asked to produce a consultation paper on the definition of "public task" before the end of 2010.

7.2.2 Charging for information

Whether the public sector should charge for access to PSI that has been collected at public expense was an issue that was highlighted in the interviews more than was expected. Most datasets that are published by government are available free of charge over the web, whether they be statistics from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) or, more recently, datasets through the data.gov.uk gateway. However some of the most crucial underpinning datasets are published by a small number of trading funds which were set up to provide high quality information that could be sold at a profit for the exchequer. These include the Meteorological Office, the Hydrographic Office, the Land Registry and, the focus of most attention in the debate, Ordnance Survey, as a large proportion of PSI is underpinned by geospatial data. As

[917] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.
[918] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[919] European Parliament, ref. 45, Article 1, L 345/93.
[920] Janssen, K. *INSPIRE and the PSI Directive: public task versus commercial activities?*. Paper presented at 11th GI & GIS Workshop: ESDI: Setting the framework, Alghero, Sardinia, 29 June – 1 July 2005. <http://www.ec-gis.org/Workshops/11ec-gis/papers/303janssen.pdf>, 2005, [accessed 14.06.2010]. p.13.
[921] Rhind, D. *APPSI's recommendations to progress the re-use of public sector information*. Letter to Michael Wills MP, 21 July 2008. <http://www.appsi.gov.uk/reports/minister-letter-ec-submission-07-2008.pdf>, 2008, [accessed 14.06.2010].
[922] Brown, G. *Building Britain's digital future. Speech given on 22 March 2010, London.* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/03/speech-on-building-britains-digital-future-22897>, 2010, [accessed 14.06.2010].

Michael Nicholson, Vice-Chairman of the PSI Alliance (a lobby group of information service companies that use PSI to compile their products) and a member of APPSI, suggested:

> [government] doesn't actually realise that the glue that makes so many things work is only available to be unglued on terms and conditions which are unacceptable.[923]

At the time of the interviews, Ordnance Survey charged considerable amounts of money for licences to access most of its data, not just to commercial enterprises but internally across the public sector as well. Nicholson was not arguing that the data should be free, as that would put a considerable burden on the public purse, but rather that it should be sold at the marginal cost of distribution in order to stimulate innovation in the private sector. Suffolk[924] and Rhind[925] also both commented on the difficult position of trading funds with the competing pressures of the move to opening up government datasets with the requirement to generate income. However Rhind also alluded to evidence, particularly from Austria and Spain, that if information was available freely which had previously been charged for at a serious rate, then use expanded dramatically.

The Free Our Data[926] campaign maintained that datasets should be made available for re-use by business, be it Google or BP, as well as the public and this was supported by Nicholson,[927] who felt it was in the citizen's best interests as well:

> What's the private sector good at? And the answer is innovation, added value, clever interfaces, usability. And actually, if the government wants to make sure that the data is available to the citizen, making sure that the private sector can get it, for commercial gain if that's what's required, actually is good news for the citizen. And I believe that's not being recognised.

Nicholson[928] quoted an example of "people doing stuff". The Netherlands Meteorological Office decided to release free of charge its satellite data on cloud cover which was subsequently used by a private company to produce a highly successfully information service advising cyclists about the chances of rain on their routes.

As regards the information economy, Nicholson compared the decision to make Companies House data available at a low cost, thereby leading to a significant information industry built on their data, and only about 30 UK companies currently publishing geographic information. Worlock also commented on the need for an active commercial base in information service

[923] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[924] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[925] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.
[926] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.
[927] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[928] *Ibid.*

development and suggested that the recommendation of the Power of Information Taskforce regarding freeing up geospatial data (recommendation 7) could provide a necessary stimulus. However he suggested that the Treasury believed the argument that changing the trading basis of the trading funds would cost government more money and would not agree to such a change. This was despite the findings of the Cambridge University study[929] showing that considerable extra revenue could be generated. Nicholson may have been right about the Treasury view, but ultimately Tim Berners-Lee was able to convince Gordon Brown that it was in the country's best interests to free up geospatial data[930] and the Treasury agreed to make up any shortfall in Ordnance Survey funding with the changes announced at the end of March.[931]

Nicholson made the point that Ordnance Survey was only one of the trading funds:

> In my opinion, Ordnance Survey are so bad that they're actually helpful. If we didn't have Ordnance Survey it would be harder to make the argument stick. So if they suddenly got seriously better, then the whole debate might stagnate, which would in an sense be awful because we wouldn't have entirely solved the problem.[932]

There is no clear guidance yet on what may happen about making more data available free of charge or at marginal cost from the other trading funds. It is also too soon to say what the implications might be for the UK's Location Strategy,[933] set up to implement the EU's INSPIRE Directive.[934] The purpose of INSPIRE is to provide a structure for exchange, sharing, access and use of interoperable spatial data and spatial data services across the various levels of public authority and across different sectors. Rhind[935] and Cross[936] were sceptical about what the Location Strategy would achieve but potentially it will be invaluable in future policy-making and worthy of research at a later date when there has been sufficient progress.

7.2.3 Quality and structure of data

The Location Strategy is concerned with the quality and structure of geospatial information to enable efficient sharing of data across the public sector. This standardisation is central to

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[929] Newbery, Bently & Pollock, ref. 19.

[930] Chatfield, ref. 905.

[931] Great Britain. Department for Communities and Local Government, ref. 906.

[932] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.

[933] Great Britain. Geographic Information Panel. *Place matters: the Location Strategy for the United Kingdom: a report by the Geographic Information Panel to Baroness Andrews, Minister for the Geographic Information Panel.* <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/locationstrategy.pdf>, 2008, [accessed 14.06.2010].

[934] European Parliament and Council of Europe. Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE). *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 108, 25 April 2007. <http://eurex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:108:SOM:EN:HTML>, [accessed 14.06.2010].

[935] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.

[936] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.

work being done by OPSI and the COI to introduce semantic web technology to PSI datasets, enabling linked data.[937] David Pullinger[938] pointed to work done on statutory notices in the *London Gazette* which he considered to be in advance of work of this kind around the world, as well as information on public sector jobs and online consultations, and improving the usability of a range of other datasets. However:

> I don't think it's government's job to do a lot of these mash-ups actually and I don't
> think we should invest much money into it. I think it's our job to release the data and
> allow external people to do that, but we need to demonstrate that it's possible and
> why it's valuable.[939]

Pullinger is working with John Sheridan, OPSI, and a core team around Professor Sir Tim Berners-Lee to implement Berners-Lee's vision for the use of the semantic web in government. Much of the pioneer work on linked data can be tracked back to Sheridan:

> I went to the information domain of the Chief Technology Officers Council shortly after
> the Berners-Lee appointment to throw down the gauntlet to them and say: "We need
> to have an approach for how we make URIs [Uniform Resource Identifiers] because
> otherwise we're not doing linked data and we need that." We now have, albeit in
> draft, a really solid piece of work that brought together the expertise that there was in
> government and the expertise in the widest UK public sector practitioner sense. We
> have a really thorough worked-out way now for how do we go about minting URIs for
> non-information resources and how they relate to information resources.[940]

Sheridan has been leading on the development of a linked data version of the UK *Statute book*, which he believes has helped with the compilation of ontologies for statute concepts, enabling the disambiguation of terminology.[941] An example of others linking to the data in the Statute Book is the *Local Government Service List,* which is a controlled vocabulary of types of services that local authorities provide, mapped to the statutory duties or statutory powers that are either based on the local authority's obligation to deliver that service or give them the power to deliver that service:

> We're providing a very granular URI scheme that allows you to talk about pieces of
> legislation, at different points in time and different levels of granularity, with different
> geographical extents, so you can have a URI for sub-section 2 of such and such as it
> stood on this date or as it stands today. You can ask for that and get back some

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[937] Pullinger, D. & Sheridan, J. *Lessons learned implementing semantic web in UK government.* Paper presented at Online Information 2009, London, 2 December 2009. [not published in proceedings.]
[938] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[939] *Ibid.*
[940] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[941] Great Britain. Legislation.gov.uk. *Help.* <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/help#aboutOpsiSld>, 2010, [accessed 24.10.2010.

linked data that will tell you about what powers does that confer, what pieces of legislation have amended that.[942]

7.3   Impact of the Power of Information Review and Taskforce

Tom Steinberg and Ed Mayo were commissioned by Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Hilary Armstrong in 2007 to undertake the Power of Information (PoI) Review. According to John Suffolk, it was William Perrin, an official in the Cabinet Office, who was: "a one-man evangelist in terms of making the Power of Information happen and knocking on doors to get people interested."[943]

These included Minister Tom Watson MP in the Cabinet Office, a key figure in implementing the review's recommendations. Steinberg[944] felt that the reason the review was commissioned was because there was a feeling that opportunities were being missed, and that current public sector information policy might be costing the country a lot of money, especially in relation to the trading funds. John Pullinger[945] and Peter Griffiths[946] alluded to a feeling of unease that the government ought to be investigating how it should be making use of web 2.0 technology. Richard Allan[947] also suggested that *TheyWorkforYou* (run by Tom Steinberg's social networking organisation MySociety[948]) had had a significant impact because it affected politicians directly.

David Pullinger[949] saw the review as far-sighted in its dealings with social media and the release of closed data held by government, a view supported by Heath,[950] but suggested that it did not deal with people getting access to public sector information sufficiently well. However he felt that this gap was largely filled by the Taskforce that was set up to investigate how the recommendations of the review could be taken forward. Griffiths[951] thought that the review was useful as far as it went, but was too focussed on the potential of social media and new media, reflecting the enthusiasms of the authors. He would have liked to have seen more observations about the fundamentals of information management and public sector information in general. CILIP had tried to engage with the follow-up Taskforce without success. Griffiths went on to express concern over the short two weeks allowed for comment on the Taskforce report and felt that the Taskforce had:

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[942] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[943] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[944] Email correspondence with Tom Steinberg, 18 August 2009.
[945] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[946] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[947] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[948] MySociety. *[Home page]*, <http://www.mysociety.org/>, 2010, [accessed 26.11.2010].
[949] Interview with David Pullinger, 6 April 2009.
[950] Interview with William Heath, 7 September 2009.
[951] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.

> … been careful to come up with the right conclusions that they think are doable and would tie in with government objectives. That's not necessarily the right outcome.[952]

David Pullinger saw the situation from a different perspective. He had found it helpful to be able to feed ideas into the independent Taskforce, which it then considered when making its recommendations. These recommendations could then be used as a lever to help further the work of himself and colleagues within government. Taskforce chairman Richard Allan described the working relationship:

> We were working with some friends to try and steer the whole of government in a new direction. We were aligned with them and it was, if you like, a cell seeking to change the broader scope of government who certainly weren't, and maybe still aren't, signed up to this agenda.[953]

These "friends" included champions from within government: Tom Watson MP, and officials from the COI, OPSI and the Transformational Government Unit:

> We have strengthened that case for them, and helped to catalyse and build that. But it is a process not an event. The process is a group of people driving a wedge into government and trying to push things through, and what we've done is push that in a bit deeper. … But a lot of it's about cultural change, so therefore by definition if you've said even if government stands up and says we accept all this stuff, which they have, the cultural change is still going to cycle through over two or three years. The culture change isn't there yet.[954]

Sheridan[955] also used the analogy of the wedge being banged in when describing the transformational effect of the Power of Information agenda on OPSI, whereas Dr Ian Brown[956] talked about PoI's success in "turning the Whitehall supertanker" and saw the inclusive nature of the Taskforce as very important in coming up with something that had a good chance of changing government direction. He regretted that Tom Watson was no longer the relevant minister but also looked to the coming election and made the point that Opposition politicians had more time to consider issues than ministers caught up in the day-to-day running of their departments.

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[952] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[953] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[954] *Ibid.*
[955] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[956] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.

7.3.1 Impact of the Power of Information agenda on the work of government: the external view

Andy Williamson,[957] Hansard Society, felt that change was already happening anyway but PoI had given people permission to be more innovative more openly, and be able to point to it and be able to say: "But it says there, we can do this", echoing David Pullinger's point above. Steinberg[958] also agreed that the review had helped pro-PSI officials in departments and agencies to push for change but still felt that most people in government had not either heard of the report or the issues in it at all. However Allan[959] felt that there was a reasonable amount of acceptance, at least initially, of the agenda, judging by its appearance in different parts of government policy documents. Also freedom of information legislation had been critical in opening up government; there had been much resistance internally to it but government had sent a clear signal that implementation was not optional. Heath[960] suggested that there had been considerable progress at the local level in opening up data, citing Lichfield Council as an example, although regretted that there were still some major datasets that ought to be made available at national level, for example postcode data.

Griffiths thought the review was useful because the authors were listened to, a point also made by Williamson,[961] whilst campaigner Cross[962] was more enthusiastic, "thrilled" at the Cabinet Office response to the review, and he saw it as a sign that there was a change in government. Brindley[963] felt that Cross's Free Our Data campaign had had more impact generally than the Power of Information agenda and it was issues around transparency, freedom of information and customer choice which were more important to government. However the personalisation agendas would have some knock-on consequences for the under-pinning of information management and Web 2.0 use. Daines suggested that the Power of Information agenda may be seen as a way of stoking the economy but he did not think it had had an impact on copyright or the work on data protection, or indeed on *Information matters*:[964]

> There's no way that they're all being brought together into a consolidated understanding of: this is what we want to do.[965]

Williamson[966] considered that the *Power of Information review* was a narrowly-focussed document, aimed at an internal audience, but recognised that anything more radical would not

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[957] Interview with Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[958] Email correspondence with Tom Steinberg, 18 August 2009.
[959] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[960] Interview with William Heath, 7 September 2009.
[961] Interview with Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[962] Interview with Michael Cross, 3 November 2009.
[963] Interview with Dame Lynne Brindley, 28 September 2009.
[964] Great Britain. HM Government. *Information matters*, 2008.
[965] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[966] Interview with Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.

have succeeded and suggested that it had been pitched correctly. What was lacking was evidence that it was right, but it was a vision of what could be done in the future and the evidence would build up in time. Nicholson[967] agreed that the report said sensible things but he would have liked it to have been more radical and didn't see a real will within government to make it happen.

Batt also saw the report as sensible and pragmatic, and said that it had been helpful to commission the work from outside Whitehall, but it was in the nature of government that change took a long time. He was not hopeful for future work because of the financial crisis and what he perceived as infighting within government:

> Information should be the glue that binds an organisation together and drives
> decision-making. It's not like that. … public knowledge could be the raw material of
> the future. It could be that the creative economy is going to be a generator of wealth,
> and in that case, knowledge becomes a key component. Government invests a lot of
> money in that. I think information, in terms of public service information, it is going to
> be hard to get any traction in terms of policy for all this.[968]

Worlock[969] was of a similar mind. He thought the Power of Information activity had been extremely important and was pleased to see the Shareholder Executive address issues around the trading funds, but was discouraged that Treasury approval was needed:

> In a way, to have good reports like that, with that degree of clarity, and then to worry
> that nothing will happen as a result because it hasn't fundamentally changed the
> situation is even more frustrating. … Either you believe you are living in an
> information society or you don't. The Power of Information report is a call to all those
> who do believe they're living in an information society to think and react. I don't think
> that call is heard in Treasury. I don't think it's heard in the upper orders in a lot of
> government departments.[970]

Nicholson was concerned that the financial crisis meant that the Power of Information agenda might be: "kicked into the long grass by the Operational Efficiency Programme review",[971] and Brown[972] wondered whether a new government would see some of the agencies gathering data as targets for privatisation. Hahamis suggested that there should be a longitudinal study to see how the well the recommendations were addressed, including a cost-benefit analysis

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[967] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[968] Interview with Chris Batt. 5 March 2009.
[969] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.
[970] *Ibid.*
[971] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[972] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.

to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the actions. Meanwhile Allan felt the primary problem was that the financial situation was taking attention away in other areas:

> … so people just don't get round to making decisions on this stuff because it's not important enough. The opportunity is there, and the message that what we need now is innovation is actually stronger than ever, if you can frame it in the right terms.[973]

7.3.2 Impact of the Power of Information agenda on the work of government: the internal view

The Power of Information (PoI) agenda has had more impact on the work of the Cabinet Office and OPSI than other departments, with the exception of teams working on the supersites Directgov, Business Link and NHS Choices. Comments above show that there was a general feeling that it would take time for the changes to trickle down through departments, although the new Coalition government's plans to open up government datasets may speed up the process.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) supported the principles of the PoI agenda but had not been directly affected by it[974] and for the senior staff member at TNA,[975] whilst they had been aware of the reports, these had not had an impact on their current work as a normal civil servant:

> I would say that the accountability issues brought about by FoI and by data handling have had far more impact on me as a civil servant rather than the opportunities story.[976]

However Chief Information Officer John Suffolk felt that the PoI agenda had increased pressure for open data and recalled how he had brought together the Chief Information Officer Council and the Chief Technology Officer Council to meet Sir Tim Berners-Lee, whose message was:

> "Give me your raw data. I don't want your personal data, just give me raw, PSI, data", and everyone agreed. It's quite hard to say "no", isn't it? Clearly the argument is sensible. Well why wouldn't we release non-personal data for other people to do things with it we could never imagine? And therefore it is the Power of Information

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[973] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[974] Interview with Steve Wood, 17 November 2009.
[975] Interview with A senior staff member at TNA, 11 May 2009.
[976] *Ibid.*

that's stimulated that demand and created that groundswell of pressure for people to not get in the way.[977]

For David Pullinger[978] the reports were having an influence across government, but it was more what the reports were trying to say rather than "Power of Information" by name. Jim Wretham[979] in OPSI suggested that it was still early days and that the impact across government had not been that great yet but he also felt that the message was spreading, aided by interest from Gordon Brown and the Prime Minister to be, David Cameron. The PoI reports had had an impact on the value and use of information beyond that of its commercial use:

> What the Power of Information really highlighted was the new and innovative ways in which information could be used and repurposed. We have seen the development of many new Internet-based sites, many of which can be accessed absolutely free of charge and are put together by individuals or small groups for social benefit. And of course with web-based services it opens up the possibility of people developing new and exciting information services with the minimum of resources. Publishing is no longer the exclusive preserve of large publishing companies. It is equally open to a developer sitting in a coffee bar working on a laptop.[980]

The Directgov team has made commitments as a result of the PoI work.[981] Firstly Directgov now has an Innovate site[982] where, separate from its main site, it encourages ideas from the development community. It is also feeding into the data.gov.uk project, sharing its technology and experience with the Cabinet Office team taking it forward. Directgov has also set up a fund called Gov.Labs with Business Link and NHS Choices to look at how they jointly innovate around ideas such as the use of social networking advisers and other intermediaries. In addition, they are considering how they incorporate additional links to social networking sites, as well as the links that already exist to local authorities.

Sheridan was clearly enthused by the PoI agenda and felt that it had made a considerable difference within OPSI:

> It has moved some of the issues up the agenda, it's broadened our focus from being purely economic to being economic *and* social, it's got us thinking about what contribution PSI re-use could make to public services reform which we weren't talking

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[977] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[978] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[979] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[980] *Ibid.*
[981] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[982] *See:* <http://innovate.direct.gov.uk/>.

about prior to PoI at all internally. It's galvanised a whole bundle of people. It's still work in progress.[983] [interviewee's emphasis]

He saw it as providing a mandate for a range of things that OPSI was taking forward and a policy rationale for other things that were going on, particularly in terms of digital engagement and government's use of social media. There were now huge challenges for government communications professionals and for all civil servants about what it meant to be a civil servant, where communication could now be many-to-many and civil servants could not continue to function under a cloak of anonymity.

As a result of the PoI review, guidelines were developed for civil servants to help them in their use of social media to communicate with those outside government. Allan[984] found, during the course of the work of the Taskforce, that there had been little use of social networking so far. The guidelines were permissive but departments did not have a business strategy for digital engagement, something that the Taskforce recommended be addressed and the Central Office of Information was encouraging. Williamson[985] also stressed the need to manage communications channels appropriately and referred to the guidelines developed in BIS for the use of Twitter by civil servants: it was 20 pages long but needed to be. Wretham[986] was positive about this new direction in communications but recognised the need to be careful about presenting one's own personal ideas as if they represented those of whichever department you worked for. Moore[987] however cautioned that social networking sites were still only used by a minority of the population.

Sheridan suggested that the UK was the first country to develop this kind of agenda but that the United States and Australia were also working in the same direction. Allan[988] also cited Australia as providing a useful example of the use of a creative commons licence for government information, including geographic data.

7.3.3 Skills needed in government to take forward the Power of Information agenda

When asked whether the government had the skills to take forward the Power of Information agenda, most answers could be characterised as a qualified "yes". Andy Williamson[989] was the most positive outside government but even he suspected that government did not recognise who had the skills and that they were probably not in the places that government

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[983] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August2009.
[984] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[985] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[986] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[987] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[988] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[989] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 29 July 2009.

thought they might be. He also doubted that they were given enough scope, power and responsibility to develop the agenda. He went on to make the point that government often considered itself to be the expert but it was only an expert on its own side, not the community side, and it needed to work in partnership with the public to innovate its services. He also questioned whether government had the courage to take the necessary risks in innovation as it required a radical shift in culture, including a willingness to fail and learn from that failure:

> We don't have the culture of risk-taking in this country and within government we have even less, but we've got to.[990]

John Suffolk felt that government definitely had the skills but took an opposing view on innovation. He felt that the public sector was perhaps not given the credit it deserved in this regard:

> You don't always see it because the 5 ½ million people working in the public sector, deal with people of every language and every ability, across every distribution channel. You have no choice but to be innovative in all strange and different ways. Secondly, we're used to fuzzy data, conflicting objectives, having to work our way through a problem that has never been solved before, and I think that actually gives people the ability to stretch themselves and try things which you would never be allowed to do in the private sector. … If you look at what's happening now on Power of Information and you look at what Steph Gray's doing [a blogger in BIS at the time, now freelance] and other people, they're out here doing it; no one's getting in their way; it's just happening in a viral, osmosis kind of way, because it can.[991]

This contrasts with Heath who agreed that government had the skills but they were underneath "a seven-fold layer of blockers and mindguards."[992] Brown[993] similarly agreed that government had the skills but was concerned that financial restraint may prevent them from undertaking this new work.

Richard Allan[994] felt that government probably had more skills than it thought it had, for example to map out the places where government should be engaging and putting out information, but might not have the skills to decide how to do that. He was of the opinion that government had to own the work and it was better kept in-house, although there might be occasions when outside help was required, and warned against assuming that the work was more difficult than it actually was. One specific area where he saw new skills being required was in social networking in the government context rather than for personal use:

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[990] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 29 July 2009.
[991] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[992] Interview with William Heath, 7 September 2009.
[993] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[994] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.

A professional civil service use of a social media site potentially is a very different discipline from a personal use of a social media site, so the fact that you do it personally doesn't mean that you're in a better position to do it professionally. It could almost be argued you'd be in a worse position because you'd start trying to do it like you'd do it personally, so we're almost developing an entirely new set of skills where there is some transfer but it's not a one-to-one mapping between what you do in your private life and what you do in your civil service role.[995]

Finally, the person who felt most strongly that government did not have the skills to implement the Power of Information agenda was the review's co-author Tom Steinberg:

No, government needs to recruit a new generation of public servants in order to really take it forward. I regret not making this recommendation directly in the report.[996]

7.3.4 How the recommendations are being carried forward

Looking ahead, interviewees were asked how they saw the recommendations of the Taskforce being taken forward. Steinberg felt that it was likely that the next government would carry on with many of the policies and much the same general approach, although it remained to be seen under what name and with what determination. This was before he took on the role of adviser to the Conservative Party while it was in Opposition. In a press interview in 2009 he predicted that public spending would be the next big subject area that ought to be opened up for data mashing by third parties to create new products, much as MySociety had already done,[997] so it is perhaps no surprise that a Conservative pre-election pledge was to open up public spending data.[998] Steinberg subsequently joined the new Coalition Government's Public Sector Transparency Board.[999]

For this research, Steinberg considered that Ordnance Survey had responded only partially to the recommendations of the Review and Taskforce and not at all in terms of its spirit or wider message. Rhind[1000] also felt that there would not be a significant change of direction under a Conservative leadership although he suggested that there might be more emphasis on the commercial drivers. He also doubted that in the short term there would be any change in the trading funds, such as Ordnance Survey, because of the financial crisis.

[995] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[996] Email correspondence with Tom Steinberg, 18 August 2009.
[997] Miller P. Tom Steinberg talks with Talis about the work of MySociety. *Nodalities Magazine*, 2009, (8), 15-19.
[998] Conservative Party (Great Britain). *The tech manifesto will open up government.* <http://blog.conservatives.com/index.php/2010/03/13/our-tech-manifesto-will-open-up-government/>, 2010, [accessed 26.11.2010].
[999] Cameron, ref. 896.
[1000] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.

Rhind[1001] and Allan[1002] thought it was too soon to tell how Ordnance Survey would fulfil the recommendations of the Taskforce. The Taskforce research found that people needed mapping data and would find it from other sources if Ordnance Survey did not provide it at a reasonable cost. Personally Allan would have liked all OS data to be given away free of charge as that would have huge advantages for the geographic information services sector, but recognised the difficulties for government in the current economic climate.

Much of the work in the PoI agenda was being driven by Andrew Stott,[1003] appointed as the Director for Digital Engagement working out of the Cabinet Office. Formerly he was chair of the Chief Technology Officer Council and Deputy Chief Information Officer. Stott was given some staff and a budget, but Allan saw Stott's key role as developing what he described as a new profession, neither pure communications nor pure IT:

> There are people out there who want to be part of this profession already in government, working in bits of different government departments, so I think the question is: can they gather, build, develop that community? There may be some sticking points where you start developing somebody in their department and then the department decides it doesn't like it, but that's where their Cabinet Office clout comes back in, and they need to be a Whitehall operator to get that.[1004]

Allan suggested that the PoI agenda was champion-led, driven by people who understood it, who wanted to do it and then were given the space to do it, with Cabinet Office support:

> I think in many cases the reason for them wanting to do it is personal, it's not necessarily formally in their job description. They've just got a passion for it.[1005]

Buy-in from senior ministers was crucial to acceptance of the work across government and Allan felt that Tom Watson had been instrumental in this. What was needed now was a hard-headed assessment of the government's business requirements and consideration of the tools needed to meet those requirements:

> We're a little bit aspirational – stick a finger in the air and say: well this stuff must be good. Actually you've got to go from that to this hard-headed assessment of whether it really is good or not. We have a belief but we don't have a demonstrable evidence that for Defra a particular form of engagement is good. They have to do that themselves. What we've said is they should test that proposition and what needs to

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[1001] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.
[1002] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[1003] *Ibid.*
[1004] *Ibid.*
[1005] *Ibid.*

happen now more than anything is a high-level someone in the department says: "yes we want to test the proposition that this is going to be good."[1006]

7.3.5 Main achievements of the Power of Information agenda

In conclusion, Tom Steinberg, co-author of the *Power of Information Review*, and Richard Allan, chairman of the Power of Information Taskforce, were asked what they considered had been the main achievements of the PoI agenda:

> Bringing some new modest policies into existence, producing the research on the economics of trading funds that confirms that their current state is unsustainable, and starting a wider movement in government. It is the wider movement that has to do most of the heavy lifting before the citizens will feel many impacts, though.[1007]

> I'd say we have allowed the thinking to develop, encouraged the growth of a community, encouraged particularly those on the inside who were trying to do this.[1008]

John Sheridan summed up how progress was moving forwards:

> I sometimes think of myself as like a surfer. So I'm there on the beach, I see the wave, I go paddling out to the wave, catch whatever that wave is and I'll be further up on the beach. OK, there's another wave. So Power of Information was a wave, Power of Information Taskforce was a wave, Berners-Lee's appointment was another wave. At some point in the next year we're going to have an election; I'm sure there'll be another wave, and another wave after that.[1009]

7.4   Meeting objective OB6

This chapter has explored the opening up of government data since 2009, in fulfilment of objective OB6. The EU Directive on the re-use of public sector information, which came into force in 2005, required Member States to set up mechanisms to regulate the re-use of PSI. In the UK this role was undertaken by the Office of Public Sector Information, originally within the Cabinet Office but later in The National Archives. Regulation itself was mandatory but making PSI available for re-use was not, although it was greatly encouraged and facilitated by the OPSI's work, and the research suggested that the UK was at the forefront of developments on re-use in Europe. However, much valuable data, especially geospatial data, was produced and controlled by trading funds, for example Ordnance Survey or the

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[1006] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[1007] Email correspondence with Tom Steinberg, 18 August 2009.
[1008] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[1009] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.

Hydrographic Office, which were required to cover their full costs. They therefore had to charge third parties significant amounts for licences to re-use their data, which interviewees from information service companies felt was counter-productive in developing the UK's knowledge economy.

The Power of Information review, commissioned in 2007, and the Power of Information Taskforce in 2008/9, paved the way for a revolution in the way government publishes its information. They encouraged the use of social media as a channel of communication, but also made recommendations on the structure of data which facilitated its re-use and subsequent development of new information services for the citizen by both the corporate and voluntary sectors, as well as by individuals. They also made recommendations about the relaxation of trading fund licences which were taken up again by Professor Sir Tim Berners-Lee when he was appointed by Prime Minister Gordon Brown in summer 2009 to advise on how to open up UK government data even further. After a short consultation, much Ordnance Survey data was made freely available for re-use.

Despite concerns from interviewees that PoI issues would suffer as a result of the government's Operational Efficiency Programme, transparency and open data became an election issue in 2010. The push to open up government data, including data from trading funds, has been continued by the incoming Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition government through the Public Sector Transparency Board, whose members include Berners-Lee and PoI review co-author Tom Steinberg. Much work has been done using semantic web technology to facilitate linking data, with the development of legislation.gov.uk at the forefront, and over 3000 datasets have been released through the data.gov.uk portal, which was set up as a channel for sharing data as well as a source of advice on good practice and a platform for new applications.

Despite the recognition by many interviewees of the long-term value of the Power of Information work, some doubt was expressed about whether government officials had sufficient skills or were in the right place to fully implement the agenda, particularly regarding the development of social networking.

The ethos of the PoI agenda – the opening up of government data and citizen engagement through social media – has been accepted at the highest levels in government in 2010. It is too soon to tell to what extent this implementation is filtering down through departments: there have been orders from the centre of government to release certain datasets within prescribed timescales, but changing the culture throughout government is a much longer-term process. However Annex G shows what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations. This is in the context of an assessment of a framework for evaluating

implementation of government policy on citizens' access to public sector information which is developed in the next chapter.

Chapter 8: Findings: Evaluation of government policy on citizens' access to public sector information

8.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses objective OB7: to identify how implementation of policy on public sector information (PSI) is evaluated and investigate how this evaluation could be developed. The review of the literature and attendance at events showed that there was a gap in evaluation of implementation of information policy, including policy on PSI. Evaluation that is undertaken internationally and nationally that could be used to evaluate PSI policy is discussed but the work is taken further by developing a framework for capturing the necessary elements to be evaluated. The framework is then used to identify new elements that could be measured and also tested against the recommendations of the Power of Information Taskforce report[1010] to see how it would work in practice to assist evaluation. The structure of Chapter 8 is as follows:

[1010] Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce, ref. 22.

8.1.1 Background

Many researchers of the policy process divided it into a sequence of stages, starting with setting the agenda, followed by policy formulation, implementation and finally evaluation.[1011] This analysis suggests that evaluation is the end of the process but this researcher would argue that in fact the process is cyclical and that the results of the evaluation should feed back into to future policy-making, whether it is a proposed extension of the current policy or a change of direction. The concept of "evidence-based policy" is in theory adopted by the government administration in the UK[1012] and part of that evidence should be the results of evaluation of earlier policy implementations.

A study of evaluation of public policy was not in the original concept of the research; that had been done by others, notably Hogwood and Gunn,[1013] Parsons,[1014] Braybrooke & Lindblom[1015] and Wildavsky.[1016] However during the course of the background reading and attendance at events, it became clear that there was a gap in evaluation of implementation of government information policy. To address this, it was decided to include questions on evaluation in the interview schedule to obtain feedback on how UK government policy on the provision of public sector information (PSI) to citizens might be, or indeed whether it should be, evaluated (*see* section 8.3).

Drawing on the interviews and a review of the literature on eGovernment evaluation, both academic and policy documents, a framework was devised to assist policy-implementers to identify elements of policy to be evaluated (*see* section 8.4). To test the framework, it was populated by those elements which relate to UK government policy on citizens' access to PSI. To take it a stage further, a trial was undertaken to populate the framework with existing indicators to assess how hospitable it was to current evaluation and to highlight where gaps in evaluation existed. A further test was to see how the framework could be used to identify existing measures to evaluate implementation of a real policy initiative (in this case the Power

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[1011] Hill & Hupe, ref. 146, p.115.
[1012] Mulgan, ref. 126, p.50.
[1013] Hogwood & Gunn, ref. 144.
[1014] Parsons, ref. 142.
[1015] Braybrooke, D. & Lindblom, C.E. *A strategy of decision: policy evaluation as a social process*, 1963.
[1016] Wildavsky, ref. 170.

of Information Taskforce[1017] recommendations – *see* section 8.5 and Annex G) and to make suggestions for further measures needed.

This research reviewed many studies related to international benchmarking across a wide area of government policy – eGovernment – in order to gain an understanding of the issues involved. Of particular value in this regard were Bannister,[1018] Heeks,[1019] Millard,[1020] Codagnone and Undheim,[1021] Behn [1022] and Osimo.[1023] However the literature review found little that would help government itself to evaluate the implementation of the spread of policy relating to access to information and which had been tested. Some research considered evaluation of individual, particularly IT, projects that may relate to one agency or department (for example Barnes & Vigden[1024] and Jones *et al*[1025]) and some developed theoretical frameworks and models for evaluation that had not been tested (*see* section 8.2.4).

8.1.2 Why evaluate?

> The ideal organization would be self-evaluating. It would continuously monitor its own activities so as to determine how well it was meeting its objectives or even whether these objectives should continue to prevail. When evaluation suggested that a change in objectives or programmes to achieve them was desirable, these proposals would be taken seriously by top decision-makers who would institute the necessary changes without vested interest in continuing current activities. Instead they would steadily pursue new alternatives to better serve desired outcomes.[1026]

Wildavsky, above, illustrates the importance of evaluation to organisations. At the most basic level, evaluation is needed to assess whether a policy has achieved its goals, but this of course is dependent on how clearly those goals have been expressed and whether they have been formulated in a way that is measureable, either quantitatively or qualitatively. In the context of public administration, evaluation has been defined as: the systematic analysis of public policies, programmes and projects.[1027] Behn[1028] suggests that evaluation requires a

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[1017] Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce, ref. 22.

[1018] Bannister, F. The curse of the benchmark: an assessment of the validity and value of e-government comparisons. *International Review of Administrative Sciences,* 2007, 73(2), 171-188.

[1019] Heeks, R. Understanding and measuring eGovernment: international benchmarking studies. *In:* S. Hafeez, ed. *e-Participation and e-Government: understanding the present and creating the future,* 27-28 July 2006, pp.1-39.

[1020] Millard, J. eGovernment measurement for policy makers. *European Journal of ePractice,* 2008, (4), 1-14.

[1021] Codagnone, C. & Undheim, T.A. Benchmarking eGovernment: tools, theory, and practice. *European Journal of ePractice, 2008,* (4), 1-15. <http://www.eupractice.eu/files/4.2_0.pd>, [accessed 10.11.2009].

[1022] Behn, R.D. *The challenge of evaluating m-Government, e-Government, and i-Government: what should be compared with what?*, 1995. <http://www.belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/behn-wp.pdf>, [accessed 12.11.2009].

[1023] Osimo, D. Benchmarking eGovernment in the Web 2.0 era: what to measure, and how. *European Journal of ePractice, 2008,* (4), 1-11. <http://www.epractice.eu/files/4.1_2.pdf>, [accessed 10.11.2009].

[1024] Barnes & Vidgen, ref. 38.

[1025] Jones, S., Irani, Z. & Sharif, A. E-Government evaluation: reflections on three organisational case studies, *Proceedings of the 40th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences,* 2007, pp.1-8. <http://www.epractice.eu/files/media/945.pdf>, [accessed 09.03.2010].

[1026] Wildavsky, ref. 170, p.213.

[1027] Homburg, V. *Understanding e-government information systems in public administration.* London: Routledge, 2008, p.113.

comparison and that the first task in any evaluation is to decide what is the initial basis of this comparison.

Evaluation may be undertaken:

- at the policy development stage to assess the potential cost-benefits, risks and impacts
- during implementation to check if the project is on track (formative evaluation)
- or post-implementation to identify whether the policy achieved its goals and what lessons have been leaned to feed into future policy development (summative evaluation).[1029]

This research is focussing on the implementation stage evaluation rather than the evaluation of the policies themselves.

The type of evaluation undertaken needs to reflect the audience for the results. Potential audiences are policy-makers and decision-makers within government who need to know how effective their current policies are and learn lessons for future policies – essentially inward-looking. This is particularly important at a time of economic crisis when hard decisions need to be taken about which policies to pursue and what to cut. Governments may also wish to see how the country is performing in comparison with others in the context of global trends, which again would guide the direction of future policies. International benchmarks such as the United Nations eGovernment survey[1030] are in the main aimed at governments.

Within countries, individuals and organisations may want to hold government to account when deciding who to support at election time or to make decisions affecting their lives based on league tables or changes in national levels of, say, mortality or literacy. This "holding government to account" has been a particular mantra of the 2010 Coalition Government[1031] and a key element of that is publishing performance data to demonstrate transparency and thereby help to improve trust in government.

[1028] Behn, ref. 1022, p.5.
[1029] Homburg, ref. 1027, p.113.
[1030] United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *United Nations e-Government survey 2010: leveraging e-Government at a time of financial and economic crisis*, 2010. <http://www2.unpan.org/egovkb/global_reports/10report.htm>, [accessed 20.07.2010].
[1031] For example Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 444.

8.1.3 Types of assessment

The following sources of data for evaluating government policy implementation were identified in the course of the literature review, particularly drawing on the work of Codagnone, Boccardelli and Leone.[1032]

Surveys of stakeholders:
- internal questionnaires of officials managing services being evaluated and internal users of those services, as will as external users, eg citizens. They may be accessed through a variety of channels: print, telephone, email, pop-up surveys on websites
- interviews with managers plus internal and external users
- focus groups and user panels
- customer journey mapping: "tracking and describing all the experiences that customers have as they encounter a service or set of services, taking into account not only what happened to them, but also their responses to their experiences."[1033]

Automated website analysis:
- web metrics of use of websites
- web crawler analysis of features, including the extent of conforming to accessibility guidelines.

Third party assessment
- ease of use of websites
- functionality and design of websites
- services available and their level of maturity in relation to eGovernment development, from one-way communication through interactive and transactional to fully integrated
- information provided about governments
- information provided for individuals and organisations.

Administrative data
- income and expenditure, which may have been generated using the Standard Cost Model[1034]
- departmental activities reports
- official statistics

[1032] Codagnone, C., Boccardelli, P. & Leone, M.I. *eGovernment Economics Project: measurement framework final version*, 2006. <http://www.umic.pt/images/stories/publicacoes200709/D.2.4_Measurement_Framework_final_version.pdf>, [accessed 21.07.2010].

[1033] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Customer service mapping*, [n.d.]. <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/corp/assets/publications/delivery_council/customer_journey_mapping/cjm_final.doc>, [accessed 24.07.2010], p.1.

[1034] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Better Regulation Executive. *Measuring administrative costs: UK standard cost model manual.* London: Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2005.

- other datasets generated by government in the course of its work.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), to be of good quality datasets should be: relevant to user needs; sufficiently accurate to measure the concepts and characteristics they were designed for; credible because it was collected in a trustworthy way; timely; easily interpretable; and accessible.[1035]

8.1.4 Who does the evaluating?

> Why don't organisations evaluate their own activities? Why don't they seem to manifest rudimentary self-awareness? … Evaluation and organization, it turns out, are somewhat contradictory. … Who will evaluate and who will administer? … Can authority be allocated to evaluators and blame apportioned among administrators? How does one convince administrators to collect information that might help others, but can only harm them? … Would the political problem be solved by creating a special organization – Evaluation Incorporated – devoted wholly to performing the analytic function? Could it obtain necessary support without abandoning its analytic function? Can knowledge and power be joined?[1036]

Here Wildavsky sums up the three options for who does the evaluating:

- internal – staff developing and implementing the policies
- internal – separate evaluation unit
- external consultants.

His recommendation is that a combination of more than one approach is needed: internal evaluation is necessary for organisations to correct their errors as they go along but it must be reinforced by continuous external assessment in order to avoid self-serving behaviours.[1037] Many of the measurement activities discussed in the next section are carried out by third parties.

8.2 Current evaluation activities: what is being done

This section considers the various current measurement schemes which address elements of government policy on citizens' access to public sector information. In the main, the international benchmarks are measures of eGovernment and eGovernance and the UK

[1035] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate. Public Governance Committee. *Management in government: feasibility report on the development of comparative data*, 2005.
[1036] Wildavsky, 170, p.212.
[1037] *Ibid*, pp.6-7.

government measures are more specific in their coverage. It is not within the scope of this research to undertake a critique of these measures – that has been done by others, for example: Bannister;[1038] Deng;[1039] Janssen, Rotthier and Snijkers;[1040] Kunstelj and Vintar;[1041] and Salem[1042] – but rather to identify what measures already exist and are used by government which could also be used to measure implementation of policy on access to PSI. It is not helpful to suggest developing new measures without first assessing where acceptable current measures already exist; it is more efficient to build on these, filling in gaps where measures do not yet exist.

8.2.1 International benchmarks

8.2.1.1 *United Nations e-Government Survey*

A number of international benchmarks are widely used by governments to gauge their standing in relation to other countries. The most comprehensive is the United Nations e-Government survey which was been conducted annually 2003-2005 and biennially since then[1043] and provides an inter-country comparison, not an absolute measure of activity. The Survey is a composite of three indices: the Telecommunications Infrastructure Index, the Human Capital Index and the Online Service Index, the latter being supplemented with an e-Participation Index in the 2010 survey.[1044] It is the Online Service and e-Participation Indices which have elements relevant to this research. An independent research team carries out a third-party assessment of individual countries' online presence, both the national portal if one exists, and the websites of the ministries of education, labour, social services, health and finance. What is particularly interesting is that the researchers put themselves in the position of the ordinary user, not the expert user, so are looking at how easy it is to find information, not just whether it exists. They also assess for accessibility against the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium.

The survey is constantly under review, developing each year, with a move from readiness studies to uptake and impact and now eParticipation. In 2006 the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs set up a working group to look at the long term future of the

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[1038] Bannister, ref. 1018.

[1039] Deng, H. Towards objective benchmarking of electronic government: an inter-country analysis. *Transforming Government, People, Process and Policy,* 2008, 2(3), 162-176.

[1040] Janssen, D., Rotthier, S. & Snijkers, K. If you measure it they will score: an assessment of international eGovernment benchmarking. *Information Polity,* 2004, 9(3-4), 121-130.

[1041] Kunstelj & Vintar, ref. 377.

[1042] Salem, F. Benchmarking the e-Government bulldozer: beyond measuring the tread marks. *Journal of Measuring Business Excellence,* 2008, 11(4), 9-22.

[1043] Curtin, G. Global e-Government and e-Participation models, measurement and methodology: issues and challenges. *In:* Hafeez, S. ed. *Workshop on e-Participation and e-Government: understanding the present and creating the future, 27-28 July 2006.* <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN026527.pdf>, 2007, [accessed 12.01.2010], pp.59-74.

[1044] United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ref. 1030.

survey and the working papers from the inaugural event informed much of their thinking. [1045] At the workshop, Heeks[1046] made it clear that the audience for eGovernment benchmarking was the policy-maker; it gave governments an indication of how well they were achieving in relation to other countries and helped them decide future priorities. However he also highlighted the potential use for accountability by citizens and civil society organisations but reported that there was very little evidence of how the benchmarks were used generally and by whom. The UN eGovernment surveys were not designed to inform the citizen about actual progress of their own government in implementing eGovernment, unlike, for example, national literacy indicators, and do not therefore provide measures that could be used for assessing government progress in implementing citizens' access to PSI. However, the data gathered from the survey is kept in a Knowledge Base which is made available for other benchmarking organisations to draw upon.

Since 2006 the UN has been working in partnership with other international organisations, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank, on developing a standardised set of eGovernment development indicators that can be used by all – something the UN stresses:

> … would greatly facilitate international comparability and avoid unnecessary
> duplication in assessment of e-government development.[1047]

An initial draft list of indicators is included in the 2010 survey[1048] but none of them relate to citizens' access to PSI as such, despite the eParticipation Index putting considerable stress on the provision of information. There are two indicators relating to online services and user satisfaction with those services, but the suggested coverage does not include provision of information.

8.2.1.2 EU eGovernment benchmarking

The European Commission has been benchmarking developments in the information society for 10 years, mostly through the use of the *Eurostat community survey on ICT usage by households and by individuals* and the *Eurostat community survey on ICT usage and eCommerce by enterprises*, as well as through a Capgemini assessment of 20 basic eGovernment services. The latest report is the 2010 *Europe's digital competitiveness report*[1049] which drew on the 8th Capgemini benchmark measurement *Smarter, faster, better*

[1045] Hafeez, S. ed. *Workshop on e-Participation and e-Government: understanding the present and creating the future, 27-28 July 2006.*
[1046] Heeks, ref. 1019, pp.1-2.
[1047] United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ref. 1030, p.5.
[1048] *Ibid.,* p.94.
[1049] European Commission. *Europe's digital competitiveness report 2010*. Brussels: European Commission, 2010. <http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=5789>, [accessed 21.07.2010].

eGovernment.[1050] It used third party assessment of public websites at national, regional and local level across the EU to gauge levels of online service availability and sophistication. In addition, the Capgemini research piloted five indicators to assess the user experience, which was considered to be a growing area of importance. The five indicators were:

- *Accessibility:* A web crawler performed an automated assessment of compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 1.0 standards) of the national portal to determine whether the national portal was accessible to people with disabilities.
- *Usability:* Can you use a channel of choice, does the website allow for progress tracking, is there a help functionality available and are privacy policies duly mentioned and explained?
- *User Satisfaction Monitoring:* Do websites allow for user feedback and reporting on this?
- *One-stop-shop approach:* What proportion of the 20 basic services are available on the principal portal(s)?
- *User-focused portal design:* What is the ease of finding information on the different websites and are they structured by theme or life-events for instance?[1051]

It is worth noting that the UK scored highly on all elements except the portal design.

None of the above EU indicators yet relate to the provision of PSI *per se* but they show the growing importance of the user focus and are starting to address how to measure user satisfaction. As part of Capgemini's work, governments were encouraged to share the results of their own research into user satisfaction with websites.

Looking to the future, the European Commission's i2010 High Level Group has developed a conceptual framework for benchmarking of digital Europe from 2011 which builds on the current indicators.[1052] Some of the proposed indicators relate to citizen usage of eGovernment services and use of the Internet more generally, and whilst they do include measures of access to information, this is not specifically information from government.

A separate exercise for the EU to develop a set of detailed potential indicators was undertaken by Codagnone, Boccardelli and Leone in 2006 after extensive investigation of previous work on evaluation of eGovernment. Under the auspices of the eGovernment Economics Project, they did much conceptual thinking and developed a comprehensive

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[1050] Capgemini *et al. Smarter, faster, better eGovernment: 8th benchmark measurement*, 2009. <http://www.uk.capgemini.com/industries/public/thought_leadership/eu_egov_2009/>, [accessed 27.01.2010].
[1051] *Ibid,* p.40.
[1052] European Commission. i2010 High Level Group. *Benchmarking digital Europe 2011-2015: a conceptual framework*, 2009. <http://www.epractice.eu/files/Benchmarking%20Digital%20Europe%202011-2015%20-%20A%20conceptual%20framework.pdf>, [accessed 21.07.2010].

Measurement framework[1053] with the idea that member states and organisations undertaking evaluations could pick and chose which indicators were relevant to them. The more detailed measures could be used internally within governments to measure efficiency, effectiveness and democracy – what they termed "benchlearning." It is not clear to what extent these indicators have been incorporated into the EU's benchmarks or used within member states, however they are the most relevant measures for assessing citizens' access to public sector information. Another potential source of indicators is research undertaken for the European Commission on eParticipation. Smith, Macintosh and Millard have developed an eParticipation analytical framework,[1054] with lists of components to be assessed. No specific measures have been developed; the framework is designed to provide a checklist of elements that could be measured, reflecting the priorities of the project being evaluated.

8.2.1.3 OECD Government at a Glance

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) from 2009 is producing biennially *Government at a Glance,*[1055] which provides indicators on over 30 elements underlying government performance, including eGovernment indicators drawn from the UN and EU sources mentioned above. The OECD itself also undertakes a *Survey on integrity* which looks at information that legislators in upper and lower houses have to disclose about themselves and this feeds into *Government at a glance*, but it does not address provision of information more generally. In 2009 the OECD also undertook a survey[1056] of 25 national governments and 54 civil society organisations from 14 countries which asked respondents to report on open and inclusive policy-making in their respective countries. It is clear from an OECD workshop held in March 2010[1057] that the OECD is developing an expanded set of indicators for the 2011 *Government at a glance*, covering open government, access to data and public trust in government, which should provide useful measures of the provision of PSI to citizens in due course.

8.2.1.4 Academic eGovernment surveys

Brown University in Rhode Island undertook annual third party assessments of eGovernment in most nations, including consideration of content, although not in any detail, however 2007 seems to be the last year of publication.[1058] Waseda University, Tokyo, is still publishing its

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[1053] Codagnone, Boccardelli *et al.*, ref. 1032.

[1054] Smith, S., Macintosh, A. & Millard, J. *Study and supply of services on the development of eParticipation in the EU: Deliverable 1.1c: Major factors shaping the development of eParticipation: final version*, 2009. <http://islab.uom.gr/eP/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=36&&Itemid=82>, [accessed 22.07.2010].

[1055] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *Government at a glance*, 2009. <http://www.oecd.org/gov/indicators/govataglance>, [accessed 12.01.2010].

[1056] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *Focus on citizens: public engagement for better policy and services.* <http://www.oecd/dataoecd/20/3/42658029.pdf>, 2009, [accessed 12.01.2010].

[1057] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Workshop on e-Government indicators 29-30 March 2010.* <http://www.oecd.org/document/59/0,3343,en_2649_34129_44704443_1_1_1_37405,00.html>, 2010, [accessed 22.07.2010].

[1058] West, D.M. *Global e-Government survey, 2007.* <http://www.insidepolitics.org/egovt07int.pdf>, 2007, [accessed 22.07.2010].

annual *International e-Government ranking[1059]* – 2010 will be its sixth year of operation – but it only covers c.40 countries. Four of its indicators assess the national portal but from the technical and design perspectives, not content. Interestingly its fifth area of assessment looks at the presence and mandate of chief information officers, which is a post recommended in the EU Breaking Barriers to eGovernment project[1060] to facilitate co-ordination and leadership in eGovernment implementation.

8.2.2 UK/England

8.2.2.1 Cross-government reports

Within the UK the most obvious form of major evaluation across government was the Treasury's public service agreements (PSAs), the latest targets covering 2008-2011,[1061] however the incoming Coalition government has now abolished the targets.[1062] This raises two issues. Firstly the PSAs themselves covered government's main priorities, and although the provision of information to citizens would have contributed to many of them, it was not central to any – it played a supporting role and therefore was not specifically evaluated. The second issue is the problem of continuity. Any measurement regime instigated by central government can also be stopped by central government, particularly after a change of administration. Ideally evaluation would take place over a period of time using consistent data. Governments will report on progress with initiatives but these reports cease when the initiative ceases or changes direction. For example annual reports on progress with the transformational government agenda were produced in 2006, 2007 and 2008 but not thereafter[1063] and OPSI no longer seems to publish a separate annual report on progress with re-use of PSI in the UK (*see* Section 8.5.1). An implementation update to *Digital Britain[1064]* was published at the end of 2009 (in which access to public data merits one paragraph (no.33)) but it is assumed that this will be the only one as the government changed before the next report could be issued.

8.2.2.2 Official statistics

Official statistics are not as prone to change as target regimes and reports on government initiatives. The Office for National Statistics produces an annual report on internet access in households,[1065] drawn from the Omnibus Survey, with data going back to 1999. It gives a

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[1059] Waseda University. Institute of e-Government *2009 Waseda University international e-Government ranking,* <http://www.giti.waseda.ac.jp/GITS/news/en_news28.html>, 2009, [accessed 22.07.2010].

[1060] Oxford Internet Institute *et al. Breaking barriers to eGovernment: overcoming obstacles to improving European public services.* <http://www.egovbarriers.org/?view=home>, [n.d.], [accessed 22.07.2010].

[1061] Great Britain. HM Treasury, ref. 418.

[1062] Great Britain. HM Treasury, ref. 180.

[1063] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. Chief Information Officer Council. *Transformational government.* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/cio/transformational_government.aspx>, 2010, [accessed 27.08.2010].

[1064] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, ref. 431.

[1065] Great Britain. Office for National Statistics. *Internet access: households and individuals.* <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=5672&More=Y>, 2009, [accessed 26.08.2010].

changing picture of how households use the Internet and what they use it for, although that does not extend to finding PSI or data on interaction with any particular agency, such as government. However it does show how government targets for internet penetration are being met, particularly amongst the more socially excluded groups.

8.2.2.3 Central Office of Information and Socitm (Society of IT Managers)

The 16th Report of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), [1066] in responding to the National Audit Office report *Government on the internet*,[1067] criticised government for the lack of information available about the use and costs of its websites. As a consequence of the PAC report recommendations, the Central Office of Information has developed a set of measures for website costs,[1068] usage[1069]and quality[1070] and its first report on results was issued in June 2010.[1071] These measures are in line with Socitm's Website take-up service for local government websites, which has allowed it to undertake a comparison of results between local and central government website usage.[1072]

It is too soon to draw much conclusion from these early results but hopefully over the years these measures, separately and combined, will produce much useful data to chart progress. However it is worth noting that the Central Office of Information only received a 12% satisfaction rating in 2009/10 whilst the Department for International Development had consistently high satisfaction figures.[1073] Both departments had amongst the lowest usage. The Department for Work and Pensions had the lowest satisfaction rate but access to work and pensions information through Directgov received one of the highest ratings. It might be surmised that people were searching the DWP website for data that was only available on Directgov and so were dissatisfied with their failure to find what they were looking for.

The Central Office of Information has produced evaluation metrics for public relations[1074] but these only relate to media coverage and are therefore not suitable for measuring citizens' access to PSI. Its guidelines for effective public engagement[1075] are designed to help when

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[1066] Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Committee of Public Accounts, ref. 243.

[1067] Great Britain. National Audit Office, ref. 241.

[1068] Great Britain. Central Office of Information. *Measuring website costs. Guidance note TG128.* <http://coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=223>, 2009, [accessed 26.08.2010].

[1069] Great Britain. Central Office of Information. *Measuring website usage. Guidance note TG116.* <http://coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=229> 209, [accessed 26.08.2010].

[1070]Great Britain. Central Office of Information, 2009. *Measuring website quality. Guidance note TG126.* <http://coi.gov.uk/documents/guidance/TG126-measuring-website-quality-v1-1.pdf>, 2009, [accessed 22.01.2010].

[1071] Great Britain. Central Office of Information. *Reporting on progress: central government websites 2009/10.* <http://www.coi.gov.uk/websitemetricsdata/websitemetrics2009-10.pdf>, 2010, [accessed 26.08.2010].

[1072] Socitm. *Local government sites score better on visit success but central government sites better on satisfaction, says new Socitm analysis of website performance data.* Press release 23 August 2010. <http://www.socitm.net/press/article/147/local_government_sites_score_better_on_visit_success_but_central_government_sites_better_on_satisfaction_says_new_socitm_analysis_of_website_performance_data>, 2010, [accessed 26.08.2010].

[1073] Great Britain. Central Office of Information 2010, ref.1071, p. 22.

[1074] Great Britain. Central Office of Information. *PR evaluation metrics.* <http://www.coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=330>, 2009, [accessed 27.08.2010].

[1075] Great Britain. Central Office of Information. *Effective public engagement.* <http://www.coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=283>, 2009, [accessed 27.08.2010].

instigating individual public campaigns and whilst the importance of evaluation is stressed, the COI, not unreasonably, recommends that the form of evaluation should vary depending on the initiative. However its guidance on engaging through social media[1076] does not make reference to evaluation.

8.2.2.4 Directgov customer monitor reports

Potentially the most useful source of metrics for evaluation comes from Directgov. Several times a year it commissions surveys which are reported on internally as Customer monitor reports.[1077] The questions asked cover:

- purpose of visit, which includes headings related to finding information
- why the user visited several areas, where appropriate, which may be for negative reasons of poor design or lack of information, alternatively it could be for the positive reason that they got interested and wanted to pursue ideas further
- convenience eg access all in one place
- ease of use
- trust in the information and services being provided
- satisfaction with the information and services provided
- priorities for improvement of the site
- key drivers of citizens' satisfaction.

These are as yet internal, unpublished metrics, and of course they only relate to Directgov websites and citizens who access information online rather than through a different channel – or not at all. Nevertheless, they could be developed into extremely useful metrics in due course.

8.2.3 Examples from overseas

In the course of reviewing measures to evaluate implementation of policy and access to PSI, a number of studies from other countries were identified, for example: Holland *et al*,[1078] Bruning,[1079] Balthasar,[1080] Aichholzer & Westholm,[1081] Baker,[1082] and McClure[1083] (*see also*

[1076] Great Britain. Central Office of Information. *Engaging through social media.*
<http://www.coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=264>, 2009, [accessed 27.08.2010].

[1077] Randall, T. *et al. What users think: Directgov customer monitor July '09.* [unpublished].

[1078] Holland, C.E.A. Measuring and evaluating e-Government: building blocks and recommendations for a standardised measuring tool. *In*: A. Anttiroiko, ed, *Electronic government: concepts, methodologies, tools and applications*, 2008, pp. 1690-1707.

[1079] Bruning, E. A methodological assessment of ten years of Canada's Citizen First satisfaction survey research. *International Review of Administrative Sciences,* 2010, 76(1), 85-91.

[1080] Balthasar, A. Institutional design and utilization of evaluation: a contribution to a theory of evaluation influence based on a Swiss experience. *Evaluation Review,* 2009, 33(3), 226-256.

[1081] Aichholzer, G. & Westholm, H. Evaluating eParticipation projects: practical examples and outline of an evaluation framework. *European Journal of ePractice, 2009,* (7), 1-18. <http://www.epractice.eu/files/7.3.pdf>, [accessed 10.11.2009].

[1082] Baker, D.L. Advancing e-Government performance in the United States through enhanced usability benchmarks. *Government Information Quarterly,* 2009, 26(1), 82-88.

Capgemini[1084]). These were not considered in detail because an initial assessment did not seem to provide new insights that would substantially influence the design of the framework devised as part of this research.

8.2.4 Academic models and frameworks

One of the challenges of evaluating the provision of PSI to citizens is that there is no one policy, rather it is integral to many very diverse policies from different departments. This research considered frameworks and models of evaluation already developed by other academics to see if there were any that would be suitable for evaluating implementation of government policy on PSI access. Many looked at the evaluation of policy itself rather than its implementation, or were at a high abstract level so could not be used as a practical tool by policy-makers and implementers.

None of those identified were sufficient in themselves, although some had useful elements. This matches findings by Chircu[1085] who analysed the literature on evaluation of eGovernment projects 2001-2007 and found that most only looked at one dimension of value and considered only a subset of the potential range of stakeholders. But even Chircu only addressed social, political and financial dimensions of value relating to each stakeholder and not technical, legal or environmental.

Mehrizi, Ghasemzadeh and Molas-Gallart[1086] adapted stakeholder mapping for evaluation prior to implementation, although the focus in their case study was on the implementer rather than the receiver. However the concept of identifying the different stakeholders and how they relate to the elements of policies is a useful one which has been incorporated into the framework developed here. DeLone and McLean's model of information systems success has been adapted by Wang and Liao[1087] and does focus on users, but it is limited to electronic systems and considers only one form of measurement: a user-satisfaction survey. Magoutas, Halaris and Mentzas[1088] developed a layered ontology to evaluate the quality of eGovernment services. They used both web metrics and an online user survey which adapts to the users depending on the answers they give to earlier questions, matching the questions

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[1083] McClure, C.R. Information policy-based indicators to assess US federal websites: methods and issues, *In:* J. Stein, M. Kyrillidou & D. Davis, eds. *Proceedings of the 4th Northumbria international conference on performance measurement in libraries and information services,* 12-16 August 2001 [n.d.], <http://www.libqual.org/documents/admin/mcclure.pdf>, [accessed 11.11.2009], pp.145-154.

[1084] Capgemini *et al.*, ref.1050, p.50.

[1085] Chircu, A.M. E-government evaluation: towards a multidimensional framework. *Electronic Government: an International Journal,* 2008, 5(4), 345-363, p.346.

[1086] Mehrizi, M.H.R., Ghasemzadeh, F. & Molas-Gallart, J. Stakeholder mapping as an assessment framework for policy implementation. *Evaluation,* 2009, 15(4), 427-444.

[1087] Wang, Y. & Liao, Y. Assessing eGovernment systems success: a validation of the DeLone and McLean model of information systems success. *Government Information Quarterly,* 2008, 25(4), 717-733.

[1088] Magoutas, B., Halaris, C. & Mentzas, G. An ontology for the multi-perspective evaluation of quality in e-Government services. *In:* M. Wimmer, H.J. Scholl & Å. Grönlund, eds, *EGOV 2007. Lecture notes in computer science 2007,* 2007, <http://imu.iccs.ntua.gr/Papers/C89-QUONTO-Magoutas-Halaris-Mentzas.pdf>, [accessed 10.11.2009], pp. 318-329.

to the user's level of experience and satisfaction. This is useful in itself but again is limited in its scope and quality of information provision is perhaps more difficult for a user to evaluate than the satisfaction they are getting from a service they are currently using.

Esteves and Joseph[1089] have developed a useful framework for assessing eGovernment projects, taking into account stakeholders and stages of eGovernment development, together with assessment dimensions based on Bakry's STOPE model:[1090] strategy, technology, organisations, people and environments. However it is not clear how this would be used in an actual assessment of a project: what you would measure and how. Mullen and Horner[1091] raised the issues of information literacy and trust in their evaluative framework of ethical problems in eGovernment, however they did not go as far as producing benchmarks to measure the progress.

Perhaps the most useful work on eGovernment evaluation frameworks in relation to this research has been done by Millard,[1092] who reported on the trends towards measuring policy outcomes and impacts on society as well as inputs and outputs, and suggested the same three major policy goals for eGovernment as the eGEP model:

- *efficiency* and the search for savings where the benefit is to government
- *effectiveness*: the search for quality services, where the user is seen as a consumer of services
- and the search for good *governance*, where the citizen is viewed as a voter and participant.

Millard has produced a Generic impact analysis and measurements reference system which graphically shows the importance he places on linking outputs, outcomes and impacts to policy objectives, and has listed elements that might be measured, although he does not go on to suggest use of any specific benchmarks. However it is a helpful list from which to draw elements that would be specific to evaluating implementation of government policy on citizens access to government information, rather than eGovernment *per se*.

8.3   Findings from interviews: what should be done

Three main messages came out of the interviews with stakeholders regarding post-implementation evaluation of information policy: it is difficult, it is complicated and it takes a long time to do it properly. There was no agreement as to how policy on PSI should be evaluated. One problem is that information policy is often just one element of a much larger,

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[1089] Esteves & Joseph, ref. 370.
[1090] Bakry, S.H. Development of eGovernment: a STOPE view. *International Journal of Network Management,* 2004, 14(5), 339-350.
[1091] Mullen & Horner, ref. 372.
[1092] Millard, ref. 1020.

more targeted policy, say on improving education, and not something viewed in isolation.[1093] Sheridan[1094] suggested that progress in developing information policy was helped if it could be shown how information supported a wider range of policy objectives, whilst Brown[1095] and Saxby[1096] both felt that information policy was such a broad concept that it was necessary to break it down into its component parts to evaluate it, eg freedom of information or data protection. However Brown also stressed the need to assess the harmonisation between policies and what impact that had on their implementation.

Saxby went on to highlight the importance of looking at past failures to improve the chances of future success but Williamson suggested that there was a resistance to this because of the natural inclination to want to move on once something has been done as well as the fear of highlighting failure and mistakes:

> Everything's got to be right and I think that gets in the way of effective evaluation. …
> Good evaluation has got to get to grips with what this was supposed to do and did it
> do it, because that's where you learn. … It's a human thing, we don't seem to have
> this quality of wanting to go back and look at what we've done. Trying to evaluate
> projects and getting the lessons from it in the right context is really important because
> it builds up our knowledge, especially at the moment because this is new. I don't
> think there's enough done but I understand why.[1097]

Conversely, Steinberg felt that this area of policy was too new to be evaluated: "there isn't yet much to evaluate, and there never will be if it doesn't push forward more strongly."[1098]

Brown[1099] agreed with Williamson that a key component of evaluation was judging whether the stated objectives of the policy were achieved. John Pullinger[1100] took up this theme and suggested that the select committee procedure, whereby Parliament gathered evidence to hold government to account for its policies, was a helpful and appropriate one. Allan concurred, suggesting that addressing how each of the recommendations of the Power of Information Taskforce recommendations had been implemented would be a measure of its success. (This research goes some way towards such an assessment. *See* section 8.5 and Annex G.)

[1093] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[1094] *Ibid.*
[1095] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[1096] Interview with Professor Stephen Saxby, 9 September 2009.
[1097] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[1098] Email correspondence with Tom Steinberg, 18 August 2009.
[1099] Interview with Dr Ian Brown, 25 August 2009.
[1100] Interview with John Pullinger, 6 April 2009.

It is in the nature of government that it has to react to the unexpected as well as carry forward its planned policies. Saxby[1101] raised the importance of defining the fundamentals of what government did, so that when things happened it could react more effectively. He suggested that it would be helpful to define a set of principles for information to test whether the right information was available in the right form, in the right place, at the right time to feed into better policies. He recognised, however, that this was not easy. Marcella took a similar view:

> What is it that we would be trying to achieve by this information policy and how do we structure that so that it's meaningful and that what we're providing is not duplicated? It's using the best resources, bringing them together in the most effective way and it's presented in ways that people can easily find what they need and understand what it's about and it brings people to the information.[1102]

Hahamis[1103] recommended longitudinal evaluation to assess the impact of information policies and Moore agreed that the impact on citizens may take many years to become clear, if at all:

> You start the process in a primary school, you get children at that level to analyse information, and approach information in a questioning way The impact of that may not be fully seen for another 50 or 60 years and so measuring impact is I think really difficult. ... There's no sign that I can see that government's going to be prepared to spend that level of funds to assess its information [policy].[1104]

Daines[1105] saw lack of available finance in the library and information sector as inhibiting longitudinal studies but Marcella[1106] suggested it would be useful to carry out annual surveys to attempt to measure how people in different life situations could access information. Batt[1107] suggested that evaluation of information policy ought to identify the impact on people's lives and well-being but Marcella recognised how difficult this was to do:

> You could argue alternately that it should have a marked impact on the health, vitality and the general well-being of society, but that's a very tenuous thing to actually demonstrate. Information policy is not a single thing; it's many things and it is about supporting individuals and communities in various aspects of their lives. [1108]

[1101] Interview with Professor Stephen Saxby, 9 September 2009.
[1102] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[1103] Interview with Panos Hahamis, 30 July 2009.
[1104] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[1105] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[1106] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[1107] Interview with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009.
[1108] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.

Marcella and Baxter,[1109] in their research on citizenship information, showed that individuals had difficulty in identifying examples where information had been a positive benefit. Griffiths also pointed out that you could not ask people about the usefulness of a piece of information at the time they receive it as they would not yet know if it had been of benefit:

> It comes down to things like polling and so on that communications people use to see what campaign results they've had, but there's nothing in the information domain. It's really in the communication domain saying: "Let's get MORI or someone to find out how far this message is penetrating" but it's not really about how far people therefore become able to use the information or how they evaluate that information. It's a problem.[1110]

Daines[1111] thought that not enough work had been done in the design of the NHS Choices supersite; evidence so far suggested that it had not had as much impact on people's lifestyles as had been hoped. Also while NHSDirect had been helpful, it had not reduced the workload of doctors, although it might have reduced the increase in demands on their time. Jayne Nickalls was more buoyant about the customer satisfaction research undertaken by Directgov:

> Our publicly monitored measure is website convergence, but Directgov has a whole performance management system where we look at customer satisfaction. We measure both our end-user citizen's view, but also government departments' view, because we want them to find it easy to use, so there's customer satisfaction, usage – is our usage going up? – and then awareness. So unprompted awareness and prompted awareness, those are all measures that we are constantly trying to drive up so that people know about information and know where to go, and we're driving usage.[1112]

8.3.1 What to measure

Moore[1113] drew a distinction between efficiency, effectiveness and impact. Many of the measures currently used were addressing inputs and outputs – efficiency measures. Effectiveness measures addressed whether policies had met their targets:

> If you looked at effectiveness you could look at things like take up of broadband, the extent to which people use broadband to meet their daily information needs, how well informed people are about things like the level of pollution in the atmosphere, how well people are informed about climate change, how well they're able to evaluate,

[1109] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[1110] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[1111] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[1112] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[1113] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.

discuss and consider proposals to restart the nuclear energy programme and all sorts of things like that. They're all pretty fundamental questions.[1114]

The impact that policies have is much harder to assess. Moore did not think it was possible to measure impact of information policies on society as there were too many variables and the timescales were too long.

Griffiths[1115] and Hahamis[1116] both raised the problem of insufficient understanding of citizens' engagement with government to be able to devise meaningful measures. Rhind suggested that a starting point would be greater awareness of what information was available, but that a battery of different measures was needed, both qualitative and quantitative. Interviewees suggested various things that could be measured, although many were very vague about how one would do the measuring and their suggestions tended to reflect their own interests. For example Daines[1117] thought there could be a measure for functional information literacy similar to Moser's measure of overall functional literacy whilst Griffiths[1118] focussed on evaluating what information was retained or not and how you judged that. Heath[1119] felt that the level of trust in government was important and similarly Daines[1120] suggested the number of people voting gave an indication of citizen engagement. He also put forward the idea of an "activism index" to assess citizens' volunteering activities.

Chief Information Officer John Suffolk[1121] suggested that only two measures were needed at this stage of development of information policies. Firstly, was all non-personal data that could be published, published in raw format? Secondly, was government providing signposting for citizens and businesses on things like Directgov and Business Link to point to what people had done with that data? In due course he would add: how many draft policies were available for online consultation and right to reply? He concluded:

> We need an initial start-up, less than a handful of metrics just to make sure that it is actually moving forward. I think those are pretty good measures to make a substantial leap forward. I wouldn't over-process this kind of work. The moment that you do that it makes it be treated differently and this should be the way we do business.[1122]

[1114] *Ibid.*
[1115] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[1116] Interview with Panos Hahamis, 30 July 2009.
[1117] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[1118] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[1119] Interview with William Heath, 7 September 2009.
[1120] Interview with Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[1121] Interview with John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[1122] *Ibid.*

A number of interviewees concentrated on economic measures. Heath[1123] suggested measuring the cost of production of public data, the strength of the economy and the emergence of new services adding value to public datasets and Rhind[1124] felt that income from selling public data gave an indication of the value people placed on it. Allan[1125] raised the potential for cost-saving through greater efficiency in the communication spaces: higher quality and efficiency, as opposed to revenue generation. The PSI re-use agenda of the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) furthered economic development. According to Sheridan[1126] there was a basic realisation that better informed markets operated at a higher level of efficiency, but the contribution that OPSI's policy made to that was quite hard to identify. Wretham, also OPSI, suggested that take-up of the (then) Click-Use licence scheme (now the Open Government Licence) and the Information Fair Trader Scheme (IFTS) were useful performance measures:

> I think we're seeing movement in terms of greater openness on some of those IFTS-accredited organisations and the fact that TNA's Standards team are going out and promoting best practice and standards, not just for the licensing re-use but also as part of the information management assessment work.[1127]

David Pullinger also suggested that information requested through the OPSI data unlocking service was an opportunity to be able to identify what people wanted:

> … but other than that you've only got a hypothetical concept of what it is that people might want, and so it's very difficult to know and put a measure against that.[1128]

Pullinger felt that it was difficult to assess what information users were failing to find because the content was not available rather than because the search engine was not good enough. To address this, he set up a process to identify the terms that are being put into search engines by users as a means of ascertaining what their needs were. This was then matched against provision of information to see where the gaps are that need to be filled.

Heath[1129] thought that measures for data accuracy might be informative as it was difficult to find out how much of the data one had was accurate. But he went on to suggest that measures should be flexible and evolving, set by small business and individuals rather than government, although it was not clear how this would work in practice. His view was that centrally imposed targets might distort what actually happened: they would reflect what

[1123] Interview with William Heath, 7 September 2009.
[1124] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009.
[1125] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.
[1126] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[1127] Interview with Jim Wretham, 23 February 2009.
[1128] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[1129] Interview with William Heath, 7 September 2009.

government thought was important and valuable rather than what benefitted those the policy was supposed to help.

The conclusion from the interviews is that there is no consensus on what to assess and how to evaluate implementation of policy on citizens' access to public sector information. Assessing the impact of information on individuals and society, as opposed to measuring inputs and outputs, is particularly difficult.

8.4   Framework for evaluating implementation of policy on citizens' access to public sector information

The review of literature on evaluation of policy implementation showed that current frameworks and measurement regimes had a number of inadequacies and no one suggested framework would provide a template for a framework for evaluating implementation of policy on citizens' access to PSI. Holland *et al.*[1130] undertook a similar exercise to this research in that they assessed current eGovernment benchmarking activities and found them wanting, but even their own comprehensive suggestions for indicators did not include skills required within government to develop eGovernment services nor skills needed by citizens and businesses to make effective use of the services.

Having looked at other measurement regimes and academic research in this area, the challenge for this research seemed to be to develop a framework that:

- was simple in concept yet capable of incorporating considerable detail
- included the policy goals
- incorporated the full range of stakeholders
- included outcome/impact measures as well an inputs and outputs
- and was capable of encompassing a broad set of related policies

and to test it against a real set of policy actions. The purpose of the proposed framework is to assist policy-makers in mapping the various elements of information policy that need to be evaluated and to identify gaps in evaluation. This evaluation should enable officials and politicians to learn where the individual policies are working or have worked, and how well, where more needs to be done or where the direction of policies needs to be changed. As has already been demonstrated, there is no one policy on the provision of PSI to citizens but rather a range of related policies under the *aegis* of different Whitehall departments. These policies may be promulgated by one department but require implementation by all or many departments in central, and even local, government. The framework is not intended to be

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[1130] Holland, ref. 1078.

used for ranking the performance of departments against one another in implementing a policy, although data gathered for that purpose may be usefully aggregated to assess how successful the policy is proving to be.

It is hoped that the framework will be useful during implementation rather than just post-implementation as, in the nature of a broad area of policy, there will be continuous development of smaller initiatives that feed into the overall policy – there is no end point, other than possibly at a general election. Even then, changes are likely to be gradual rather than sharp; as already discussed, both major political groupings in the UK hold broadly similar views on policy in this area at the time of writing.

Many elements of policy are already being assessed as part of national and international benchmarking activities, such as the new requirement on UK government website owners to survey users annually[1131] and the biennial UN eGovernment Survey.[1132] This framework aims to help show which elements of the policy are covered by such benchmarking and where there are gaps in assessment that could be filled.

Just because something *can* be measured does not mean that it necessarily is worth the expenditure of resources so to do.[1133] By the same token, just because something is *difficult* to measure, it does not mean that the assessment should not be attempted; there is a danger of building in bias if one concentrates on what is easy to measure rather than on what should be measured.

8.4.1 Why this approach

Models and frameworks that have been considered to date have either been very high-level and simplistic, so not suitable for capturing the multi-dimensional aspects of information policies, or very complicated and not suitable for practitioners to use. Some have been untested academic constructs rather than practical tools. Others have been designed either to measure overall eGovernment progress – the big picture (usually international in scope) – or to evaluate implementation of specific projects, usually ICT projects. This research is looking at evaluation of a specific subset of eGovernment implementation, covering many cross-departmental policies and with the focus on the citizen as the main beneficiary of the policies. These policies are not restricted to ICT-based activities. A new approach is therefore needed.

[1131] Great Britain. Central Office of Information 2009, ref. 1070, p.3.
[1132] United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ref. 1030.
[1133] Wildavsky, ref. 170, p.219.

8.4.2 Matrix aspects and factors

In order to analyse the various policy elements to be evaluated, a matrix is suggested which combines a breakdown of the policies by the aspects: why, who, what, how, where and when against the PESTEL factors: political, economic, social, technical, environmental and legal.[1134] PESTEL is more usually thought of as a tool for identifying external risks in developing corporate business strategy, however all the same factors need to be assessed in government activity as well, therefore the tool is suitable for adaptation and expansion.

- *Why*: Why – the purpose of the policy – must be the starting point of any evaluation. If the objectives are not clear, how can one measure whether they have been achieved? As Wildavsky puts it:

  To know whether objectives are being achieved, one must first know what they are supposed to be. Yet, the assumption that objectives are known, clear, and consistent is at variance with all experience. We know that objectives invariably may be distinguished by three outstanding qualities: they are multiple, conflicting, and vague. They mirror, in other words, the complexity and ambivalence of human social behaviour. … Evaluation cannot ordinarily proceed, then, by determining how well the unknown objectives of a program are being achieved at whatever cost. The first element of evaluation, therefore, which often proceeds simultaneously with program operations, must be a search for objectives against which to evaluate the program.[1135]

- *Who*: The 'who' in the policy evaluation can be many and various. Firstly, who is the evaluation aimed at? Who is the audience? Is it ministers, officials in departments or agencies, business, or the general public? Exercises designed to show the public how well government is doing against its published targets will be different from those intended to provide ministers and senior officials with knowledge to inform future policy-making. Secondly, who are the intended beneficiaries of the policies? It may be all or a sub-set of citizens, corporate business or even government itself. Thirdly who are the people who will make the policy happen and what is their relationship with the beneficiaries?

- *How*: How is the service/benefit provided? In the context of provision of public sector information, how is the information be made available – in what format or formats?

[1134] Gillespie, A. Additional chapter on business strategy. *In: Foundations of economics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, <http://www.oup.com/uk/orc/bin/9780199296378/01student/additional/page_12.htm>, [accessed 26.01.2010].

[1135] Wildavsky, ref. 170, p. 215.

- *What*: What is the content of the service/benefit being provided? What actual types and amounts of information does the policy cover? What does it not cover? Where are the gaps in provision? What is the quality of the information?

- *Where*: Where is the service being provided? What channels are being used to provide the information, either directly of through intermediaries? Are there other channels that could and should be used?

- *When*: When is the benefit/service provided? Is it at times to suit the beneficiary or the provider? Is it timely? Does the provision of the benefit save time? Has a target been met in the intended timescale?

Dissecting policies from these aspects can help identify what needs to be evaluated but a PESTEL analysis can take us one stage further in determining what form the evaluation should take and what questions need to be answered. For the purposes of this framework, the aspects are used to cover the following:

- *Political*: influences on, activities by, and benefits for, government and Parliament, for example increasing trust or co-ordination between departments
- *Economic:* cost-benefit of the policy, to government, the information economy and citizens; external economic influences
- *Social*: benefits for citizens
- *Technical*: external influences of technology; technical activities to be undertaken to implement the policy
- *Environmental*: implications of the policy for environmental concerns, for example the sustainability of large computing centres
- *Legal*: legislation that impacts on the policy or results from the policy, including EU directives.

In some cases suitable data may be already collected as part of a regular benchmarking activity, in others, specific research may be commissioned. Once a set of policies has been in operation long enough for the activities to have produced benefits, it may be considered desirable to commission a wide-ranging internal or external evaluation, for example from the National Audit Office, to make an independent assessment using a variety of techniques.

Table 8.1 provides an overview of the matrix and its elements. An explanation of the various elements can be found in section 8.4.3, together with details of the measures that are already in place.

Table 8.1: Framework for analysing evaluation of implementation of UK government policy on the provision of public sector information

PESTEL analysis covering the following aspects:

WHY	Meeting strategic goals
WHO	Perspectives of stakeholders and interaction between them; Audience for evaluation; Evaluators
HOW	How data is presented; How policy implementations are to be evaluated
WHAT	What information is provided; What is to be evaluated
WHERE	What channels are used
WHEN	Timescales and targets

Aspect	P: Political	E: Economic	S: Social	T: Technical	N: Environmental	L: Legal
WHY	PWhy1: Meet strategic goals of government, eg openness/ transparency, increase trust (aims of the government)	EWhy1: Save money – for government and therefore citizens	SWhy1: Improve citizens' ability to make decisions affecting their lives.	TWhy1: Design systems to meet needs of citizens	NWhy1: Decrease environmental impact of the provision government services to citizens - eg. decrease amount of paper-based publication by government and its agencies; decrease travel to obtain information.	LWhy1: Meet obligations under the EU Directive on Re-use of public sector information, Directive on Environmental information and INSPIRE Directive

Aspect	P: Political	E: Economic	S: Social	T: Technical	N: Environmental	L: Legal
WHY cont.	PWhy2: Boost participation in the democratic process (aim of Parliamentary democracy). PWhy3: Goals framed in such a way that enables achievement of goals to be measured.	EWhy2: Generate income for information industry and tax revenue for government EWhy3: Boost national economy	SWhy2: Decrease digital divide by improving information literacy	TWhy2: Systems to meet needs of policy implementers		LWhy2: Meet requirements of UK/English legislation enacted – eg Freedom of Information, Data Protection
WHO	PWho1: Stakeholders & audience: Government: Policy-makers PWho2: Stakeholders & audience: Government: Policy-implementers PWho3: Stakeholders & audience: Parliament	EWho1: Stakeholders: Information industry	SWho1: Stakeholders and audience: Citizens SWho2: Stakeholders and audience: Social networking groups SWho3: Voluntary and community groups	TWho1: Stakeholders: Information profession TWho2: Stakeholders: Technical system designers		LWho1: Information Commissioner's Office. LWho2: EU Directorates. LWho3: Crown Prosecution service.

Aspect	P: Political	E: Economic	S: Social	T: Technical	N: Environmental	L: Legal
WHO cont.	PWho4: Stakeholders & audience: Internal and external evaluators eg NAO PWho5: Stakeholders & audience: Advisers PWho6: Stakeholders & audience: Local government					
HOW	PHow1: Policies to require data to be provided in formats suitable for re-use	EHow1: Licences enabling re-use of data EHow2: Increased capacity to produce new products through re-use/data mashing	SHow1: Format relevant to citizens' own requirements and skills, including those with disabilities SHow2: Citizens have skills to find information	THow1: Formats enabling re-use of data THow2: Compliance with W3C accessibility guidelines THow3: Technical quality of data	NHow1: Minimal computing needed for re-use to cut down on energy consumed	LHow1: Meet obligations under the EU Directive on Re-use of public sector information LHow2: Meet requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act

Aspect	P: Political	E: Economic	S: Social	T: Technical	N: Environmental	L: Legal
HOW cont.				THow4: Include coding required by developers THow5: Maximise usability of websites		
WHAT	PWhat1: Publications and datasets provided automatically. PWhat2: Information requested and made available through FOI and OPSI Unlocking Service/data.gov.uk.	EWhat1: Resources provided to support policy implementation and provision of information. EWhat2: Information provided that can be re-used. EWhat3: Tax revenue	SWhat1: Content of information meets citizens' needs	TWhat1: None – information should be independent of technology impact.	NWhat1: Information made available under EU Environmental Regulations.	LWhat1: Meet obligations under the EU Directive on Re-use of public sector information, Directive on Environmental information and INSPIRE Directive LWhat2: Meet requirements of UK/English legislation enacted – eg FoI
WHERE	PWhere1: Government commitment to supporting face-to-face as well as ICT-based platforms.	EWhere1: Costs of making information available through many platforms, including face-to-face.	SWhere1: Access points to meet needs of all citizens, including those with disabilities.	TWhere1: Range of platforms used to meet expectations of citizens and developers	NWhere1: Decrease travel to obtain information.	

Aspect	P: Political	E: Economic	S: Social	T: Technical	N: Environmental	L: Legal
WHERE cont.			SWhere2: Portal to make online access easier.		NWhere2: Increased heat generated by centralised computing facilities.	
WHEN	PWhen1: Time-based targets set by government met – eg commitments under POI responses; time for POI responses; other policy document commitments for providing services and reporting progress.	EWhen1: Information provided in timely manner to third parties. EWhen2: Licences for re-use quick to obtain.	SWhen1: Time saved in finding data. SWhen2: Data made available in timely manner. SWhen.3: Time in responding to queries.	TWhen1: Time-based targets for ICT projects set by government met.		LWhen1: Meet obligations under the EU Directive on Re-use of public sector information.

8.4.3 Breakdown of each element of the matrix

Tables G:1 – G:6 in Annex G show a breakdown of how each element within the matrix could be evaluated using existing indicators and the data sources that are currently used to provide the raw data. Where no current indicators exist, potential indicators are suggested as appropriate, together with potential data sources. Data sources suggested for the eGEP Framework indicators are those specified in the eGEP Framework itself.[1136]

The current and potential indicators are taken from:
- UK: Central Office of Information indicators on web costs, web quality and web usage
- EU: iGov2010 High Level Group benchmarks; European Commission eGovernment Economics Project.

Potential types of data source are:
- official statistics
- administrative data
- departmental progress reports against plans, for example transformational government or Digital Britain progress reports – although these will probably have drawn on other metrics
- Standard Cost Model Calculations
- qualitative internal self assessment
- employee surveys
- pop-up surveys
- face-to-face random sample user surveys
- third part assessment, for example by National Audit Office, MORI or ABCe
- web crawler results
- web metrics

[1136] Codagnone, Boccardelli & Leone, ref. 1032, p.53-55.

Table 8.2: Composite list of potential indicators

Indicators were selected as being the most applicable for measuring government policy on the provision of public sector information to citizens. Original numbering from the source of indicators has been used as far as possible.

Source of indicator	Abbreviation	Indicator	Type of data source
Central Office of Information Web costs measures	COI Costs 1	Strategy and planning	Administrative data
	COI Costs 2	Design and build	Administrative data
	COI Costs 3	Hosting and infrastructure	Administrative data
	COI Costs 4	Content provision	Administrative data
	COI Costs 5	Testing and evaluation	Administrative data
Central Office of Information Web quality measures	COI A	Satisfaction with visit to website	Pop-up survey
	COI B	Users found what they wanted	Pop-up survey
	COI C(i)	Ease of use of site	Pop-up survey
	COI C(ii)	Attractiveness of design	Pop-up survey
	COI C(iii)	Ease of finding information/services	Pop-up survey
	COI C(iv)	Clarity and ease of comprehension of information	Pop-up survey
	COI C (v)	Accuracy and timeliness of information	Pop-up survey
	COI C (vi)	Usefulness of site search	Pop-up survey
	COI D	Likelihood of recommending website	Pop-up survey
Central Office of information Web usage measures	COI Use 1	Number of unique user/browsers	Web metrics
	COI Use 2	Number of page impressions	Web metrics
	COI Use 3	Number of visits	Web metrics
	COI Use 4	Number of visits of at least 2 pages	Web metrics
	COI Use 5	Time of visits of at least 2 pages	Web metrics
European Commission eGovernment Economics Project	eGEP 12	% public servants eGov/ICT skills	Internal self-assessment/ Employee survey
	eGEP 22	% in number of personnel redeployed to front line activities	Administrative data
	eGEP 23	% in number of IT-enabled face-to-face contact points	Administrative data
	eGEP 26	% in number of integrated services available in main Government portal	Administrative data/ Third party assessment

Source of indicator	Abbreviation	Indicator	Type of data source
European Commission eGovernment Economics Project cont.	eGEP 30	% in improved planning and policy-making score	Internal self-assessment
	eGEP 41	% in number of policy drafts online for consultation	Third party assessment
	eGEP 42	% increase in number of government websites with Constituency Relationship Management Applications	Third party assessment
	eGEP 43	% in response time to queries received online	Administrative data/ Third party assessment
	eGEP 44	% increase in number of government websites providing platforms for digital interaction and consultation (online forum, e-petitioning etc)	Third party assessment
	eGEP 45	% in number of government websites providing two-way interaction with users	Administrative data/ Web metrics
	eGEP 46	% change in aggregate openness score	Third party assessment
	eGEP 47	% in number of government processes fully traceable online	Third party assessment
	eGEP 49	% in number of public agencies reporting their budget and expenditure online	Third party assessment
	eGEP 50	% in number of public agencies publishing online chart with indication of responsibility and contact information of each public servant	Third party assessment/ Web crawler
	eGEP 51	% in overall volume of administrative and legislative documentation online	Third party assessment/ Web crawler
	eGEP 52	% in online public information clarity and accuracy score	Third party assessment
	eGEP 53	% increase in externally assessed transparency score	Third party assessment

Source of indicator	Abbreviation	Indicator	Type of data source
European Commission eGovernment Economics Project cont.	eGEP 54	% increase in online public services with certified accessibility	Web crawler
	eGEP 55	% increase in externally assessed participation score	Third party assessment
	eGEP 56	% increase in queries submitted online	Web metrics
	eGEP 57	% increase in online forum interaction	Web metrics
	eGEP 58	% increase in policy drafts downloaded	Web metrics
	eGEP 59	Availability of online appeals procedure and e-ombudsman	Third party assessment
	eGEP 60	% in time saved by citizens	Standard Cost Model Calculations
	eGEP 62	% K€ cost savings for citizens (travel, postage, fees to intermediaries)	Standard Cost Model Calculations
	eGEP 67	% in off-hours service usage/downloads	Web metrics/ Pop-up survey
	eGEP 68	% in number of unique users repeatedly using elective online services	Web metrics
	eGEP 69	% in number of unique users cross-using services in Government portal	Web metrics
	eGEP 70	% in number of users reporting eGovernment services to be useful	Random sample survey
	eGEP 71	% in number of users reporting information available in government website to be accurate and credible	Random sample survey
	eGEP 72	% in number of users reporting government websites satisfactorily address security and privacy issues	Random sample survey
	eGEP 73	% in overall eGovernment user satisfaction index	Random sample survey
	eGEP 75	% in overall eGovernment user satisfaction index by age/income/educational attainment	Random sample survey

Source of indicator	Abbreviation	Indicator	Type of data source
European Commission eGovernment Economics Project cont.	eGEP 76	% in number of government websites providing customer service (online call centre)	Third party assessment
	eGEP 78	% in usability score	Third party assessment
	eGEP 82	% in usage of public job portals	Web metrics
	eGEP 83	% in usage of public eLearning portals	Web metrics
	eGEP 84	% in usage of public eHealth portals	Web metrics
	eGEP 86	% of Internet penetration by age/income/educational attainment	Random sample survey
.	eGEP 87	% increase of eGovernment usage by socially disadvantaged groups	Random sample survey
EU i2910 High Level Group Benchmarks	C32	% of individuals with computer skills (none, low, medium, high)	Random sample survey
	C33	% of individuals with internet skills (none, low, medium, high)	Random sample survey
	E1	Online availability and interactivity of the 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises	Third party assessment
	E2	% of individuals using the internet for interacting with public authorities by level of sophistication	Random sample survey

8.5 Testing the Framework against the Power of Information Taskforce recommendations

8.5.1. Introduction

The Power of Information (PoI) Taskforce recommendations and the Government's response to those recommendations have been taken as a basis for assessing the validity of the framework for two reasons: firstly it is the policy that most closely matches the scope of this research and secondly because it covers a variety of actions involving different departments – it is complex. It is also becoming more influential. As Tom Watson MP, then Minister for Digital Engagement, says in *Digital engagement*, the Government's response to the Taskforce in May 2009:

> The Power of Information principles are no longer just recommendations in a report but will be core to the future development and implementation of government policy.[1137]

In *Digital engagement's* recommendations, the strategic objectives underpinning the government's commitment to the PoI agenda are:

- *Openness*: The government is committed to being open with our information. This is *to strengthen our democracy and to increase the social and economic welfare of the UK.*[1138] [author's emphasis]

- *Open feedback*: Over recent years we have moved decisively away from the idea that the State alone can decide how public services will be designed and delivered. An understanding of the needs and behaviours of citizens is an integral part of the decision making process in government.[1139]

- *Open conversation*: There are thousands of conversations about public services in thousands of locations online. This creates an opportunity for Government to go out and speak with those people directly about their public services. Where they are welcomed, civil servants should take advantage of this and put a professional face to what are often perceived to be faceless public services. This will help to address the perception gap in public service delivery. The Cabinet Office and COI will be

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[1137] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 469, p.3.
[1138] *Ibid.*, p.4.
[1139] *Ibid.*, p.11.

ensuring that civil servants feel confident, empowered and equipped to go online and join in the debate.[1140]

- *Open innovation*: The web enables Government to open up its innovation process. … Opening up this process brings tangible benefits both in the speed of realisation and the quality of solution. …The opportunity offered by internet collaboration is the ability for people to collaborate in real time in different physical locations. … To make this work we need to expose some of the workings of government. Show people the problems we are working on, some of the information flows that we use and how we build web services for citizens.[1141]

Arguably, open feedback and open conversation are now part of Prime Minister David Cameron's Big Society agenda.[1142] However, there appears to be no formal mechanism for reporting on progress with implementing the recommendations as a group, at least not publicly, although many of the recommended actions are being pursued, in particular by TNA and the Cabinet Office. Previous OPSI annual reports did contain information on a range of activities relevant to, and including, the PoI agenda but no such report has been produced for 2010 since the subsuming of OPSI's identity within The National Archives; the 2010 annual report from The National Archives[1143] does not replicate the type of information that was contained in the earlier OPSI annual reports.

8.5.2 Using the framework to evaluate implementation of the Power of Information Taskforce recommendations

To test the framework for evaluating the implementation of citizens' access to public sector information, each of the recommendations of the *Power of Information Taskforce report* has been analysed to see which elements of the framework are applicable and to identify gaps in the recommendations. The detailed mapping is in Annex G and includes progress in implementing each of the recommendations at 30 October 2010, as far as could be ascertained.

It was possible to assign elements from the framework to each of the recommendations. An analysis of which elements were used and which were not showed that there were areas of citizens' access to PSI that were not covered by the Power of Information agenda. The main gaps were a lack of emphasis on the skills required by citizens and on multi-channels, eg

[1140] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 469, p.12.
[1141] *Ibid.*, p.17.
[1142] Cameron, D. *Big Society speech, Liverpool, 19 July 2010,* <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/big-society-speech-53572>, 2010, [accessed 26.07.2010].
[1143] Great Britain. The National Archives. *Annual report and resource accounts of The National Archives.* HC 95. Norwich: TSO, 2010. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/annualreport0910.pdf>, [accessed 26.08.2010].

mobile technology, although this is possibly implied. The "Why" elements were also mostly implied rather than explicit. It was not always easy to know what success would look like – ie outcomes as opposed to outputs – as the recommendations were not worded in such a way as to make progress with their implementation easily measurable.

8.5.3 Conclusions from the framework assessment

8.5.3.1 Limitations of the Framework

Evaluation of implementation of UK government policy on citizens' access to public sector information was only one of a number of focuses of this research, albeit an important one. It could not therefore have been researched in as comprehensive a manner as it would have been had it been the *raison d'être* of the research. The approach has been to identify measurement that is already being undertaken, particularly within the eGovernment domain, and identify gaps that need to be filled, rather than devise new measures and test them. Unesco[1144] has also taken this approach in its work on developing information literacy indicators. Further work is needed to investigate measures from a wider perspective than eGovernment, for example in education. An initial assessment of measures used in other countries did not reveal any significant relevant examples, however evaluation is being developed all the time and there may be appropriate initiatives to consider at a later date. In addition, the framework needs to be tested against other information policies.

8.5.3.2 What was learnt about using the framework

The framework was designed to identify all the elements that need to be considered when evaluating implementation of policy on citizens' access to public sector information, however it should be hospitable to any other broad policy area. Specific projects ought to have evaluation built in to the implementation, but this framework is aimed to help when policy is broad and spread across a number of departments. However this does raise the issues of who does the assessing, and whether the effort involved is justified.

The framework took a considerable time to complete, although the concept is simple. It does provide for inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders and looks beyond a one-dimensional political, technical or social aspect. Once the framework has been completed, the next stage is to identify measures for each element. However because of this, it requires much work to use it to its full potential. In practice, how often will governments want to undertake detailed evaluation of a broad policy implementation rather than gain feedback through international benchmarks on how they are doing against other countries (or previous governments)?

[1144] Catts & Lau, ref. 251.

Benchmarks currently available are by their nature rather simple, as to be otherwise would make data collection too complicated. However that does not facilitate painting a detailed picture. They measure what can easily be measured, which is not necessarily what should be measured. Also they are largely quantitative measures rather than qualitative, and additional qualitative research may be needed to provide in-depth feedback, especially relating to the user experience.

8.6   Future measurement

The review of current measures relevant to evaluating citizens' access to PSI showed significant gaps, although it may be that the information is available in measures not yet identified as the focus so far has been on eGovernment evaluation in particular. In various cases, measures cover use of services but it is not always clear whether they are addressing specific interactive services, eg applying for benefits, or eGovernment services more generally, including the provision of information; PSI is not identified separately yet, although new OECD indicators may fill this gap. The six main areas of deficit are:

- quantifying amount and types of public sector information available, including licensing conditions and associated costs. This relates to the move to make government more open and transparent

- obtaining PSI though digital channels other than online, eg through mobile telephones and digital television. Take up of mobile technology, broadband and computers is well-documented, but not in relation to use for accessing PSI

- use of intermediaries by information have nots and cannots to provide face-to-face and telephone help in accessing PSI, for example public libraries, Citizens Advice Bureaux and call centres and funding of these intermediaries for this purpose

- information literacy skills of: citizens; teachers, and others who might train users in these skills; intermediaries; and officials within government who are designing and maintaining information systems, although the Unesco Institute for Statistics[1145] is in the process of developing indictors in this area which may prove valuable in the future

- civil service participation in social networks to provide information, not just the government's own online forums. Measures could be quantitative indicators but qualitative research may be more helpful at the start to assess how the process is

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[1145] Catts, Lau, ref. 251.

working and to identify the types of interactions, problems, benefits, successes and barriers

- finally, the measures are still lacking enough of a focus on the user's experience, however there is an awareness of this and it is being addressed. Better measures should be coming on stream in the next few years.

8.6.1 Suggestions for new measures

Below are some suggestions for potential new measures, although it may be difficult to quantify the total information created and made available. They are designed to address use of Web 2.0 technology to enable re-use of government information, as well as measure the amount of new data made available, and to obtain a greater insight into the user's experience. They were derived by using the framework to assess where there were currently gaps in evaluation (*see* Annex G) and crafting measures that would fill those gaps.[1146]

8.6.1.1 Availability of data and its re-use

- % of government data available free of charge
- % of government data available at cost
- % of government data available only for a licence fee (ie mostly trading fund data in practice and from other organisations under the Shareholder Executive banner, such as Royal Mail)
- % increase in the number of government documents available free of charge
- % of government datasets made available for re-use in re-usable format and the increase in that % over time
- % of government datasets coded with RDFa (Resource Description Framework - in - attributes)
- % of government datasets that are covered by an ontology
- % increase in staff with skills to develop ontologies and code datasets with RDFa
- % of government departments with ontologies that meet the W3C SKOS (Simple Knowledge Organization System) standard.

8.6.1.2 Qualitative measures of citizens' experience of obtaining information

- able to find what looking for
- if not, why not?
- how easy to find

[1146] As the thesis was being finalised, the European Union has begun consulting on new economic measures that are similar to those suggested here. *See* Corbin, C. *Public sector information economic indicators & economic case study on charging models.* INFSO/E4 JP (2009)D/141680. European Commission, 2010, <http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/psi/docs/pdfs/economic_study_report_final.pdf>, [accessed 10.09.2010].

- suitability of format
- suitability of channel
- own information literacy skills
- own information literacy training.

8.7 Meeting objective OB7

This chapter has addressed objective OB7: to explore how implementation of policy on PSI is evaluated and investigate how this evaluation could be developed. The overall conclusion is that evaluating the implementation of UK government policy on citizens' access to public sector information is not easy. There are various evaluation activities being undertaken to benchmark eGovernment, particularly by supra-national bodies such as the United Nations, OECD and EU, but they do not specifically address PSI policy yet, particularly aspects of the users' experience and content available. However there are potential measures being tested which will be worth investigating further in due course. The UK is starting to develop measures for the quality and use of its websites but, again, it is too soon to make a judgement on how well these are working. Also the new Coalition government has ceased the cross-departmental performance measurement of public service agreements and it is not yet known what, if anything, will replace them to measure progress against government objectives.

Measures so far tend to consider inputs and outputs. Impact and outcomes are far harder to measure – some interviewees suggested that this was impossible. There was no consensus on how information policy on access to PSI could be evaluated but there was considerable agreement that it was difficult, complicated and would take a long time to do properly. This begs the question of how cost-effective any specific evaluation would be, particularly given that policy on PSI is usually part of some larger policy rather than a policy in its own right. This does not mean that is should not be attempted, but first it would be sensible to map what is already being measured and identify potential measures to fill the gaps.

To help identify the gaps, a framework was developed: a matrix of PESTEL against who, what, why, where, when and how, which was populated with the various elements that might be measured. Frameworks already developed were considered but they did not meet the criteria that were necessary for evaluating a government policy area such as citizens' access to PSI. It was felt that the framework must:

- be simple in concept yet capable of incorporating considerable detail
- include the policy goals
- incorporate the full range of stakeholders
- include outcome/impact measures as well an inputs and outputs
- be capable of encompassing a broad set of related policies.

The measures that were currently available, or which were being trialled, were then put into the framework. Although time-consuming to complete, the framework did allow the identification of areas that lacked evaluation mechanisms:

- quantifying amount and types of public sector information available
- obtaining PSI though digital channels other than online
- use of intermediaries by information have nots and cannots to provide face-to-face and telephone help in accessing PSI
- information literacy skills
- the use of social networking by civil servants
- and the user's experience – although this was starting to be addressed.

Potential new metrics were suggested for measuring availability of data and its re-use as well as the user's experience.

Further testing of the framework would need to be undertaken in due course, but as a first step, the framework was tested against the recommendations of the Power of Information Taskforce. This was to see if it could be used to identify gaps in evaluation of a specific range of policy and also elements of PSI policy that were not covered by the PoI agenda. The testing demonstrated that the framework was effective in this respect. It showed that the main PoI gaps were a lack of emphasis on the skills required by citizens and on multi-channels. The "Why" elements were also mostly implied rather than explicit. It was not always easy to know what success would look like – ie outcomes as opposed to outputs – and the recommendations were not worded in such a way as to make progress with their implementation easily measurable.

This concludes the chapters on the research findings. The last chapters draw the research together with discussion (Chapter 9), conclusions and recommendations (Chapter 10).

Chapter 9: Discussion of findings

9.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from the research in relation to the original research objectives, highlighting the importance of the drivers for change in UK government policy on citizens' access to public sector information (PSI). It starts, however, with a consideration of how the research fits into the theoretical frameworks of the policy process, as outlined in section 2.2. This chapter is structured as follows:

> 9.2 Theoretical basis of the research
>
> 9.3 Policy development (objective OB4)
>
> 9.4 Access to public sector information (objective OB5)
>
> 9.5 Opening up government data (objective OB6)
>
> 9.6 Evaluation of policy on PSI (objective OB7)
>
> 9.7 Summary of chapter 9.

9.2   Theoretical basis of the research

This research is firmly in the information policy domain rather than the public administration domain. It is not a case study to test the validity of a public administration theory and does not seek to impose a theoretical policy framework; it is specifically about the development of policy on citizens' access to public sector information, drawing lessons for that range of policy, not for policy-making in general. Nevertheless, the various theories of policy development provide a theoretical lens through which to assess the findings.

As the interviews and literature review showed, there is no one information policy but rather a set of (mostly) inter-related policies[1147] developed by different UK government departments.[1148] By its nature, information policy does not have easily defined boundaries,[1149] so the information policy process is not easily defined either. The research found that policy on citizens' access to public sector information does not fit neatly into the linear stagist policy model of Hogwood and Gunn[1150] but rather reflects Colebatch's[1151] description of structured interaction – an altogether more complex mixture of influencers and players than just the small group within government who actually make decisions about what the policy or policies should be. What actually happens on the ground in developing and

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[1147] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission, ref. 216.
[1148] Hill, ref. 282.
[1149] Burger, ref. 211, p.91.
[1150] Hogwood & Gunn, ref. 144.
[1151] Colebatch, ref. 141.

implementing policy is much more chaotic than the straight-forward picture put forward in government policy documents, more akin to Lindblom and Woodhouse's "primeval soup".[1152] Writing in 1993, they referred to "deeper forces" structuring and distorting government behaviour, which today might include technology, social networking and trust/transparency. Parsons[1153] points out the importance that politicians place on public opinion when developing policy, and issues of trust must surely play into that agenda. He also suggests that involvement of the general public in policy development would lead to more diverse and less uniform policy.[1154] This potentially has interesting implications for the development of cohesive policy-making under the Coalition administration with its commitment to more public consultation on policy design.[1155]

The structured interaction approach recognises the wide range of players in the development of policy, not just those who actually take the policy decisions. This is also a feature of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF).[1156] Although this is a US methodology, founded in a political system where there is, usually, far greater influence exerted by lobby groups than in the UK, it nevertheless is helpful in considering who has made the difference in the UK, particularly as regards making government information more open. ACF suggests change will happen when a group of people and institutions come together with a common purpose that addresses a policy problem, and that this will include researchers and the media. Various interviewees suggested that the *Guardian's* Free Our Data campaign[1157] had considerable influence on government, confirming the views of Baumgartner and Jones[1158] on the importance of the media in moving issues up the government's agenda. If one looks at the make-up of the Public Sector Transparency Board, one sees individuals from outside government who are now central to government policy, drawn in after they have been shown to have valuable expertise and ideas – Sir Tim Berners-Lee, Professor Nigel Shadbolt, Rufus Pollock, who researched the economic value of the trading funds data,[1159] and Tom Steinberg, co-author of the Power of Information review.[1160]

The findings of this research suggest that the particular drivers of changes to government policy on the provision of public sector information resulted from the research and influence of those outside government – Berners-Lee, Shadbolt, the Power of Information review team and Taskforce – but this research also found that there were key internal players as well, in particular William Perrin and John Suffolk in the Cabinet Office, with support from DirectGov chief executive Jayne Nickalls and Head of Digital Policy David Pullinger, and OPSI's Head of eServices John Sheridan and other OPSI staff. Other outside lobbyists who had influence

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[1152] Lindblom & Woodhouse, ref. 147.
[1153] Parsons, ref. 142, p.110.
[1154] Parsons, ref. 163.
[1155] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 763.
[1156] Sabatier & Weible, ref. 151.
[1157] Free Our Data, ref. 608.
[1158] Parsons, ref. 142, p. 204.
[1159] Newbery, Bently & Pollock, ref. 19.
[1160] Mayo & Steinberg, ref. 21.

were the Open Rights Group, including William Heath, Richard Allan and Harry Metcalfe. It might be an interesting exercise to undertake a social network analysis to map the paths of interaction between these and other key players.

This research has other elements in common with Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework[1161] in that it attempts to marry a top-down approach, focussing on actual policies through the mapping of UK policy documents – Colebatch's "sacred map"[1162] – with a bottom-up approach addressing the "policy problem" of citizens' access to public sector information – akin to Colebatch's "profane map".[1163] Unlike the ACF, this research is not concerned with theory construction but instead was designed to make practical recommendations to stakeholders. However it shares the intention of looking at policy development over a decade or more. Considering the published outputs on policy over that time span is achievable, provided they are identifiable and available, but one of the problems with taking a long view of the policy advocates is that they are constantly changing. Most, but not all, of those interviewed would not have been in post a decade ago or their perceptions may have been clouded by time. In the case of some information professionals, their relevant knowledge and insight was gained in the past rather than recently. The consequence is that any attempt to get an objective and consistent view from policy advocates over a decade will inevitably be partial.

The Multiple Streams Framework of Kingdon[1164] stresses the role of the "policy entrepreneur" in manipulating change in policy whilst the Punctuated Equilibrium theory of Baumgartner and Jones[1165] also places considerable emphasis on outside forces, however it is their concept of most policy changing incrementally, with sudden changes of importance, which is of particular interest in the light of the development of UK open government data policy during 2009 and 2010. What elements have come together to raise PSI policy from a support role to an issue addressed by successive prime ministers and to election pledges?

Underlying policy on developing electronic citizen-centric services has not changed in over a decade, having been a plank of the transformational government agenda,[1166] itself inspired by the New Public Management theory put forward by Osborne and Gaebler[1167] and others in the early 1990s. The need for efficiency in government had also been a key feature of the transformational government agenda, but one now addressed with more urgency in the wake of the financial crisis;[1168] dealing with citizens on a one-to-one basis is much more expensive than engaging many-to-many through digital channels. The use of the Internet by

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[1161] Sabatier & Weible, ref. 151.
[1162] Colebatch, ref. 141, p. 313.
[1163] *Ibid.*
[1164] Parsons, ref. 142, pp. 192-194.
[1165] True, Jones & Baumgartner, ref. 152.
[1166] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 7.
[1167] Osborne & Gaebler, ref. 116.
[1168] Great Britain. HM Government, ref. 26.

governments gradually grew but the development of social networking provided a new way for citizens to engage with one another and obtain information, putting pressure on government to match citizens' expectations for digital engagement.[1169] Finally public trust in government had been low for many years but the 2009 MP's expenses scandal[1170] – and consequent media coverage – brought this to a crisis point, at a time when a general election was close and citizen engagement in the political process was therefore higher on the political agenda. So, whilst there were elements of policy that had changed little in the last 10 years, suddenly there was a series of challenges to be addressed – Kingdon's "policy problems".[1171,1172]

Various researchers, for example Hogwood and Gunn,[1173] have argued that identifying the "policy problem" is the start of the policy process which leads on to addressing how to, and whether, the problem is solved. It could also mean the tipping point for a policy to take on greater significance. In terms of this research, does its increased importance mean that citizens' access to public sector information has moved on from being the problem to becoming a *solution* to a problem? If we take this as a premise, what is, or are the policy problem(s) that policy on citizens' access addresses? The previous paragraph suggests that governments need to: save money, engage through digital media, and especially social networking channels; and increase public trust through opening up their data and increasing the level of transparency in their dealings.

9.3   Policy development (objective OB4)

This section discusses the findings in chapter 5: Policy development, looking at what actually happens within the UK government now to develop and co-ordinate policy on citizens' access to public sector information (PSI). It addresses objective OB4: to assess how policy on citizens' access to PSI is developed and governed.

9.3.1 Importance of PSI to government

At the time of the interviews, public sector information did not seem very high on government priorities, although interviewees within government generally felt that its importance was growing and that more effort was being made to meet user needs. However those outside government tended to suggest that government did not really understand the concept of information and how important it was to the smooth running of the government process itself; information policy had been about public relations rather than providing information for decision-making – what the government wanted to say rather than what the citizen needed to know. Separating the publication of official statistics from ministerial comment on the figures

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[1169] Mayo & Steinberg, ref. 21.
[1170] BBC. News, ref. 442.
[1171] Parsons, ref. 153.
[1172] Sabatier, ref. 154.
[1173] Hogwood & Gunn, ref. 144, p.24.

was a step forward in clarifying what was fact and what was "spin"[1174,1175] but by the time of the 2010 general election the opening up of raw datasets had become much more important to both main political parties.[1176] Trust in government was low and making government more open and transparent was a way to try and increase the level of public trust.[1177] The Power of Information review[1178] had planted seeds which would start to flower from late 2009 onwards.

9.3.2 Who makes information policy

The answer to: "Who makes information policy?" would seem to be: "It depends on who is interested." This supports the finding of the UCL Constitution Unit research[1179] that there is no set pattern to the way policy is made in the UK. A minister with a keen interest in a particular area may push policy through but civil servants too can have latitude to develop policy, although they will need a minister to sign it off, and policies that run across departments will be harder to put in place as many more ministers will have to be brought on board. The Cabinet Office has the most central role within Whitehall but even it cannot enforce policy implementation, as David Pullinger explained.[1180]

HM Treasury was perceived by interviewees from outside to be a dominant force, and one which had held back the opening up of data currently sold by the trading funds – Ordnance Survey (OS) and the Hydrographic Office for example. However this is at the macro level of operation. Perhaps many information projects are small scale or are a part of other, funded, projects so there does not need to be a submission for funds from Treasury. However even the Treasury was overruled by Prime Minister Gordon Brown on the matter of making some OS data available free of charge that had previously been charged for, following pressure from Sir Tim Berners-Lee[1181] and the results of a public consultation in early 2010.[1182] This change of policy regarding OS was announced very soon after the closing date for the consultation, so one might speculate that the government had already changed its mind – or had it changed by Berners-Lee.

Sought advice to government comes from a range of sources, including expert civil servants internally, external experts commissioned to address a particular topic, non-departmental public bodies set up to provide ongoing advice in a subject area, and responses to consultations from the public and interested parties. There is also influence on government

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[1174] Great Britain. Office for National Statistics, ref. 8.
[1175] Great Britain. HM Treasury, ref. 484.
[1176] For example, Brown, ref. *27* and Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 763.
[1177] Great Britain. Audit Commission, ref. 835.
[1178] Mayo & Steinberg, ref. 21.
[1179] Waller, Morris & Simpson, ref. 528.
[1180] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[1181] Chatfield, ref. 905.
[1182] Great Britain. Department for Communities and Local Government, ref. 906.

policy from lobby organisations and campaigns. These make up Sabatier's[1183] "Advocacy Coalition" in the UK.

Opinion from interviewees was divided as to how much influence any organisation or individual had on the development of government policy on citizens' access to public sector information. The *Guardian's* Free Our Data campaign[1184] did much to raise the national consciousness about restrictions on re-use of government data collected at the public's expense: the media also has the power to embarrass. It was suggested that this campaign had more influence on government thinking than any pressure from the information profession.

The research showed that technical staff within government are working to develop interactive consultation procedures[1185] but at the time of the interviews there was criticism of the level of commitment to public consultation. The Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition government is committed to improving the public's involvement in policy-making,[1186] but it is too early yet to assess the extent and impact of public involvement in the policy process.

9.3.2.1 Role of OPSI/APPSI

OPSI was set up to implement the EU directive on the re-use of public sector information[1187,1188] and the interviews and attendance at events showed that OPSI's work in this area is highly regarded, not least at European level. However the directive only enforces the setting up of national systems to regulate re-use of PSI; it does not give OPSI the power to make central and local government bodies release public data for re-use. OPSI can only encourage, and some interviewees have argued that it can therefore only be an advisory body, not a regulator, unless it is given more powers and greater funding to increase its capacity, which is unlikely in the economic climate of 2010.

Staff within OPSI were very involved with the Power of Information Taskforce[1189] and the rolling out of the recommendations, working with officials in the Cabinet Office, including the Digital Engagement Team and the Digital Policy team within the Central Office of Information.[1190] It has been instrumental in innovations to structure PSI in order to facilitate access by search engines and re-use of the data by third parties who want to develop new information services of value to citizens.[1191] It is now leading on semantic web technology applications to link data, which will enhance searching capabilities.[1192]

[1183] Sabatier & Weible, ref. 151.
[1184] Free Our Data, ref. 608.
[1185] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[1186] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 763.
[1187] Great Britain, ref. 16.
[1188] European Parliament & Council of Europe, ref. 454.
[1189] Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce, ref. 22, p.35.
[1190] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2010.
[1191] Pullinger & Sheridan, ref. 937.
[1192] *Ibid.*

These new initiatives being taken forward with the COI provide technical solutions to improve citizens' access to PSI, but OPSI is at the centre of strategy to encourage re-use of PSI by third parties and has done much to streamline the bureaucracy with the introduction firstly of the Click Use licence[1193] and now a replacement creative commons-type licence, the Open Government Licence.[1194]

OPSI's Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information (APPSI)[1195] was set up to advise ministers on the re-use of PSI and to act as a tribunal for disputes between government bodies and third parties. So far it has only made one ruling, against Ordnance Survey,[1196] which was ignored in the view of ex-APPSI member Worlock,[1197] so it does not have a strong record, but again, it has no powers of enforcement. According to interviewees, it has experienced a growing interest from ministers after Professor David Rhind took over the chairmanship, and has produced useful documents, but as with advisory non-departmental public bodies generally, its only sanction is embarrassment.

Both OPSI and APPSI were set up in a climate of government data being available "on demand" rather than presumed to be open. OPSI has played a part in this opening up: its Unlocking the data service[1198] enabled anyone to request that a dataset be made available and OPSI would endeavour to facilitate this if possible. Also John Sheridan provided the link to Sir Tim Berners-Lee as he is co-chair of the W3C eGovernment panel, working with Berners-Lee.[1199] However the "Making public data public" initiative is being run from the Cabinet Office[1200] and it remains to be seen what impact this big drive to open up public data will have on the work of OPSI. The consensus from interviewees was that OPSI staff were high-performing, but as with so many aspects of policy-making and implementation, personal relationships across government are very important for achieving innovation.

Although originally set up within the Cabinet Office, OPSI moved to The National Archives in 2006.[1201] TNA, as well as being the national repository for public records, has responsibility for developing records management capability across government and the chief executive is Head of Profession for Knowledge and Information Management.[1202] It is this expertise in information management that is cited as the reason for the move of the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) from the Cabinet Office.[1203]

[1193] Great Britain. Office of Public Sector Information, ref. 455.
[1194] Great Britain. The National Archives, ref. 448.
[1195] Great Britain. Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information, ref. 450.
[1196] Great Britain. Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information, ref. 596.
[1197] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.
[1198] Great Britain. Office of Public Sector Information, ref. 459.
[1199] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[1200] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 32.
[1201] Great Britain. The National Archives, ref. 15.
[1202] Great Britain. The National Archives, ref. 74.
[1203] Great Britain. The National Archives, ref. 15.

Opinion of interviewees was divided as to whether this move was beneficial or detrimental to influence that OPSI might have over government practice and policy. Some felt that having a Cabinet Office imprimatur gave OPSI more authority across government departments while others suggested that there were benefits from being part of a larger organisation with a strong leader to fight their corner. This may have been true whilst Natalie Ceeney was the chief executive: she had a very high profile, but the inference from the interviews was that this was because of her own personality rather than anything inherent in her role at TNA. This begs the question as to how much influence TNA, and by implication OPSI, will have under her successor.

OPSI as a separate identity is now being phased out, with the exception of its regulatory functions[1204] and the contents of its website are being subsumed within TNA's website.[1205] It is too soon to tell whether this will have a positive or a negative effect on the profile of public sector information use and re-use. The actual functions do not seem to have changed other than the Cabinet Office taking over responsibility for freeing up data at public request, but does the concept of "The National Archives" convey the forward-looking nature of the PSI agenda? Of course an archive these days can consist of information just published and put in the public domain and not necessarily "old", but only a limited part of the functions of TNA is actually managing the national archive. Perhaps much will depend on the impact of the organisation that the new chief executive, when appointed, can achieve.

It may be that in due course OPSI would be able to wield more influence if it returned to the Cabinet Office; its work on semantic web technology and the Power of Information (PoI) agenda point outwards towards the Cabinet Office, in particular, rather than inwards towards TNA Certainly the OPSI staff were well-regarded for their expertise and all that they had managed to achieve with limited resources within TNA, but the policy on PSI is being made in the Cabinet Office under the direction of Rt Hon. Francis Maude MP.[1206] The move of Directgov back to the Cabinet Office[1207] already suggests more of a locus there for PSI and transferring OPSI back as well would seem to be a logical step to increase the synergy between the OPSI team and the Digital Engagement Team.

It is worth noting that OPSI and APPSI do not yet appear in the research literature. Writing to date has been compiled by those working for OPSI and APPSI. As far as this researcher is aware, this is the first research to address these two bodies.

[1204] Email correspondence with Jim Wretham, 27 July 2010.
[1205] Great Britain. The National Archives, ref. 941.
[1206] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 32.
[1207] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 57

9.3.2.2 Power of Information and other external advisers

The original authors of the Power of Information review and the members of the Power of Information Taskforce clearly had an impact on government as their recommendations were taken very seriously,[1208] but they were perhaps knocking at an open door as they were asked to do the work by government.[1209,1210] Tom Steinberg, a former policy adviser and co-author of the original review, had shown what could be done with data mashing through his work at MySociety to develop the sites TheyWorkForYou and FixMyStreet, both successful – and free – information services.

After Berners-Lee was taken on as an adviser to the Labour Government in 2009,[1211] Steinberg was similarly recruited to advise the Conservative Party,[1212] and his early influence could perhaps be seen in the Conservatives' commitment to opening up government spending data.[1213] Berners-Lee, Professor Nigel Shadbolt, who worked with Berners-Lee on advising the Labour government, and Tom Steinberg, were all appointed to the Coalition Public Sector Transparency Board, chaired by Cabinet Office Minister Francis Maude.[1214] Martha Lane Fox, another high-profile external expert, was brought in by the Labour administration to advise on digital exclusion and, like Berners-Lee and Steinberg, has also been given an expanded role (Digital Champion) by the new Coalition government.[1215] There has already been considerable commitment to opening up public data through data.gov.uk under the influence of Berners-Lee and Shadbolt but it is still too early to tell what the long-term impact on government information will be, and particularly what difference Lane Fox can make to the number of citizens becoming truly digitally and information literate, making full use of eGovernment services. Nevertheless, these external experts have obviously had significant influence on government policy in relation to citizens' access to public sector information. The same could not be said for the information profession.

9.3.2.3 Influence of the information profession

Many interviewees who were not information professionals did not see the profession filling roles in government in developing new information services and particularly services using Web 2.0 technology. The impetus seemed to be coming from those described by Richard Allan as of the Web activists culture.[1216] Several interviewees raised the issue of the need for a new profession between public relations/communications experts and IT professionals,

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[1208] For example: Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 23.
[1209] Mayo & Steinberg, ref. 21.
[1210] Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce, ref. 22.
[1211] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 25.
[1212] Conservative Party (Great Britain), ref. 899.
[1213] Conservative Party (Great Britain), ref. 1266.
[1214] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 32.
[1215] Race Online 2012, ref. 31.
[1216] Interview with Richard Allan, 8 May 2009.

although British Library head Dame Lynne Brindley,[1217] amongst others, saw it more in terms of upskilling the information profession.

In April 2009 the Knowledge Council produced the *Government Knowledge and Information Management Skills Framework*[1218] which sets out the skills required at various levels within government. The work of the Council and TNA on the knowledge and information (KIM) function is internally focussed[1219] and this is clear from a reading of the framework. KIM services are for the benefit of government primarily, rather than for the wider public,[1220] and the framework does not convey a sense of public engagement or interaction; the emphasis is on capturing and managing internal information or externally published data. There is no suggestion that KIM professionals might work with outside bodies to provide new services through the use of Web 2.0 tools. As David Pullinger[1221] explained, things change when you are externally rather than internally focussed. The internal focus for those working in the mainstream KIM departments is to be expected – that is their role. However, it is argued that people with these KIM skills would be useful in the more innovative, outward-facing areas, with their experience of meeting, and designing systems around user needs.

David Pullinger[1222] talked about a lack of understanding of how to use ordinary people's language in ontologies and a library-centred vision. With the Web world developing all the time, clearly there is scope for training in information skills to employ the best technology to produce new information services. Perhaps it is not so much a new profession that is needed to grasp the opportunities that these Web developments provide, but rather a new mindset amongst current information practitioners: more entrepreneurial and proactive, more fluid in their ways of working, more risk-taking, more interested in access than control. According to some interviewees, these are traits not traditionally associated with public sector library and information professionals – a point also made by Feather.[1223]

There are two functions in this context that library and information professionals could usefully perform. Firstly, with the economic climate, policy emphasis is on efficiency savings and information staff can show how good use of information can save money. Secondly many interviewees felt that government did not have a clear understanding of the value of information, both to itself and the citizen; without a clear vision of what could be achieved, it would be difficult to develop and co-ordinate a coherent set of policies. Again, information professionals could articulate to government the value and benefits of good access to information, both for itself and the public.

[1217] Interview with Dame Lynne Brindley, 28 September 2009.
[1218] Great Britain. HM Government, ref 647.
[1219] Interview with senior staff member at TNA, 11 May 2009.
[1220] *Ibid.*
[1221] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[1222] *Ibid.*
[1223] Feather, ref. 245.

The information profession does not appear to have much influence on information policy internally, but neither do external information organisations. A key problem is that there are both too many voices within the profession and too many government departments with some kind of information policy agenda (*see* Table 1.1, p. 19); it is the nature of information policy that it supports other goals of government such as economic development, lifelong learning or health improvement, rather than being an end in itself, which is why there is no obvious focus within government, or indeed outside it. There is no clear point of contact.

The LIC[1224] had been set up to provide wide-ranging advice to government but was amalgamated within MLA in 2000, which did not have the same focus.[1225] Now the MLA too is destined to be dismantled by April 2012 as part of the cuts in public expenditure.[1226]

The interviews showed that there was now no one place for government to get advice on information policy, however this does not mean that a replacement organisation for the LIC should be set up. With the political and economic climate in 2010, there would clearly be no support for such a new body. Interviewees were not specifically asked if they thought there should be a new policy advice organisation as by the time of the interviews it was clear that the political trend was to reduce the number of non-departmental public bodies, not set up new ones, a trend which has continued. However there was a strong suggestion from various interviewees that another layer of bureaucracy was not desirable anyway; co-ordination between existing players was preferable.

The Libraries and Archives Copyright Alliance (LACA) provides a good example of interested parties coming together to promote a single issue, however it is not practicable to set up a new body for each policy area; some mechanism is needed to put forward a joint view, drawn from a wide range of organisations with overlapping interests. There may also be some further scope for mergers, as has been the case in the archives world.

In order to get a professional voice heard, relevant bodies need to come together behind a coherent message to the relevant department, possibly through a form of coalition. Who is going to facilitate this? If the information profession wants to have influence on a government information policy it is going to have to make it easy for government by speaking with one voice to whichever department or departments is responsible for a particular initiative. CILIP would be the most obvious choice to act as central co-ordinator, but it would not necessarily be the most appropriate body to lead on all policy areas. However it probably has the largest UK membership spread relevant to this research, if you include library policy.

[1224] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission, ref. 490.
[1225] Great Britain. Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, ref. 496.
[1226] Great Britain. Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, ref. 88.

Peter Griffiths, a previous president of CILIP, also identified the problem of how to enthuse members to campaign on a particular issue, seeing the big picture, not just having a narrow library focus. Government information professionals may be able to help the wider profession with tactics on how to engage government and how to put messages across to policy-makers[1227] but there also needs to be people inside and outside the profession who can act as policy champions, who have the ear of those in power and know how to frame persuasive arguments. The research showed that there are few such champions, especially from within the profession. Natalie Ceeney, whilst Chief Executive at TNA, was a leading promoter of knowledge and information management but she came from outside the profession; that does not, and should not, negate the value of what she was able to achieve.

9.3.3 Co-ordination of information policy

As chapter 2 showed, Britain has never had a "National Information Policy" (NIP) as such,[1228] but the analysis of policy documents in chapter 4, up to and including the general election manifestos, suggests that the UK has moved some way towards a digital information policy as part of an overall digital policy. *Digital Britain*[1229] incorporated many elements but was lacking on information content. Following on from that, *Putting the frontline first: smarter government*[1230] and *Building Britain's digital future*[1231] addressed how public sector information should be opened up as part of the overall eGovernment strategy, but this is a long way from having a National Information Policy *per se*. Data quality and reliability – cornerstones of the statisticians' professionalism[1232] – do not figure, nor the data management skills required by government.

Much has changed since 2002 when the last work was done on NIP in the UK.[1233] The emphasis in telecommunications infrastructure is now on developing a fast broadband network across the UK to enable the public and private sectors, as well as citizens, to access digital services.[1234] The current challenges for government are how to make best use of the capabilities of Web 2.0 in developing new, interactive, services and expanding channels of access, eg using mobile technology and digital television.[1235] However the need to ensure that all citizens have the necessary information handling skills[1236,1237] and that the country has a vibrant cadre of information specialists[1238,1239] is as vital as ever. The focus not just of the

[1227] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[1228] For example, Malley, ref. 280, p.5.
[1229] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, ref. 24.
[1230] Great Britain. HM Government, ref. 26.
[1231] Brown, ref. 27.
[1232] Great Britain. UK Statistics Authority, ref. 486.
[1233] Library Association (Great Britain), ref. 298.
[1234] Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Great Britain. Department for Culture, Media and Sport, ref. 24.
[1235] *Ibid.*
[1236] Gurstein, ref. 246.
[1237] International Federation of Library Association and Institutions & Unesco, ref. 248.
[1238] Feather, ref. 245, p.185.

UK government, but of many governments around the world, is to develop citizen-centric services, not departmental-centric services.[1240]

The information industry has matured, consolidated and become truly global so there is arguably less need for support from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. However government still needs to address how to maximise the economic benefit of making its own information available for commercial exploitation.[1241] It is making progress: more information has been made available through the data.gov.uk service launched in January 2010[1242] and Ordnance Survey data was also made more freely available in April 2010.[1243]

Whilst digital exclusion still exists, and needs to be addressed,[1244] most people now have access to at least one channel for accessing electronic information services, whether directly or through a proxy such as a public library or a call centre helpline. However the interviews showed that much still needs to be done about the organisation of information so that it is easy to find: making clear what information exists, including through the publication schemes on websites; standardisation of approach and interoperability; and avoiding duplication with non-government sources of information – working with other information providers.[1245]

Does Britain actually need a National Information Policy now? The more recent literature did not address the subject but findings from the interviews suggested not. A greater degree of co-ordination between policies was desired, particularly to ensure that they did not conflict, but with the complexity of potential policies and the range of departments involved, one overarching policy would be unworkable. A framework of policies was a preferred alternative and Table 9.1 below identifies the elements that could be in such a framework at the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

Who would be responsible for this framework of policies? Different parts of policy-making are spread throughout various government departments and there is no formal co-ordination mechanism, no minister for information policy that has a brief to oversee the work of departments, no enforcer. The Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition of 2010 has shown little desire for major changes to the structures of government.[1246] Responsibility for the Olympics has moved back to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and the Government Gateway and Directgov back in the Cabinet Office, but it is unlikely that there will be any major re-organising of responsibilities for information policy, despite the continuing commitment to open data and the work of the Power of Information team.

[1239] Bargmann, Pfeifer & Piwinger, ref. 229.
[1240] For example, United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ref. 1030.
[1241] Great Britain. Number 10, ref. 893.
[1242] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 904.
[1243] Great Britain. Department for Communities and Local Government, ref. 906.
[1244] Great Britain. Department for Communities and Local Government, ref. 423.
[1245] This is supported by the findings of the review of Directgov by Martha Lane Fox which was published just as this research was being completed. *See:* ref. 744.
[1246] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 57.

Table 9.1: Elements of a 21st century Framework of information policies

Co-ordination Make it all happen	- Co-ordinate development of information policies across government: leadership at the highest level, mechanisms to ensure co-ordination; access to appropriate advice - Co-ordinate roll out of government information policies across the public sector - Evaluate implementation of information policy and co-ordinate action resulting from the evaluation
Skills Boost training for citizens and enhance the information profession	- Improve information literacy of citizens: through education in schools, through UK Online centres and public libraries and the workplace - Develop the cadre of information specialists within government and throughout the country who can gather and organise public information to maximise its usability and use
Content Optimise content and quality of information made available	- Find out and provide what users need: work with user groups, business, social networking groups; focus groups; surveys - Improve the quality of information: standards for quality of statistical data in place; standards for quality of other information; standardised coding (eg RDF) to enable re-use and linking of data
Accessibility Minimise barriers to access and maximise use	- Right to data - Core information free at the point of use - Trading funds: Government commissioned review of economics of trading funds: it may be better for the country's economy to make all their information free for re-use rather than charge for key data - Remove barriers for re-use of public sector information - Organise government's preservation of its own documents in both print and electronic form to ensue long-term availability - Maximise channels of access: Directgov and other government websites; use of mobile technology and digital TV; telephone helplines; face-to-face; print; social networks - Enhance social and digital inclusion, including through spread of broadband access - Adhere to interoperability guidelines for digital media to ensure consistency of approach and access, and optimise for search engines - Investigate and trial data sharing between government departments, mindful of implications for public trust/privacy
Regulation Target government's legislative impact	- Privacy and data protection: role of Information Commissioner, how government regulates itself with recent lapses in security - Intellectual property: crown copyright and other copyright legislation; open government licence - Legal deposit, especially of electronic documents

Information policy is very diverse; it is not usually an end in itself but rather supports other major initiatives. There will be no "Ministry of Information" – the concept conjures up Cold War propaganda divisions – but should there be a minister for information? With the trend towards cutting central government the answer is probably "no". The nearest we have been to this was Labour minister Tom Watson's Digital Engagement brief. The impression gained from interviews was that policy in this area drifted after he resigned from office in June 2009.

However the Coalition government has put considerable emphasis on transparency and opening up government data, managed from the Cabinet Office.[1247] Perhaps rather than designating a whole post, a minister without portfolio could have information policy as part of their designated brief. There is currently in 2010 a minister without portfolio in the Cabinet Office so there is a precedent for this type of post and the Institute for Government[1248] recommended that ministers should be designated with responsibility for cross-cutting issues, of which information policy would be an example.

9.3.3.1 Key relationships and structures

As found by Perri 6[1249] and the Institute for Government,[1250] co-ordination across government is a problem. There are some co-ordinating mechanisms, but these relate to information management and information systems delivery, for example the Chief Information Officer Council[1251]; there is no co-ordination of policy looking at the information needs of citizens. The Knowledge Council has a formal co-ordinating structure but its remit at present is limited to internal information and knowledge management; it does not have a role in policy.[1252] So far it has concentrated on advice on risk management in the wake of leaked data,[1253] but it may start to raise other issues across government further now. Internal reactions from the interviews show that it has been doing a considerable amount of work but it does not have a high profile within the library and information profession and little information about it is available externally. Perhaps as the government is opening up its data, the Knowledge Council should be opening up its advice likewise.

Wildavsky[1254] and Mulgan[1255] both stressed the importance of relationships and the interviews suggested that much is being achieved through informal personal connections, especially between OPSI and various parts of the Cabinet Office. This works well when the personalities get on with each other, but it leads one to ask what the consequences would be if there was a change of personnel.

[1247] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 32.
[1248] Parker, ref. 171, p.9.
[1249] 6. ref. 161, p.131.
[1250] Parker *et al.*, ref. 171.
[1251] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 50.
[1252] Interview with a senior staff member at The National Archives, 11 May 2009.
[1253] *Ibid.*
[1254] Wildavsky, ref. 170, p.17.
[1255] Mulgan, ref. 126.

9.3.3.2 Supporters and inhibitors of co-ordination

The interviews suggested that inhibitors to co-operation are related to people and financial or technical issues. Cultures varied between departments so it was difficult to get them to all do things in a certain way and there was considerable inertia to change. The Institute for Government still found siloed thinking in departments, [1256] echoing some of the interviews, for example with Peter Griffiths.[1257] With so many pressures on the time of officials, they will concentrate on the activities that their minister or permanent secretary tells them they have to do. In order to co-operate, it also helps if you have a common understanding of issues, and various interviewees mentioned a lack of comprehension of the technicalities involved in developing new information services. Where there is a good understanding, personal relationships can flourish, as with John Sheridan[1258] and David Pullinger.[1259] Good training can overcome shortfalls in technical knowledge and understanding but developing a shared culture across government, when it is divided into so many departments, is a much more difficult task.

On the financial front, apart from a general shortage of funds for public expenditure, there are two issues. Departments may not be funded to undertake work that another department requires them to do: for example the Cabinet Office had to provide funding to help other departments close websites. But also, as David Pullinger[1260] pointed out, much of this work is new and it is therefore very difficult to budget accurately. Another practical issue raised by both Pullinger[1261] and Sheridan[1262] was the nature of IT contracts with suppliers. These contracts tend to be long-term and therefore technical innovations unknown when the contract was drawn up will require negotiation, which may take far longer than the extra work required. Also Pullinger and Sheridan found that the contractors themselves did not necessarily have sufficient understanding of the technical issues to be able to produce a viable solution.

9.3.4 Policy champions

So driving change across government is not easy. Various interviewees suggested that the only way to get real change was a top-down approach with the most senior leaders committed to change, be they the prime minister or other powerful Cabinet ministers, or top civil servants, confirmed by the experience of Mulgan.[1263] At the time of the interviews, access to government datasets was limited and various interviewees did not see much prospect for opening up of citizens' access to PSI without senior backing – which they felt was unlikely. However, history has proved them both right and wrong. Senior backing was needed, but it

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[1256] Parker *et al.*, ref.171, p.7.
[1257] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.
[1258] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[1259] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[1260] *Ibid.*
[1261] *Ibid.*
[1262] Interview with John Sheridan, 11 August 2009.
[1263] Mulgan, ref. 126.

was also achieved after Gordon Brown was persuaded by Sir Tim Berners-Lee to make raw data available to third parties, and most particularly, some geospatial data.[1264] With the Labour Party endorsement of open data,[1265] the Conservative Party leadership also produced its own plans to make public data more available, especially information on public spending,[1266] and at the time of writing these are coming to fruition.[1267,1268]

9.3.5 Changing patterns of policy-making

One of the most unexpected findings of the research was the trend towards trials of small technology-based projects that could be scaled up, giving staff their head and allowing them to fail. This has the advantage that you don't need approval from HM Treasury and you learn from failure as well as success; failure of large projects in the public sector is vilified in the UK.[1269] This way of working would seem to reflect Parsons's description of innovative policy-making by "letting go".[1270] Whether this will continue remains be seen, but it may be that this is the way forward, rather than the "grand projects".

9.4   Access to public sector information (objective OB5)

Clearly there have been huge developments in the provision of public sector information to citizens in the last few years, and particularly from the middle of 2009. But the research also showed that there was no room for complacency, nor indeed was there any. This section looks at how the various aspects of the existing policy are working, how they could be improved and what gaps need to be filled, based on the findings in chapter 6: Access to public sector information.

9.4.1 Citizen-centric services

Why should citizens want all this public sector information? We all need information to help us make decisions that affect our daily lives:[1271] where to live, which school to send our children to, which hospital would best meet our needs, what benefits we are entitled to and how to get them. We go to government for information we need rather than information that would be nice to have. Much of the rhetoric since eGovernment was first described as a concept has been about making services citizen-centric, particularly as part of the

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[1264] Chatfield, ref. 905.
[1265] Great Britain. HM Government, ref. 26.
[1266] Conservative Party (Great Britain), ref. 998.
[1267] Cameron, ref. 30.
[1268] Great Britain. Number 10, ref. 893.
[1269] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2010.
[1270] Parsons, ref. 163, p.52.
[1271] Interviews with Rhind, John Pullinger and Griffiths.

transformational government agenda,[1272] but certainly interviewees outside government felt that there was a long way to go before services were truly focussed on citizens' needs rather than provided in a way that was convenient for government.

The whole process of indentifying people's needs and providing the appropriate information and advice is complicated – we have to walk before we can run.[1273] People's problems are various and can be extremely complex and one size does not fit all. Directgov and other services are not designed to cope with this complexity. Those who have the most complex problems may more usually be those who most need assistance with finding information and advice to solve them.[1274]

To be truly citizen-centric, services needed to be provided to citizens where they are, in a manner that suits them and regardless of the source of that information.[1275] Citizens cannot be expected to know that the information they need comes from a particular, or more likely a number of, government department(s), from central or local government, or even from government at all. The physical, as well as the virtual, one-stop shop is still needed, especially for those with complex problems[1276] or who cannot use digital services for whatever reason, as seen in some responses to the government's plans to make some services online only, following on from the review of Directgov.[1277]

9.4.2 Intermediaries

Who is going to provide such a service? The public library service is not set up to provide advice (except possibly for a fee) and hours may be limited – and getting more restrictive.[1278] Citizens Advice Bureaux and other advice services are obvious sources of help but their funding is also under threat in the current financial climate.[1279] Providing the physical as well as the electronic service is of course extremely expensive. It is not unreasonable at times of financial restraint for the government to want to move as many people onto using electronic service delivery as soon as possible in order to minimise costs, but in the short term expenditure ideally needs to rise for extra support for the information have nots and cannots.[1280] This seems unlikely in the current economic and political climate. A concern is that the Big Society initiative will lead to some public libraries being staffed by volunteers[1281] with insufficient training to help people with their information needs or to help them learn how

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[1272] For example: Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 405.
[1273] Kolsaker & Lee-Kelley, ref. 208.
[1274] Interview with Dr Andy Williamson, 28 July 2009.
[1275] Interviews with Chris Batt, 5 March 2009 and Guy Daines, 9 December 2009.
[1276] *Ibid.*
[1277] Kable, ref. 783.
[1278] For example: Page, ref. 792.
[1279] Interview with Professor Nick Moore, 19 February 2009.
[1280] *Ibid.*
[1281] Page, ref. 1278.

to find the answers for themselves – despite the commitment of public libraries in the Race Online 2012 initiative.[1282]

9.4.3 Government websites

It is not for this research to investigate the usability of Directgov but many commented on Directgov's limited provision of information. It is not set up for answering these complex queries, it does not provide much in the way of contacts to help people pursue their enquiries (although this may change under the Coalition government) and is not suitable for interaction such as consultations. It will not answer : "What do I need to know about …?" and "How do I...?" questions well. However considerable work has gone into continually improving it and a review by Martha Lane Fox[1283] in October 2010 has been favourably received by government.[1284]

Consolidation of UK government websites may be in theory a good idea but the fact that the Coalition government has had to issue a new round of instructions[1285] suggests that there was some resistance to the first wave of website closures instigated by the previous administration. The centre of government cannot organise all the information but it can, and does, provide advice and guidance on standards and best practice.[1286] However this is assuming that citizens go to where government has provided information, whether directly or via a search engine, and not that government has put the information where the citizen is likely to go – other sites, possibly social networking sites, that people go to find out information on particular topics. Government has started to make use of social networking[1287] but it is still very early days and research will be needed to evaluate how effective they are at providing information to third parties rather than using the social media as a channel for communicating about policies and activities.

Marcella[1288] and Griffiths[1289] warn that there must be a clear difference between the impartial information government provides to help citizens run their lives and political messages that its public relations departments want pushed out to the public: what citizens might need to know as opposed to what government wants to tell them. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the separation between National Statistics and the ministerial statements about what National Statistics show regarding the performance of their department. Citizens also need the information literacy skills to help them to distinguish fact from "spin."

[1282] Race Online 2012, ref. 31.
[1283] Lane Fox, ref. 744.
[1284] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 745.
[1285] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 14.
[1286] For example, Great Britain. Central Office of Information, ref. 1075 & ref. 1076.
[1287] Great Britain. Central Office of Information, ref. 1076.
[1288] Interview with Professor Rita Marcella, 15 July 2009.
[1289] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.

9.4.4 More content

It should be remembered that the PSI that is being made open consists of datasets collected by government as part of its business of operation, some of which may already form the basis of current published products: it is not *ad hoc* information – advice and policy documents. Where information is not automatically published, it falls to those outside government to invoke the Freedom of Information Act.[1290] There was no clear view amongst interviewees about who decides what of this *ad hoc* content can be made available and no evidence of any set process for these decisions. Questions of national security may be more straightforward to decide in most cases, but policy advice and research reports may be less so. The fact that the new Public Sector Transparency Board publishes its minutes[1291] is encouraging but this research found that many documents had yet to reappear, or links to be re-established to the archived sites at TNA, after the change of websites at the 2010 general election.

Progress will be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. We have had the revolution of the change from a presumed closed to a presumed open culture but now work needs to be done on improving the quality of the information – something of which the evidence suggests the government is now aware.[1292] One should not underestimate the amount of work involved in organising the huge range of information so that it is findable and comprehensible. Just making everything open will not necessarily help users if the data is of poor quality and reliability and the presentation is unhelpful.

9.4.5 Skills

The sections above have highlighted the lack of formal co-ordination of policy and improvements needed in the quality of information and the design of services aimed at the citizen, as well as the use of intermediaries. These are incremental in nature whereas the improvements needed in skills are a step-change.

9.4.5.1 Skills within government

One of the unexpected outcomes from the interviews was the suggestion that there needed to be a new profession within government to take forward the open government agenda. Even Power of Information author Steinberg wished he had made a recommendation on new skills in the original review.[1293] In the past, information had been the domain of the communications function within government, with an emphasis on the public relations, and the Chief Information Officer Council and Chief Technology Officer Council were concerned with the systems rather than the content.[1294] Information policy fell between the two.

[1290] Great Britain, ref. 440.
[1291] Great Britain. HM Government, ref. 813.
[1292] Stirling, ref. 473.
[1293] Email correspondence with Tom Steinberg, 18 August 2009.
[1294] Interview with Peter Griffiths, 11 February 2009.

So far technologists seem to be making the running rather than those with an information background, but David Pullinger[1295] found that even most of them did not understand structuring of information and suggested that, although library personnel did, they were still locked into old hierarchical ways of organising data; there was a lack of people who had the skills to develop the new information services around the needs of citizens in ways that citizens could intuitively use and that would be optimised for access via a search engine. He and John Sheridan in OPSI are leading on the adoption of semantic web technology but it is argued that this ought to be an area where information professionals have a key role to play.

9.4.5.2 Skills within the information profession

Information professionals within government were not seen as having a big impact on information policy or the development of new information services. Do we need a new profession within government? This could potentially be a big opportunity for information professionals in government to re-skill, and with cutbacks on recruitment, these skills are unlikely to come from outside. But along with technical skills there needs to be an outward-looking, can-do, pro-active outlook – rather than an inward-looking, narrow focus – with an appreciation of the big picture and how the values of the information profession can influence that picture.

Champions are needed who can influence at the highest level and this lack of influence of the profession generally on information policy has implications for university departments educating the next generation. They need to recruit and train for this new world, encouraging an outward-looking, big-picture perspective, with an appreciation of how they can influence information policy. It has been disappointing that nobody has been surprised at this lack of influence of the profession outside its boundaries. This is not to disparage those doing excellent work both within and outside government, but the profession needs more people with vision and ideas if it is to prosper in the Web 2.0 world.

9.4.5.3 Citizens' information literacy skills

Government is putting considerable effort into improving the design of its information systems,[1296] but good design is not sufficient in itself,[1297] although some of the more IT proficient interviewees suggested that it was. Even if it were true that government services were all so intuitive and easy to use that you did not need any training, that does not help citizens successfully navigate other websites nor frame their interrogation in the way that will be most likely to find what they really need. In a society increasingly dependent on electronic media, information literacy should be a core skill;[1298] good design should go hand-in-hand

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[1295] Interview with David Pullinger, 16 April 2009.
[1296] For example, interviews with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009 and John Suffolk, 3 August 2009.
[1297] Heeks, ref. 261.
[1298] Unesco, ref. 247.

with targeting information to meet user needs and developing the skills to find and use the information.[1299] Also if you have few or no basic literacy skills, it doesn't matter how well designed an information system is; there is only so much that can be done purely graphically. Information professionals interviewed suggested that government as a whole did not understand, or have, information literacy skills itself and that as relevant policy was split between the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, no one had overall responsibility for this policy area. Training was needed at all levels – at school and further education, in the workplace and in the community.[1300] Interviewees suggested that training in critical thinking and evaluation of information was improving within the education system, but much more needed to be done elsewhere. The Race Online 2012 initiative[1301] headed by Digital Champion Martha Lane Fox needs to address information literacy, not just digital literacy. Organisations, including public libraries, have pledged to get millions of new people "online" as part of the initiative[1302] but this must entail more than just providing access if we want citizens to maximise their potential use of electronic services.[1303,1304]

Those within government saw a big role for UK Online centres and public libraries in developing information literacy skills, but as others pointed out, public libraries have limited hours, the public library service itself is not fully engaged with the topic at present – and not everyone feels comfortable going into a public library, whether for training or just help with finding and interpreting information. They might go to a Citizens Advice Bureau but these are not set up for training and are also having their funding reduced. The role of sector skills councils was also raised as a source of training, but the strategy of the e-Skills Sector Skills Council does not address information literacy, as opposed to IT, skills.[1305]

The Digital Champion reports into the Efficiency and Reform team within the Cabinet Office; getting more citizens to use online services is part of the efficiency drive as it is much cheaper to provide online than face-to-face or telephone access.[1306] It is in government's interests to build confidence and skills to encourage use of its own services but UK plc also needs these skills more generally to enable citizens and employees to participate fully in the information society.[1307]

[1299] Gurstein, ref. 246.
[1300] Feather, ref. 245. *See also* ref. 863 for comment by Sir Tim Berners-Lee.
[1301] Race Online 2012, ref. 31.
[1302] *Ibid.*
[1303] Feather, ref. 245.
[1304] Gurstein, ref. 246.
[1305] Great Britain. e-Skills Sector Skills Council, ref. 111.
[1306] Great Britain. HM Government, ref. 26.
[1307] International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions & Unesco, ref. 248.

9.5 Opening up government data (objective OB6)

This section discusses the findings in chapter 7: which address objective OB6: To explore the opening up of government data since 2009.

Since this research started there has been a huge move to open up UK government data, both to the public and third parties – a realisation that government must work with others as they are not the experts at developing information products. The UK has great expertise in developing information services and government information, especially geospatial information, that could potentially be used to develop many services of benefit to citizens and the government exchequer. MySociety demonstrated what could be done,[1308] led by Tom Steinberg who was an IT developer but who had previously been a policy adviser within government, an unusual but useful combination. The Power of Information review[1309] and Taskforce,[1310] and the advice of Sir Tim Berners-Lee and others,[1311] paved the way for the data.gov.uk service to provide raw data to developers in open, re-usable, formats.

Building on the take-up of the data.gov.uk service launched in January 2010,[1312] Brown took a significant step forward in commitment to transparent government with the announcement that geospatial and transport data would be made available.[1313] The research showed that this had not been in the government's thinking until very recently. Indeed many of those interviewed during 2009, such as Worlock[1314] and Nicholson, [1315]were critical of the lack of availability of geospatial data in particular as it underpins so much PSI. The government rhetoric on personalising services was not new – it had been at the heart of eGovernment policy for a decade – but the presumption of non-personal data being open rather than closed, was.

This Damascene conversion did not spring from nowhere. As the interviews with current and former civil servants showed, there had been a gradual sea-change from within government for many years. Those with a role in providing or managing information, whether in the Cabinet Office, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) or the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), both saw the benefit themselves and suggested that change had been happening over the last few years, supported by ministers such as Tom Watson in the Cabinet Office and Michael Wills in the MoJ. The commissioning of, and responses to, the Power of Information review are testament to this but the UK was also ahead of most of Europe in its implementation of the EU Directive on the Re-use of public sector information.[1316]

[1308] MySociety, ref. 948.
[1309] Mayo & Steinberg, ref. 21.
[1310] Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce, ref. 22.
[1311] Crabtree & Chatfield, ref. 133.
[1312] Great Britain. Cabinet Office, ref. 904.
[1313] Brown, ref. 27.
[1314] Interview with David Worlock, 26 February 2009.
[1315] Interview with Michael Nicholson, 8 July 2009.
[1316] Interview with Professor David Rhind, 5 August 2009 etc.

However interviewees from both inside and outside government also agreed that to change the attitude within government departments towards sharing information with the outside world would require a diktat from the highest level. New Prime Minister David Cameron has committed himself to an openness agenda[1317] but it is too soon to assess to what degree the departmental culture has changed or will change and how much lasting difference there will be to government policy on access to PSI for citizens. Those are matters for future research.

What has brought about this change of attitude from the senior politicians? Drivers for change identified by interviewees were transparency and freedom of information legislation, new electronic mechanisms for doing business with citizens and availability of information from a wide range of sources. But as Bryson[1318] pointed out, crises are good for galvanising action. So perhaps the new focus on open data should be seen in the context of a "perfect storm": a lack of trust in government and politicians,[1319] perceived to be secretive, and exacerbated by the expenses scandals of 2009;[1320] the raised expectations that the public has of access to information enabled by the Internet and social networking;[1321] and the desire to be (re-)elected at the 2010 general election. Also United States President Obama[1322] made an openness pledge immediately on his inauguration, which both proved to be popular and showed it could be done. Professor Sir Tim Berners-Lee clearly had a big influence on Gordon Brown,[1323] possibly on opening up data from Ordnance Survey in particular, but it was Gordon Brown who called in Berners-Lee in the first place, seeking his advice at a lunch at Chequers.[1324]

9.6   Evaluation of policy on PSI (objective OB7)

This section discusses findings from chapter 8 which addressed objective OB7: To identify how implementation of policy on PSI is evaluated and investigate how this evaluation could be developed.

The literature review found nothing specific on evaluation of implementation of information policy – as opposed to eGovernment policy – although the Audit Commission consultation[1325] found a lack of evaluation of quality of public data. The review suggested a lack of evaluation generally, but that it was a growing area of activity. Criticisms of the various eGovernment evaluation exercises, for example by Bannister[1326] and Kunstelj and Vintar,[1327] stressed the

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[1317] Cameron, ref. 30.
[1318] Meeting with Jo Bryson, 11 March 2009.
[1319] For example, Great Britain. Audit Commission, ref. 835.
[1320] BBC. News, ref. 442.
[1321] Interview with John Suffolk in interview, 3 August 2009.
[1322] Obama, ref. 522.
[1323] Chatfield, ref. 905.
[1324] Crabtree & Chatfield, ref. 133.
[1325] Great Britain. Audit Commission, ref. 835.
[1326] Bannister, ref. 1018.
[1327] Kunstelj & Vintar, ref. 377.

need to gain more insight into the user experience and the European Commission[1328] and Capgemini[1329] are developing suitable measures. However this raises the issue of the value of quantitative data as opposed to qualitative data. You can use a Lickert scale to assess the satisfaction rating of users but it doesn't necessarily tell you much about the quality of their experience, and nothing about why other people did not use the service.

9.6.1 International benchmarks

This research into international benchmarks found that they provide quantitative measures of comparison between countries but they are rather simplistic; they may give comparative information on the amount of services and their use but not their quality, appropriateness in meeting user needs and usability, and they do not provide a detailed breakdown by service. The data provided is comparative data, not absolute data, so it is limited about what it can tell you about the implementation of specific policies. Of course if the policy is to become the "world leader" in a particular area, then international benchmarks can tell you how successful you have been, but it means you are a "world leader" and not that you are good or improving. Benchmarks currently being used were found to be not suitable for measuring citizens' access to PSI, although some of the newer measures being developed by the OECD[1330] and EU[1331] may be in time.

9.6.2 Timing

Both on the national and international scenes there are recent and continuing developments in evaluation of services, for example attempts to standardise international benchmarks[1332] and to gain a greater understanding of the user experience,[1333] and the requirement to undertake annual user surveys of UK government websites.[1334] It is therefore not the best time to evaluate the evaluation. These new initiatives will take a while to settle down and produce sufficient results before it is sensible to undertake a full review of their benefit.

9.6.3 Evaluating citizens' access to PSI

Interviewees were asked how they thought information policy on citizens' access to public sector information ought to be evaluated and the answers were the most varied and least conclusive on any of the interview topics. The only consensus was that evaluation was difficult; there was very little common ground on the suggestions of what should be done, and few specific ideas that might be workable without considerable resources. Developing

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[1328] European Commission, ref. 1052.
[1329] Capgemini *et al.*, ref. 1050.
[1330] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, ref. 1057.
[1331] Corbin, ref. 139.
[1332] United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ref. 1030.
[1333] Cap Gemini *et al.*, ref. 1050.
[1334] Great Britain. Central Office of Information, ref. 1069.

metrics on inputs and outputs was certainly easier than assessing impacts and outcomes, particularly of specific pieces of information.

In answer to the question of how citizens' access to PSI is being evaluated now in the UK, the answer is probably: it is growing. Directgov uses panels of citizens at the various stages of design[1335] – and this kind of qualitative feedback is essential to get the necessary depth of view. Annual pop-up surveys of government websites are now mandatory[1336] and will give useful feedback on user satisfaction in due course. But these do not answer questions about the amount and type of information available, nor how civil servants are providing information through social networking sites, and nothing about the skills required within government or by citizens. It will be interesting to see how progress with the Race Online 2012[1337] policy initiative is measured. Just "the increased number of people online", while useful in itself, does not tell you anything about the nature of the engagement, nor what the people who are not online are doing to obtain the necessary information to make decisions about their lives, if anything.

9.7 Summary of chapter 9

The research aimed to investigate the development of UK government policy on citizens' access to public information since 1996. The literature review suggested that the main focus for this development in citizens' access had been, and was currently continuing to be, within the context of eGovernment services. This research found that drivers for change in eGovernment development were the need for greater efficiency and an increased focus on designing services to be citizen-centred.

This was not new – they had been part of government mantra since 1996. What was new was the additional driver of the need for increased transparency in government which has been growing around the world, but particularly exacerbated in the United Kingdom by the MPs' expenses scandals of 2009-2010[1338] in the run-up to a general election. Technology has played its part in providing some of the means for extra transparency, but the research findings suggested that the influence of key individuals both inside and outside government was crucial. However the influence of the information profession was low; it needed to co-ordinate its messages to government, possibly through a coalition of some kind, although different groupings would be needed for each issue.

With the move to electronic communication with citizens, there was still a need for one-to-one access to information, particularly for those with complex needs or who did not have the

[1335] Interview with Jayne Nickalls, 1 September 2009.
[1336] Great Britain. Central Office of Information, ref. 1070.
[1337] Race Online 2012, ref. 31.
[1338] BBC. News, ref. 442.

access or skills to find information for themselves. The public library service potentially has an opportunity to increase its benefit through providing intermediary help with access and also with training in information literacy, as the research suggested that government policy in this area was lacking.

However policy on opening up data within UK government has moved on exponentially in 2009-2010 and the UK is one of the world leaders in publishing its data in formats suitable for re-use by third parties, be they corporations, community groups, social networks or individuals. Government itself has encouraged its officials to use social networking to communicate information but as yet there appears to be no mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of this communication.

Evaluation of this kind of impact is very difficult, as is evaluation of the implementation of information policy in general. Various supra-national bodies benchmark eGovernment activity across the globe but this does not yet address user needs well nor access to PSI, although there are potential measures being developed. To assist practitioners and others to identify the various elements of policy to be evaluated, a framework was developed combining a PESTEL analysis with why, who, what, where ,when and how – a concept easy to grasp but capable of much detail. The framework was populated with current and potential measures for evaluation and successfully tested against the Power of Information Taskforce recommendations. This showed gaps in measures and in the recommendations of the Taskforce as regards citizens' access to PSI and some new measures were suggested to fill the gaps.

In the final chapter, conclusions from this discussion are presented, together with recommendations for government and the information profession. Lessons from the research process are drawn out, and finally the contribution of this research to the academic discipline of information policy is considered.

Chapter 10: Conclusions and recommendations

10.1 Introduction

The overall aim of the research was to investigate UK government policy on citizens' access to public sector information (PSI). The research was designed so that each the research questions was addressed by a corresponding objective, as outlined in Table 1.2 on page 21. Meeting the first three objectives provided the background to the study: setting the work in context by uncovering previous research undertaken in this area; deciding on the most suitable methodology; and establishing which UK government policies since 1996 had responded to the need to provide citizens with PSI to help them run their lives. The next four objectives related to the findings of the research and were discussed in the last chapter.

This final chapter considers objective OB8: to make recommendations to government, the information profession and the research community in the light of the answers to each research questions, having met its related objective. These recommendations are based on the conclusions of the research as laid out in section 10.3 below and this is followed by a reflective look back at the research process. This chapter starts, however, with a summary of the current state of UK government policy on citizens' access to PSI. The rest of the chapter is structured as follows:

10.2 The current state of UK government policy on citizens' access to public sector information

During 2010 the United Kingdom has become one of the world leaders in providing access to its raw datasets for third party re-use – if you judge by the number of datasets made available rather than the quality of the data. It is certainly at the forefront of adopting linked data applications, such as the work on the legislation database. Of itself this is welcome news for the information profession and the citizen and shows a commitment to making government more open and accountable. This is particularly necessary if government is to regain public trust after the MPs' expenses scandal.[1339] The opening up of Ordnance Survey mapping data is a significant change in government policy, not least because geospatial data underpins so much PSI as well as potential applications by third parties, although it is too soon to tell how the other trading funds will also choose to, or be made to, follow suit.

However, and it is a big however, just releasing raw data does not mean that the citizen is automatically able to access more and better information. Technology should not be the master. The content and design must to be relevant to citizens' needs, with guidance on the appropriate use of the information, including its reliability. Government has started to recognise this and it is now policy to improve the quality of information provided, concentrating on the data most important for citizens, but it will take time.

It should be remembered that the information that is newly being made available is, in many cases, the raw data underpinning already published statistical products. We have yet to see to what extent other *ad hoc* information is going to be made available, for example policy documents. It is still for those outside government to invoke the Freedom of Information Act to gain access to certain documents, although it is encouraging that the new Public Sector Transparency Board has published the minutes of its own meetings, which sets a good example.

The plethora of government websites, both national and local, with very variable degrees of usability, does not make it easy for the ordinary member of the public to find and efficiently use the information that they need to make decisions about their daily lives. Part of the solution is to rationalise the number of websites, which both the previous Labour administration and the current Coalition government have been committed to, and to improve the quality of those that are left. The Central Office of Information (COI) has been producing various guidelines[1340] for public website managers to improve accessibility of websites and the Knowledge and Information Management Function within government is working to improve the quality of information management internally.[1341] Directgov, too, is involving

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[1339] BBC. News, ref. 442.
[1340] For example Great Britain. Central Office of Information, ref. 1068 & ref. 1069.
[1341] For example: Great Britain. HM Government, ref. 649.

citizens in the design of its services. But the sheer volume of information and number of different, and differently managed, public websites means that there is a long way to go before all information is easily findable and usable by citizens. There is justification for arguing that the information profession within government should be at the heart of this work.

It should be remembered that most citizens will not choose to go through Directgov as their first port of call. They are much more likely to arrive at a government website through a search engine, not being aware of who has the information they need. The COI is in the process of encouraging website managers to make their sites searchable using search engines such as Google and Bing through the development of XML Sitemaps.

Various technocrats interviewed in the research assumed that IT systems could be well enough designed for them to be so intuitive to use that citizens won't need information literacy skills. Citizens will need skills in searching and IT skills, and government policy addresses this through the work of the Digital Champion Martha Lane Fox. However citizens still need to know how to evaluate information, how to frame searches so that they really find what they are looking for, and how to organise the information well when they have it. Evidence suggests that much more needs to be done to develop these kinds of skills, as Professor Sir Tim Berners-Lee agreed at the Open Gov Data Camp in November 2010.

Public libraries and school libraries are obvious places to start but government policy may be moving away from professionally staffed libraries. The Big Society initiative has suggested that public libraries could be run by volunteers, but this conflicts with government policy of getting all citizens, as far as possible, to access government services online in order to save costs – as well as to empower citizens. If they de-professionalise all staff in public libraries, the question arises of who is going to train the public, or undertake the efficient searches for them. Then you have those who will never use online services, whether via computers, digital television or mobile phones. Funding for intermediaries is under threat, potentially putting at risk the training of both users and trainers, and the co-ordinated support that intermediaries would be expected to provide.

10.3 Conclusions and recommendations from the research

Conclusions arising from the discussion of the research findings (*see* Chapter 9) are drawn together here. The recommendations have been included with the conclusion that gave rise to them, and they therefore appear in the order of the objectives, whereas in Annex H the recommendations have been re-ordered to reflect the constituency that each is aimed at, be it government, the information profession or the research community.

10.3.1 How government policy on PSI is developed and governed (objective OB4)

10.3.1.1 Development of information policy

At the start of the research, and indeed at the time of the interviews, policy on public sector information was fairly low on government priorities, but its importance grew significantly from late 2009 until, and beyond, the 2010 general election. It became a tool in the armoury of transparent government as a way of increasing trust in government, which both main political parties endorsed.

As regards the policy-making process, there is no clear steer as to what is put forward by ministers and what by senior civil servants, although all policy has to be signed off by a minister. However an interesting trend seems to be the trial of small-scale projects that can be scaled up into larger projects and absorbed into government policy.

The Cabinet Office has the most central role in developing policy across government but even it cannot enforce adherence to policies without some compulsion from a central authority such as the Prime Minister or the Cabinet Secretary. A top-down approach is needed if all departments are to adopt the new direction.

OPSI is tasked with enforcing the Re-use of public sector information regulations but there again the power is only to advise, not enforce, and the research suggested that it was under-funded. The Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information (APPSI) is not having much impact in regards to its regulatory role. It appears to be getting more involved in providing advice to government but it is still early days for both OPSI and APPSI in public policy terms. OPSI has given up its separate identity within TNA in order to avoid confusion, however OPSI's functions could not be described as "archival" as such so it is not clear whether this helps or hinders how OPSI is seen by others. There seems to be a conflict between the greater importance of its function and the lesser prominence of its identity. Whilst she was in post, TNA chief executive Natalie Ceeney proved an ambitious mover and shaker who raised the profile of TNA within government, and the knowledge and information management function across government. Her successor had not been appointed at the time of writing so it is too soon to see whether this higher profile will be maintained in future.

The research showed that the Cabinet Office is taking a proactive role in public sector information policy, and that there is already a good working relationship between OPSI and the Cabinet Office. It also found that it is the Cabinet Office which has the power to enforce action across government in a way that The National Archives does not. On the basis of this evidence, it therefore may make more sense for OPSI, and as a corollary, APPSI, to move back again to the Cabinet Office to build on the synergy that the research showed existed

between the two departments, as some interviewees suggested. **It is recommended that the government consider moving the Office of Public Sector Information and the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information back to the Cabinet Office under the Efficiency and Reform Division. (*Recommendation 1*)**

Various interviewees referred to the need for a new profession within government to develop and implement new policy around the provision of PSI and the opening up of government information. The information profession was not seen by some as being able to fill the gap – but it was not fully clear quite what that gap was; opinion was divided. There would appear to be a big opportunity for information professionals to find a new role within government, between communications and IT. **It is therefore recommended that research be undertaken to identify what new professional information skills are needed within government and whether a new profession is needed or whether the information profession might have the appropriate skills to fill the gaps. (*Recommendation 2*) It is further recommended that university departments of information and relevant professional bodies investigate what education and training is required to develop the appropriate skills for taking forward the open government agenda, either within the information profession or in a new profession. (*Recommendation 3*)**

10.3.1.2 Policy influencers

Although the research was looking specifically at UK government policy on citizens' access to public sector information, the lessons learned in relation to advice to government are relevant across all information policies. The conclusions and recommendations in this section should therefore be taken as referring to the whole range of information policies.

Government's external advisers have made a big impact on the development of information policy, as opposed to the development of library services. They have been people from outside the library and information profession who are renowned experts in their field – Sir Tim Berners-Lee, Professor Nigel Shadbolt, Tom Steinberg, Richard Allan and now Martha Lane Fox are perhaps the most high-profile. Between them they have had, and are having, a large influence on the way government has opened up raw data and improved citizens' access to public sector information. They are all able to look beyond their particular areas of expertise to the bigger picture. There is no evidence to suggest any discernable corresponding influence – nor any great interest – from the information profession.

Within government the librarians of the various government departments meet together but the wider Knowledge and Information Management Network is co-ordinated by TNA, and supports the work of the Knowledge Council in developing the government's capacity to store and manage information. These bodies are inward-facing and the research found that they had a low profile within the information profession. It would be helpful if the Knowledge

Council reflected the new move to open government and made its own advice and activities more transparent. This would help the profession outside government to understand better the issues and activities of the profession internally and how they might work together. The Knowledge Council is not a policy-oriented body but it can draw on useful expertise in the formulation of information policy. **It is recommended that the Knowledge Council promotes its activities outside government, following the lead of the Public Sector Transparency Board. (*Recommendation 4*)**

If the profession is to have a wider profile within government, this would suggest that the professionals themselves need to think more widely about what sort of roles they could take on that are outside what might traditionally be thought of as central to their skills. **It is therefore recommended that information professionals should consider what wider skills they need to be able to take on less traditional roles in government where an information background would be advantageous, for example information policy-making and managing social networking within departments. (*Recommendation 5*)**

The research suggested that the information profession has a very low profile in the development of government information policy and that there is insufficient leadership from within the profession. There are few policy champions and the voices of campaign are too scattered. A coalition is needed to co-ordinate messages to government to make it easier for government to have a dialogue with the profession, and the profession therefore to have greater influence. Government does not want to speak to lots of organisations; it needs a focus, although that focus might be different for different issues. But the profession must go to government, not wait for government to come to it, particularly when there is no one obvious place for government to go.

Who should take the lead in this? The most likely candidate is the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and its Policy Forum is promising, but evidence suggests that there will need to be an awareness amongst staff and members of what the issues are and who to co-ordinate with. The new Archives and Records Association or the British Computer Society would be other key players, for example, but perhaps not as a lead body for PSI issues. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) may have had a role to play here but it is being closed down and its functions dispersed.

As has been shown in Chapter 1, information policy is not the province of a single department; the various aspects cut across many government departments; even the Department for Culture, Media and Sport does not have a monopoly on public libraries and its remit does not extend to the information industry, for example, so it is not in a position to co-ordinate advice on information policy as a whole. **It is therefore recommended that a co-ordination mechanism is set up within the library and information profession to**

campaign and advise government on specific policies as appropriate and that the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals should take the lead on setting up such a mechanism, although it would not necessarily lead on all issues. (*Recommendation 6*)

Another problem identified in the research was the lack of champions within the profession who can have influence at the highest levels. One can't wave a magic wand to develop these champions but the professional bodies should encourage and support leadership, and work with champions both inside and outside the profession, building on the work of the Clore Leadership Scheme, the Leading Modern Public Libraries programme and the higher education Future Leaders programme. The profession should produce, and align itself with, people who will put their heads above the parapet and needs a broader, outward-looking vision if it is to increase its impact. The also means that the information departments within universities need to be recruiting outgoing individuals and educating them to see "the big picture".

City University in London is starting a Masters in Information Leadership course in 2010 (although the high cost of the course may put it out of the reach of many in the sector), and Loughborough has a module on Leadership and interpersonal skills on its BSc course on Information management and business studies. Various information studies departments within UK universities run modules relating to the "information society", for example Loughborough, Sheffield, London Metropolitan and Leeds Metropolitan. Also aspects of information policy and law are addressed at the University of Brighton, City University, University College London, Strathclyde University and the University of the West of England, amongst others. It is difficult to assess the appropriateness of these courses from an initial survey of the websites of the relevant university departments as they vary considerably in the quality and quantity of the information they provide. Further, more detailed, research would be helpful to provide a fuller and more accurate picture in order to make recommendations about future courses. **It is recommended that information professional bodies further encourage leadership within the profession, identifying and working with champions for specific areas of policy. (*Recommendation 7*) It is also recommended that they should identify and work more with policy champions (whether individuals or organisations) from other disciplines where there is a common purpose. (*Recommendation 8*) It is further recommended that professional bodies should take a wider approach to policy formulation, looking beyond the boundaries of institutions that provide and manage information. (*Recommendation 9*) In addition, it is recommended that research be undertaken into the extent that courses of the schools of information within universities address how information policy is developed within government and also how students are helped to develop skills in influencing**

government on information policy issues, with a view to building on the courses already available. (*Recommendation 10*)

One of the problems identified in the research was government's lack of understanding of the value of information. To improve government's appreciation of information and the role that the information profession could play, **it is recommended that the professional bodies and research community work together to articulate the value of information to government and develop case studies to show how the profession can be of benefit to information policy-making. (*Recommendation 11*)**

10.3.1.3 Co-ordination of information policy

As Chapter 2 showed, Britain has never had a "National Information Policy" (NIP) as such, but the analysis of policy documents, up to and including the general election manifestos, suggests that the UK has moved some way towards a more limited digital information policy as part of an overall digital policy. There was no appetite for further bureaucracy. The research concluded that a framework of information policies was a more pragmatic approach to take but this framework would need to be co-ordinated and managed centrally. This research has included some initial thinking on what the framework of polices in the 21st century should include, building on the work of the Library and Information Commission at the end of the last decade and relating it to the themes of this research (*see* Table 9.1). While this is a starting point, there is further work to be done to provide government with a blueprint for a framework. **It is therefore recommended that the research community builds a framework for government information policies, founded on an international history of national information policies and their relevance today. (*Recommendation 12*)**

There are some co-ordinating mechanisms across government – the Chief Information Officer Council, the Chief Technology Officer Council and the Knowledge Council – but these relate to information management and information systems delivery; there is no co-ordination of policy looking at the information needs of citizens. The remit of the Knowledge Council is limited to internal information and knowledge management and it does not have a role in policy.

There are no formal co-ordinating structures and no minister charged with responsibility for co-ordinating information policy. Labour Digital Engagement Minister Tom Watson came closest to this before he resigned from office in 2009 but he was not replaced. The current (2010) administration has Rt Hon. Francis Maude playing a large role in the Cabinet Office, leading the Efficiency and Reform agenda and chairing the Public Sector Transparency Board. These relate to a large proportion of information policy, but by no means all, and information policy is not identified separately as such. Whilst there are no formal relationships across government which address information policy as a whole, individual personal

relationships are important to get things done, but these do not have any force behind them. The research showed the importance of strong leadership from the centre.

One of the key factors inhibiting co-ordination was the lack of a shared culture across government, despite attempts to "join it up." Each department has its own responsibilities and interests – and its own funding stream, so they are not going to make changes to their priorities for work unless they are required to and are provided with the necessary funding. Again, this compulsion can only come from the top.

As discussed above, the Cabinet Office is taking the lead in policy relating to public sector information at the time of writing. The Minister for the Cabinet Office chairs the Public Sector Transparency Board and oversees the work of the Cabinet Office, however this role is focussed on a narrow agenda. **It is therefore recommended that a minister within the Cabinet Office should be appointed to co-ordinate all information policy across government to ensure that there are no conflicting policies. (*Recommendation 13*).**

10.3.2 How the policies are working on practice (objective OB5)

10.3.2.1 Citizen-centric services

Government is making progress on developing citizen-centric services but the evidence shows that it is neither a quick nor an easy task. The information professionals were particularly critical of government's work in this area and the profession as a whole ought to have much expertise to offer. This would suggest that it should offer practical advice to government on how the design could be improved. This may also help to raise the profile of the information profession within government, which the research showed to be at a low level. **It is recommended that research is undertaken into the usability of the Directgov portal and recommendations made to government about how the design could be improved. (*Recommendation 14*)**

The wish to move citizens over to accessing government services electronically is understandable; once the services are working well it is a more efficient and therefore a cheaper form of communication than one-to-one. However there will be people without the skills to use the services or whose needs are so complex that they require personal attention and help, and the research suggested that policy does not seem to be fully developed around how their needs will be met. There is no evidence to suggest that putting more effort into getting them online will completely solve the problem, although the problem will probably get less over time as more people develop the skills, or the services become more able to cope with complex demands. The public library service is well-positioned to be part of the answer in the support for the information have nots and cannots; it needs to ensure that users have

access to appropriately trained staff at times, and in places, to suit them. However there are suggestions that, as part of the Big Society initiative, public libraries could be staffed by volunteers from the local community. **It is therefore recommended that government should encourage local authorities to consider the implications of replacing trained staff with volunteers without the necessary training to support citizens in meeting their information needs. (*Recommendation 15*)**

10.3.2.2 Information literacy skills

From the evidence, the biggest obvious gap in government information policy relates to information literacy skills. If people do not have information literacy skills they cannot make informed and efficient use of any public sector information that is provided. There still seems to be a lack of appreciation of the difference between IT skills and information literacy. It is not just a case of being able to use search engines; more needs to be done to train citizens and to train the trainers. There is a significant potential role here for public libraries (as well as UK Online centres, of which many are in public libraries), that they could develop further, particularly in the light of their need to show their relevance at a time of proposed cuts in public spending. This also ties in with the CILIP campaign for each school to appoint a qualified librarian, who would have developing information literacy skills as part of their remit. In the long run, providing citizens with these skills would make them much more likely to use government's online services and therefore save the public purse. **It is therefore recommended that public libraries should engage more with developing information literacy skills for citizens. (*Recommendation 16*)**

Of course information literacy is dependent upon citizens having basic literacy skills. If they do not have the latter they will not be likely to develop the former. One can draw two conclusions from this. Firstly there is a need to co-ordinate information literacy skills development with literacy skills development across government departments. Secondly, provision must be kept for those who will never sufficiently develop basic literacy skills. There is not likely to be a time when everyone accesses government information directly online, whether because they lack the literacy skills, or because of physical or psychological barriers. Without support from intermediaries, there is a danger that these people will be even further disenfranchised. **It is recommended that government co-ordinates (through BIS, DfE, DCMS, DCLG) specific policies on developing literacy and information literacy skills for children, students, adults and the workforce. This would be part of the responsibility of the Minister in the Cabinet Office and would integrate with the work of the Digital Champion. (*Recommendation 17*)**

10.3.3 Opening up government data (objective OB6)

The opening up of government data has come at a time when trust in politicians is low but citizens' expectations for access to information electronically is high. The Coalition government's commitment to opening up government data is not in doubt although changing the culture across all government departments will take time. Nevertheless there has been a culture change during the research in the way that government ministers and officials have made use of social networking, whether it be Facebook, Twitter, their own personal blogs or through other sites. This was uncommon three years ago, particularly by officials. Guidelines have been developed to help civil servants in their dealings with social networking sites but there does not seem to have been any evaluation of how well the guidelines are working in practice and the extent and nature of officials' use of social networking, particularly feeding into other social networking sites rather than running their own blogs. **It is therefore recommended that the government commissions an evaluation of how civil servants are using social networking to communicate with citizens, both through their own blogs and Twitter and through external social networking, and to assess whether the guidelines on social networking are being followed and still fit for purpose. This may include a comparative study with practice in other countries from which lessons could be learned. (*Recommendation 18*)**

Of course data that has been collected and manipulated for one purpose may not make it suitable for use in other contexts, so just putting out datasets without any regard for their quality, reliability and suitability is of limited use. Early criticism of the datasets available on data.gov.uk relate to their quality and reliability, and their lack of appropriate formatting for re-use. There is a trade-off between releasing the data quickly while it is still in a rough or inappropriate format, leaving others to improve the data for use in specific new information services until the data is available in a more usable form, or waiting until those inside government have had time to "clean up" the data so that it is of better quality but keeping third-party developers – and therefore the public – waiting longer for useful information. The government is pushing for the former approach. The important point from the users' perspective is to make clear what the data can reasonably be used for, and this the government is starting to do, but it is a big job.

The research highlighted the importance of geospatial information as part of the range of PSI, and particularly its value to third parties in re-using the data to form new information services. One of the most significant changes in policy has been the opening up of much Ordnance Survey data for free re-use, particularly important as so much PSI is underpinned by geospatial data. However the postcode file is still not freely available and this forms the basis of much geospatial information. Work has been done by the government in implementing the European Commission's INSPIRE (Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe) directive through the Location Strategy. It was originally intended that this research would investigate

this use of geospatial information and how the INSPIRE directive had been translated into UK practice, but the development of the open data agenda necessitated a change of direction. However, the research showed that there was still a need to understand how well the arrangements were working. **It is therefore recommended that the role of geospatial data in underpinning UK public sector information be assessed and the results used to evaluate the implementation of the Location Strategy, the UK's response to the European Commission's INSPIRE directive.** *(Recommendation 19)*

The other area of research that was deferred owing to the rise of the open data agenda was a comparative analysis of practice in other countries. Since the start of this research the UK has significantly developed the way it provides PSI for re-use and increased the amount of datasets made available. The research found that the UK is a world leader in this, but it is not alone. The Open Knowledge Foundation has been documenting international initiatives during 2010, too late for this research to discuss in detail. **It is therefore recommended that case studies of good practice overseas in the provision, and evaluation of provision, of open government data be developed and lessons for the UK identified. (***Recommendation 20***)**

The Coalition Prime Minister has asked for a statement of citizens' information rights from the Public Sector Transparency Board and these have been produced in draft.[1342] The research found a considerable focus on technology and data structure and a lack of emphasis on meeting user needs in the design of services – and their evaluation. With this in mind, the following data principles are suggested, which complement those of the Public Sector Transparency Board but have a greater focus on user needs:

    a.   Right to access to government information they need to make decisions about their lives free of charge, subject to national security and commercial/personal confidentiality

    b.   Right to independent scrutiny of decisions to withhold information

    c.   Right to have personal data held by government treated securely and not shared without the agreement of the individual to whom the data refers

    d.   Right of access to, and control of, all data held about themselves by public bodies

    e.   Right for information provided by government to be of high quality and reliability

    f.   Right to access information in a format suitable for all citizens, which may mean through a proxy

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[1342] Great Britain. HM Government. Open.gov.uk, ref. 902.

g. Right to have information services designed around the needs and capabilities of citizens, not the departments

h. Right to re-use data generated with public funds at cost – in effect, free of charge

i. Right of access to training in information literacy

j. Right to professional advice on information matters.

10.3.4 Evaluating policy on PSI (objective OB7)

Various evaluation activities are taking place which relate to part of the provision of PSI to citizens, particularly the work of the COI in its surveys of government websites and Directgov's work with citizens on the design of its services. However these are looking at people who are using electronic information services, rather than those who are not, and why not, and they are not addressing the citizens' skills. New benchmarks are being introduced which better address the users' experience and the work of the COI is still new. Also the outcomes of the Race Online 2012 initiative will not be known for some time. This all suggests that more research into the evaluation of implementation of PSI policy should wait until both the policies themselves have had more time to mature and the evaluation activities that do exist have had time to produce useful results.

10.3.5 Further questions for future research

Finally, the following research questions were suggested by this research, to be followed up at some point in the future when there has been further development of government policy:

i. What information/datasets have been released and how does this compare with data that could be made available? And what mechanisms are, or could be in place, to make decisions about what to release?

ii. To what extent has departmental culture become more open, and how can this be measured?

iii. To what extent does EU policy influence UK policy, using directives relating to PSI as case studies?

iv. What does a social network analysis of the key players in the development of UK PSI policy tell us about the relationships between them and the main influencers?

It is recognised that these recommendations have been framed for an "ideal world" but that the current financial situation means that actions are likely to be limited. However it is necessary to plan now for a time when public finances are not the overriding concern that they are in late 2010.

10.4 Reflections on the research process

10.4.1 Meeting the aim and objectives

The aim of the research was to investigate UK government policy on improving citizens' access to public sector information. In a sense, this research was ahead of its time, although that could not have been predicted when the aim and objectives were first drawn up, or indeed at the mid-point of the research. The landscape in the UK regarding the provision of public sector information changed dramatically during the latter half of 2009 and the first half of 2010. The interviews during 2009 suggested that whilst access to public sector information was important to those interviewed, it was not seen as a vote winner for government and was therefore only a small, though probably growing, part of the policy-making agenda – the provision of non-personal data to the public was not high on the "to do" list of ministers. However, by the time of the 2010 general election both main parties were vying to show how they would open up public data, and the incoming Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition government is taking forward its commitments to open up government data, appointing a high-profile Public Sector Transparency Board to oversee and advise on the work. This could not have been envisaged at the start of the research and was to have implications for its scope and direction.

Objective OB1: *To understand the academic and practitioner research which informs the current context in which policy on citizens' access to PSI is formulated*, was drafted in response to research question *RQ1: What previous work has been done on the theory and practice of policy on citizens' access to PSI?* Meeting this objective showed that there had been no detailed investigation of the specific subject by the information profession or the eGovernment research community, although there was tangential research on policy-making in general. However co-ordination of policy and information literacy skills were highlighted as particular themes to address.

Objective OB2: *To decide which is or are the most suitable methodologies and methods that will best meet the aim of the research*, was designed to answer research question *RQ2: What methodology would be suitable for investigating UK government policy on citizens' access to PSI?* The constructivist, critical realist perspective chosen proved to be appropriate as the research looked at the power relationships within and outside government and the mechanisms that affected the way that the policy was developed and implemented. Also it produced recommendations designed to bring about change: an improvement in the relevant policies and policy-making, as well as the citizens' ability to make use of the data and the information profession's ability to fulfil its potential in supporting the policy. The interview method was successful in getting the sort of perspectives desired; and the range and quality of the interviewees agreeing to take part showed the importance of the topic.

Objective OB3: *To identify and analyse the contents of UK government policies from 1996 which relate to citizens' access to PSI*, answered research question *RQ3: What policies has the UK government developed since 1996 on citizens' access to public sector information?* This uncovered a wide range of policy documents, mostly within the eGovernment domain and in which access to PSI was only a small proportion, at least until 2009. More recently details of policies were identified through speeches and press releases as much as through formal policy documents.

Objective OB4: *To assess how policy on PSI is developed and governed*, addressed research question *RQ4: How is policy on citizens' access to PSI developed and governed?* The picture of how the policy was developed proved to be very cloudy, although in keeping with findings from other research on policy-making. Co-ordination, an issue flagged up in the literature review, did indeed prove to be important – and lacking. The finding of the need for strong central enforcement to push new policy through was not perhaps surprising, but the importance of individuals making a difference was, and also the suggestion that a new profession might be needed within government to take forward this agenda.

Objective OB5: *To examine how the policies are working in practice and identify any gaps in the policies*, was drafted to answer research question *RQ5: How well are the policies working in practice, how could they be improved and what gaps in the policies need filling?* Meeting this objective showed that citizen-centric services had been developing for over a decade but more attention needed to be paid to design of systems and to providing help to those who did not have the necessary access or skills to use online services, possibly through the public library service. A particular gap was the lack of policy on developing information literacy skills and again evidence suggested that the public library service could play a greater role here.

Objective OB6: *To explore the opening up of government data since 2009*, was developed to answer the new research question *RQ6: What has changed in the policies in 2009-2010 in the light of a move to more open and transparent government and why?* This was included in the research after the significant change in government policy toward the publishing of PSI for re-use. It did mean that other avenues of research had to be curtailed in order to chart these ground-breaking developments. However these avenues are included in the suggestions for further research as they are still relevant: particularly investigating policy on geospatial data and comparing activity in other countries on access to PSI.

Objective OB7: *To identify how policy on PSI is evaluated and investigated and how this evaluation could be improved*, addresses research question *RQ7: How is UK policy on citizens' access to PSI evaluated and how could this evaluation be improved or extended?* This proved to be the most difficult objective to meet for two main reasons: (a) it is very complicated and would require much extra work to answer the question thoroughly – possibly

a specific study in itself; but even more (b) much evaluation is in the early stages of development and therefore not yet ready for a full study. For this reason, recommendations are not made as a result of this work on evaluation, other than to suggest that detailed work should be undertaken in due course. General issues on timing are discussed in the next section.

Objective OB8: *To make recommendations to government, the information profession and the research community in the light of the answers to the research questions*, addresses the final research question *RQ8: What recommendations follow from meeting the overall aim of the research?* In order to encourage social improvements for citizens, in line with the critical realist approach, recommendations have been made to government. Recommendations for other research would be expected from a study such as this, however the research also suggested recommendations aimed at the information profession to both improve its influence over information policy-making and assist citizens in gaining the most benefit from the increased access to PSI.

10.4.2 Timing of the research process

The research topic chosen proved to be one with rapid developments in the latter years of the research timetable. This increased significance of policy on access to public sector information during mid-2009 was both a help and a hindrance to this research. On the plus side, it showed that the subject of the research was an important and timely one to study – and that progress was being made. Any researcher ought to want positive progress which supports the citizens of their country, even if it means their research is overtaken by events; the benefit to the country is more important than the benefit to the individual researcher. The developments in provision of PSI during 2009 and 2010 were extremely welcome on the whole, but this did have consequences for the scope of this research.

Originally the research was intended to take a detailed look at the development of relevant UK government policy since 1996, and comment on how that policy had developed, however events were so fast-moving that it was not possible to go into as much detail on the older material as originally planned; the emphasis was necessarily on tracking unfolding current events rather than analysing older policy in order to keep the research relevant. Had this researcher drawn a line under the research at an earlier date, as planned, the recommendations would not have been as appropriate, indeed some of them would have been overtaken by the suggested changes actually happening, such as the move of Directgov back to the Cabinet Office and a recognition of the need to improve the quality of PSI, as well as improve the guidance on its appropriate use.

This additional work required to keep the research up-to-date and relevant inevitably meant that some of the scheduled work had to be modified. For example it was not possible to take more than an initial look at practice in the provision and evaluation of provision of PSI to citizens in other countries. Also ideally there would have been more research carried out into the influence of the European Commission on UK policy and the transposition and implementation of the various relevant directives, particularly in relation to geospatial information. These are all still worthy of further research.

With hindsight, this researcher would not have used different methods but would have made an early decision not to pursue the investigation of national information policy (NIP) as this did not turn out to be a fruitful area of research, however much of the work on NIP was done in the first year when this was not so obvious. Also, the research into evaluation of information policy proved less satisfactory than had been hoped, and again the timing was difficult as there were significant developments happening in 2010 that would not be sufficiently embedded in practice for some years for an in-depth assessment – although this would be a valuable topic for research in due course. Leaving aside the detailed work on evaluation would have enabled more time to have been devoted to assessing best practice in other countries and perhaps undertaking a separate strand of interviews concentrating more on the information profession.

10.4.3 Reflections on the interviews

With time constraints, it was not possible to undertake interviews with everyone identified as having something useful to say, however the research was designed to build in contingency, identifying twice as many potential interviewees as would be feasible to interview within the time-span of the research. With the priority system adopted, the most important and relevant key players were approached first, and interviews were undertaken in batches across all five categories. This ensured as balanced a sample as possible. In the light of the findings about the lack of influence of the information profession, further interviews with librarians within government would be desirable to get their up-to-date views. The intention is to engage with the information profession after the completion of research and the researcher has already been interviewed for the professional journal *Update* to start that debate.

The length of interviews was a limiting factor; most interviewees were able to spare an hour, which was long enough to cover the subject matter but not necessarily in as much detail as would have been desirable. However the aim of this research was to take an overview of government progress in this subject area and to make recommendations for more in depth work as necessary. Having said that, an hour with an expert produced a rich source of information and views; they all spoke eloquently and succinctly on their subject – they were

used to doing so – and staff at OPSI/The National Archives were particularly generous with their time.

Use of interviews will always bring an element of subjectivity to the research, however the interviews with experts proved to be a suitable method for gathering new data on UK government policy on the provision of PSI to citizens. The strategy of identifying an initial list of interviewees, adding other potential interviewees through snowballing, and prioritising the approaches worked well. Most interviewees were approached face-to-face when asked to participate and this proved successful: it is hard to say "no" to someone in person if they present their case well and can justify why you are valuable to the research.[1343]

Interviewees were asked to speak on the record and all agreed to be quoted, subject to giving approval of final quotes used, which was obtained. This had a two-fold advantage. Firstly the declared involvement of high-level individuals gives the research credibility, and secondly, because most interviewees were "the" something rather than "a" something, it would have been extremely difficult to sufficiently anonymise the quotes without losing their specific relevance. An added advantage was that the act of asking for approval for use of quotes at a much later stage in the research provided the opportunity for asking interviewees for any further comments in the light of developments in policy since the interviews had taken place. Some took this opportunity to add new comments – mainly to update their original comments in the light of changes.

10.4.4 Perspectives of the interviewees

In general terms responses of interviewees were very helpful and supportive of the research; all felt it was a subject worthy of study. This section considers some of the differences in perspective of the various groups of experts interviewed but does not relate to any one individual. These are impressions rather than the results of specific study, as the research was focussed on policies and not on people. It should also be noted that whilst, for the purposes of the interviews, people were allocated to a specific category, in practice some of them could also have been put in one of the other categories. Therefore in this section, interviewees are considered in all relevant categories, for example they may be both an adviser and a lobbyist, or an information professional and an academic.

10.4.4.1 Policy-makers and policy implementers

Those working within government were very positive about the work that they were doing and the progress that there had been in their particular area. They were much more open to the

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[1343] A checklist of practical advice on interviewing experts, based on experienced gained during this research, was presented to an Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded PhD workshop at Loughborough University in July 2010. *See* Annex I.

ideas behind transparent government than might have been imagined from the national press, and their vision and thoughtfulness was encouraging. The impression was gained that they felt that departments outside the Cabinet Office and The National Archives (TNA) were still siloised and inward-looking and it would take time for the culture of openness to spread throughout government (this was in 2009 – they may take a different view now). Their view of progress in the provision of PSI was much more positive than the view of those outside government. It is speculated that this might be for various reasons:

- their natural enthusiasm for their work
- the desire to impress and justify themselves to the outside world
- they were seeing the work from a different perspective (particularly provider rather than user) and therefore judging by different criteria
- communication of messages on current progress lags behind actual progress.

Having said this, they were not complacent and were aware that there was still much to be done.

10.4.4.2 Regulators and advisors

Regulators and advisers were a little less positive than those in government although they were impressed by staff in the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) and the Cabinet Office that they worked with. Because of their varying backgrounds, there was less of a common view from them, so further generalisations cannot be drawn.

10.4.4.3 Lobbyists and campaigners

Some of the most thoughtful views were expressed by the lobbyists and campaigners. Between them they had a thorough understanding of the issues involved but were also quite critical of government progress. They had assessed where the rhetoric fell short of the practice. Having said that, the views of those that provided third party information services were particularly critical of the provision of PSI for re-use and were, perhaps understandably, less interested in wider policy issues.

10.4.4.4 Academics

The responses from academics suggested that there was little current work being done in this policy area. Those that were also from the information profession were thoughtful about the value of information to government and citizens.

10.4.4.5 Information professionals

Information professionals were the most negative about government progress in the provision of PSI to citizens, in some cases extremely negative. This is probably partly due to their focus on meeting user needs and designing services around users; they were looking at the issues from the user's end, not the producer's end. They also felt that government speaks a different language – and the feeling is probably mutual. Coming from an information background, this researcher had no problems communicating with those in the profession, but she has also worked with various government departments, had a thorough immersion in the subject area, and has become familiar with the language of the other interviewees. Again in general terms, the information profession felt that government did not "understand" information while some in government felt that the information profession was not the future – others were taking up the information mantle and a new breed of person was needed.

10.4.5 Professional bias of the researcher

It is important to stress that this researcher comes from an information professional background, having worked in information policy for 20 years prior to starting the PhD. This inevitably meant that the researcher was looking at the issues from the perspective of an information professional and using the language of the profession, and naturally had rapport with the information professionals and academics interviewed through the common bond of this perspective. However, as far as possible she maintained an independent and unbiased approach, neither in favour of, nor opposed to, the information profession. Part of the reason for doing this research was that the information profession had not been looking at these issues in recent years; research had been done by technologists or public policy experts.

10.4.6 Originality and contribution of the research

This research has been the first within the information policy academic community in the UK to address how government is opening up its data to citizens in the wake of new technological innovations and its desire to be seen to be more transparent and focussed on the needs of citizens. Others with a public administration or technical background have addressed some of the broader issues but no one, as far as can be ascertained, has looked at the work of OPSI and the influence of the Power of Information agenda. Nor have other researchers addressed how implementation of policy on the provision of PSI could be evaluated, particularly drawing on current evaluation activities rather than inventing new ones. The approach of combining PESTEL analysis with Rudyard Kipling's "six honest serving men"[1344] of who, what, why, where, when and how is an original contribution to the cannon of work on evaluation frameworks.

[1344] Kipling, ref. 380382.

In conclusion, this research has been the first large-scale project in the United Kingdom to address government policy on the provision of public sector information to citizens. It has shown that this is an area where significant progress has been made in opening up government data but that there is a long way to go; there will be many further opportunities for academic researchers to investigate the boundaries between information policy, public administration, and the use of Web 2.0 and beyond in government. It is hoped that this research will help to stimulate a new wave of information policy research within the information academic community and encourage discussion within the information profession as a whole. The information profession ought to be at the heart of the new developments in the provision of public sector information services, and be seen to be at the heart, if it is to stay relevant in the 21st century.

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Annexes

Annex A: Weblilography

Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information, Great Britain	http://www.appsi.gov.uk/
Cabinet Office, Great Britain	http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/
Central Office of Information, Great Britain	http://www.coi.gov.uk/
Central Sponsor for Information Assurance, Great Britain	http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/csia.aspx/
Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Great Britain	http://www.cilip.org.uk
Chief Information Officer Council, Great Britain	http://www.cio.gov.uk/
Coalition for Public Information	http://www.la-hq.org.uk/liaison/copi/copi.html/
Communities and Local Government, Great Britain	http://www.communities.gov.uk/
DEMO-net	http://www.demo-net.org/demo/research_exchange/
Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform, Great Britain	http://www.berr.gov.uk/
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Great Britain	http://www.bis.gov.uk/
Department for Children, Schools and Families, Great Britain	http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/
Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Great Britain	http://www.culture.gov.uk/
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	http://www.defra.gov.uk
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, Great Britain	http://www.dius.gov.uk/
Department of Health, Great Britain	http://www.dh.gov.uk/
Directgov	http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm/
European eGov Society	http://www.egov-society.org/

Hansard Society	http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/
Home Office, Great Britain	http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/
Identity and Passport Service, Great Britain	http://www.ips.gov.uk/
Information Age Partnership	http://www.iapuk.org/
Information Commissioner's Office, Great Britain	http://www.ico.gov.uk/
Information Tribunal, Great Britain	http://www.informationtribunal.gov.uk/
Library and Information Commission, Great Britain	http://web.archive.org/web/20001205190000/http://www.lic.gov.uk/
Ministry of Justice, Great Britain	http://www.justice.gov.uk/
Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, Great Britain	http://www.mla.gov.uk/
The National Archives, Great Britain	http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/
NHS Direct, Great Britain	http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/
Office for Communications (Ofcom), Great Britain	http://www.ofcom.org.uk/
Office for National Statistics, Great Britain	http://www.ons.gov.uk/
Office for Public Sector Information, Great Britain	http://www.opsi.gov.uk/
Open Knowledge Foundation	http://www.okfn.org/
Politech Institute: European Center of Political Technologies	http://www.politech-institute.org/
Power of Information Task Force, Great Britain	http://powerofinformation.wordpress.com/
Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce	http://www.rsa.org.uk/
UK National Statistics publications hub	http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html
UK Statistics Authority	http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/

Annex B: Glossary and abbreviations

APPSI	Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information
BERR	Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BL	British Library
BLRIC	British Library Research and Innovation Centre
CICI	Confederation of Information Communication Industries
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CIO	Chief Information Officer
CIOC	Chief Information Officer Council
COI	Central Office of Information
COINS	Combined Online Information System
CoPI	Coalition for Public Information
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
Directgov	Portal to UK government websites aimed at the citizen
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
DOI	Digital Object Identifier
Dti	Department of Trade and Industry
eDemocracy	the use of technology to empower citizens to have greater influence on, and involvement in, government
eGovernment	the use of new technology by government to improve the efficiency of internal processes, and provide better and new services to stakeholders
eGovernance	a set of technology-mediated processes that are changing both the delivery of public services and the broader interactions between citizens and government
eParticipation	the use of technology to empower citizens to have greater influence on, and involvement in, government
EU	European Union
FoI	Freedom of Information
G2C	Government-to-Citizen communication
G2G	Government-to-Government communication
HM Government	Her Majesty's Government
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
HMT	Her Majesty's Treasury
ICO	Information Commissioner's Office

ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
INSPIRE	Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community
LIC	Library and Information Commission
LINC	Library and Information Co-operation Council
MLA	Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
NHS	National Health Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofcom	Office for Communications – the UK regulator for communications services
OPSI	Office for Public Sector Information
OS	Ordnance Survey
PoI	Power of Information
PSI	Public sector information
Public sector information	Information collected or created by government and government agencies which is made available to individuals and organisations to help them run their lives, make decisions and prosper
RDFa	Resource Description Framework – in – attributes
RSA	Royal Society for the encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce
TNA	The National Archives
SKOS	Simple Knowledge Organization System
URI	Uniform Resource Identifier
W3C	World Wide Web Consortium
XML	Extensible Markup Language

Annex C: Journal alerts, printed journals, eNewsletters, blogs and feeds regularly scanned

Journal alerts

Action Research

Administration & Society

American Review of Public Administration

Electronic Journal of E-Government Research

Evaluation

Evaluation Review

IFLA Journal

Informatica

International Journal of Communication

International Journal of Electronic Government Research

Journal of Information Science

Journal of Librarianship and Information Science

Journal of Mixed Methods Research

Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory

New Media & Society

Policy and Internet

Political Research Quarterly

Qualitative Research

Printed journals

Economist

Government Communications Magazine

Government Libraries Journal

Information World Review

Library & Information Gazette

Library & Information Update

Managing Information

RSS News

eNewsletters

e-Access Bulletin (Headstar)

E-gov Newsletter (Public Service News)

e-Government Bulletin (Headstar)

GC Weekly (Government Computing)

Hansard Society Newsletter

ICO Newsletter (Information Commissioner's Office)

OII Newsletter (Oxford Internet Institute)

Open Knowledge Foundation Newsletter

RSS eNews (Royal Statistical Society)

CI Webworld Weekly (Unesco)

Blogs and Feeds

Helpful Technology (Steph Gray)

Digital Engagement (Cabinet Office)

Tom Watson MP

John Suffolk, Chief Information Officer

Open Knowledge Foundation blog

COMMUNIA blog

Information Policy

No10

Civil Service Live

They Work For You

House of Commons Library Research Papers

POST (Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology)

Annex D: UK government policy initiatives

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Annex E: Interviewees

All interviews were face-to-face unless otherwise specified. Job titles/roles are as at the time of the interview.

Policy makers and implementers

Name	Relevance	Interview date
Jim Wretham Head of Information Policy, OPSI	Long experience of information policy in government.	London 23.02.2009
David Pullinger Head of Digital Policy Central Office of Information	In charge of government websites/digital government policy.	London 16.04.2009
John Suffolk Chief Information Officer	Head of IT profession in UK government.	London 03.08.2009.
John Sheridan Head of e-Services and Strategy OPSI	Leading on linked data and in charge of publishing legislation.	London 11.08.2009
Jayne Nickalls Chief Executive, Directgov	In charge of the Directgov website portal.	London 01.09.2009
Senior staff member The National Archives	[Note: unable to contact to confirm approval for crediting quotes.]	London 11.05.2009

Policy regulators and advisers

Name	Relevance	Interview date
Chris Batt Ex Chief Executive MLA	Previously managed the People's Network and was chief executive of government library policy NDPB	London 05.03.2009
Lord Richard Allan Facebook Europe	Chairman Power of Information Taskforce.	London 08.05.2009
Michael Nicholson Intelligent Addressing & Deputy Chair, PSI Alliance	Expert member of APPSI Panel, spoke at COMMUNIA conference 2009	London 08.07.2009
Prof David Rhind Chairman of APPSI.	Formerly CEO Ordnance Survey and Chairman Statistics Commission	London 05.08.2009
Steve Wood Head of Policy Delivery Information Commissioners Office	Responsible for freedom of information and data protection policy delivery at Information Commissioner's Office.	London 17.11.2009

Academics

Name	Relevance	Interview date
Rita Marcella Dean, Aberdeen Business School	Has done relevant research on citizenship information and very experienced at research more widely. Chair of AHRC Panel on Libraries, Museums and Archives so familiar with these research plans.	Aberdeen 15.07.2009
Graeme Baxter Aberdeen Business School	Has done research on citizenship information and Scottish Parliament electronic consultation.	Aberdeen 15.07.2009
Panos Hahamis Westminster Business School	Lectures in eGovernment and chaired the European Conference on eGovernment.	London 30.07.2009.
Dr Ian Brown Oxford Internet Institute	Research fellow at the Oxford Internet Institute, Oxford University, and an honorary senior lecturer at University College London. Member of the Open Rights Group. Focused on public policy issues around information and the Internet, particularly privacy, copyright and eDemocracy.	London 25.08.2009
Professor Stephen Saxby Southampton University	Has researched into re-use and copyright.	Southampton 09.09.2009

Information profession

Name	Relevance	Interview date
Peter Griffiths President, CILIP	Previously Head of Information at the Home Office. Chairman of the Committee of Departmental Librarians. President CILIP in 2009. Very forward-looking on adoption of ICT.	London 11.02.2009
Professor Nick Moore Acumen Research and Consultancy	Experienced researcher in information policy.	Telephone interview 19.02.2009

Name	Relevance	Interview date
John Pullinger House of Commons Librarian	Formerly no. 2 at ONS. Now in charge of developing the information policy for Parliament, including access by the public using channels other than the web.	London 06.04.2009
Dame Lynne Brindley Chief Executive, The British Library	Key player in national information policies in British Library role.	Telephone interview 28.10.2009
Gwenda Sippings Freelance consultant	Previously Head of Information Services for HM Revenue & Customs and Head of Profession for Knowledge and Information Management within government.	London 01.09.2009
Guy Daines Policy Director CILIP	Secretary to Policy Action Group on National Information Policy and in charge of policy for the library and information professional body	London 09.12.2009

Lobbyists and campaigners

Name	Relevance	Interview date
David Worlock Electronic Publishing Services	Previously on APPSI. Very experienced in electronic publishing and adviser on the EU PSI regulations.	London 26.02.2009
Dr Andy Williamson Director eDemocracy , Hansard Society	Spoke powerfully on *Digital Britain* and government use of social networking at ECEG conference.	London 28.07.2009
William Heath Kable/Ideal Government Project, Open Rights Group, Ctrl-Shift	Consultant/campaigner on improvements to government services.	London 07.09.2009
Tom Steinberg Director, mySociety	Runs TheyWorkForYou, FixMyStreet and other mash-up sites and is co-author of the *Power of Information Review.*	Sent replies by email 18.08.2009
Michael Cross Freelance journalist	Ran the Free Our Data campaign with the *Guardian's* Charles Arthur.	Telephone interview 03.11.2009

Annex F: General interview questions

	Questions	**Probing if necessary**
	Values/Principles	
1.	In the context of its overall priorities, how important do you consider the provision of public sector information to be to the government?	(a) for the government, (b) for yourself In your view, how does it fit in with the government's overall priorities?
2.	Do you think the UK needs an overarching information policy? If so, how would policy on the provision of public sector information to citizens sit within that?	
	Policy-making	
3.	In your experience, who makes the information policy affecting government in general and OPSI/National Archives in particular?	What is the balance between politicians/civil servants/other departments/advisers/think tanks/others? Or between top-down imposed policy from, say, the Cabinet Office and Ministry of Justice and cross-departmental networking for deciding and imposing policy and its implementation?
4.	How has this changed over the last 10 years?	Has this been an improvement and, if so, how? In your view, how could this policy-making process be improved further?
	Coordination	
5.	How has co-ordination of information policy (on citizens' access to PSI) changed over the last 10 years?	What have been the main factors influencing this change?
6.	In your view, what are the key relationships within government on policy relating to the provision of PSI to the public?	There has been a series of restructurings of government departments which oversee information/IT policy:
7.	In your opinion, how fit for purpose are OPSI and APPSI?	
8.	*OPSI*: What is your experience of the move of the Office for Public Sector Information (OPSI) from the Cabinet Office to the National Archives (TNA)?	What do you think was the motivation for the move?

		Where did the impetus for the move come from?
		What have been the positive and negative aspects of the move?
9.	In your experience, what factors inhibit or support inter-departmental coordination in the provision of PSI to the public?	eg structure of governance; costs; manpower/skills; culture Who pays for cross-departmental policy implementation? Is this a problem? What problems have there been in achieving buy-in for information policies across government departments and how have these problems been addressed?
	Access to public sector information	
10.	*Citizen-centric services*: In your view, how successful has the government been so far in restructuring its services to be citizen-centric, as per the Transformational Government agenda, in relation to provision of PSI to the public?	The Prime Minister has recently pledged to make services more personalised. What do you understand this to mean in terms of the provision of PSI? Has the consolidation of government websites through Directgov been beneficial for the citizen? What have been the main factors affecting progress in implementing this consolidation?
11.	*Access to public sector information*: In your view, how successful is government in ensuring that ALL citizens have access to PSI, regardless of channel?	Who within government speaks for the citizen on access to PSI? What are the main gaps between the aspiration and achievement in providing citizens with access to PSI? How does government assess the take-up, or not, of its information services? In your view, what impact might a lack of trust in government have on this take-up?
12.	*Content*: In your experience, who decides what the content of PSI should be, and how?	How do they assess user needs? How is this balanced against the needs of government, including financial and security implications? How are users involved in the design of services? How is user satisfaction assessed?

13.	*Skills*: In your understanding, how is policy being taken forward for ensuring that citizens have information skills, not just IT skills, to make the best use of the information?	Who within government has the responsibility? DCSF, DIUS, BERR? DCMS? Does government have a clear understanding of what information skills are?
	Evaluation	
14.	In your experience, how does, and should, the government evaluate the success of its information policy, generally or specifically on citizens' access to PSI?	Who, what, where, when, how, why How is this evaluation funded? How is this evaluation reported? How are the results of this evaluation fed back into policy-making? How are lessons learned from past projects? In your view, how suited are quantitative targets to measuring progress of this kind of policy? Are qualitative measures more suitable?
	Power of Information review	
15.	What do you think was the impetus behind the Power of Information Review?	
16.	What impact do you think the Taskforce is having on the way that government provides information to citizens and having on OPSI?	How has the review changed (or reflected an already changing) culture within government? Workload, culture, influence, attitudes, costs

Annex G: Evaluation framework testing

This Annex is in two sections. The first section, Tables G:1 – G:6 show the results of a trial to test how performance indicators identified in Chapter 8 (Findings: Evaluation of government policy on citizens' access to public sector information) could be integrated into the framework for evaluating implementation of UK government policy on citizens' access to public sector information. The abbreviations used are those used in the original documents relating to the indicators; these are outlined in Table 8.2, p.214. More indicators could be added to the tables as they become available, but the lack of indicators in various segments shows where the gaps are in the development of indicators.

The second section shows how each of the Power of Information (PoI) Taskforce recommendations have been implemented, as at 30 October 2010 and which elements of the evaluation framework apply to each recommendation, in order to see where there are gaps in evaluation mechanisms suitable for evaluating PoI progress.

Suggestions for evaluation are of course based on an ideal situation with no financial restrictions. The extent to which evaluation is useful and cost-effective needs to be considered as well as whether it is possible.

Performance indicators

Table G:1: Why: Meeting strategic goals

	Indicators that already exist	Data sources	Potential indicators	Data sources
Political factors	**UK**:COI A. Satisfaction with visit to website **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	Pop-up survey	**UK**: None **EU**: eGEP 30. % in improved planning and policy-making score eGEP 46.% change in aggregate openness score eGEP 53. % increase in externally assessed transparency score eGEP 54. % increase in online public services with certified accessibility eGep 55. % increase in externally assessed participation score eGEP 70. % in number of users reporting eGovernment services to be useful eGEP 74. % in overall eGovernment user satisfaction index	Internal self-assessment Third party assessment Third party assessment Web crawler Third party assessment Random sample survey Random sample survey

Political factors cont.			eGEP 75. % in overall eGovernment user satisfaction index by age/income/educational attainment	Random sample survey
			eGEP 86. % of Internet penetration by age/income/educational attainment	Random sample survey
			eGEP 87. % increase of eGovernment usage by socially disadvantaged groups	Random sample survey
			C32. % of individuals with computer skills	Random sample survey
			C33. % of individuals with internet skills	Random sample survey
			E1. Online availability and interactivity of 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises	Third party assessment
			E2. % of individuals using the internet for interacting with public authorities by level of sophistication	Random sample survey
			UN: None	
			Other: None	
Economic factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None		**UK: None** **EU**: eGEP 54. % increase in online public services with certified accessibility	Web crawler

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Economic factors cont.	**Other**: None		eGEP 87. % increase of eGovernment usage by socially disadvantaged groups	Random sample survey
			C32. % of individuals with computer skills	Random sample survey
			C33. % of individuals with internet skills	Random sample survey
			E1. Online availability and interactivity of 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises	Third party assessment
			E2. %of individuals using the internet for interacting with public authorities by level of sophistication	Random sample survey
			UN: None	
			Other: None	
Social factors	**UK**: None		**UK**: None	
	EU: None		**EU**: eGEP 46 % change in aggregate openness score	Third party assessment
	UN: None		eGEP 53. % increase in externally assessed transparency score	Third party assessment
	Other: None		eGEP 54. % increase in online public services with certified accessibility	Web crawler
			eGep 55. % increase in externally assessed participation score	Third party assessment

Social factors cont.				eGEP 70. % in number of users reporting eGovernment services to be useful	Random sample survey
				eGEP 74. % in overall eGovernment user satisfaction index	Random sample survey
				eGEP 75. % in overall eGovernment user satisfaction index by age/income/educational attainment	Random sample survey
				eGEP 86. % of Internet penetration by age/income/educational attainment	Random sample survey
				eGEP 87. % increase of eGovernment usage by socially disadvantaged groups	Random sample survey
				C32. % of individuals with computer skills	Random sample survey
				C33. % of individuals with internet skills	Random sample survey
				E1. Online availability and interactivity of 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises	Third party assessment
				E2. %of individuals using the internet for interacting with public authorities by level of sophistication	Random sample survey
				UN: None	
				Other: None	

Technical factors	**UK**:COI A. Satisfaction with visit to website **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	Pop-up survey	**UK**: None **EU**: eGEP 54. % increase in online public services with certified accessibility E1. Online availability and interactivity of 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises E2. % of individuals using the internet for interacting with public authorities by level of sophistication **UN**: None **Other**: None	Web crawler Third party assessment Random sample survey
Environmental factors	**UK**: COI A. Satisfaction with visit to website **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	Pop-up survey	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	
Legal factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: eGEP 46 % change in aggregate openness score **UN**: None **Other**: None	Third party assessment

Table G:2: Who: Perspectives of stake-holders

	Indicators that already exist	Data sources	Potential indicators	Data sources
Political factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: eGep 55. % increase in externally assessed participation score C32. % of individuals with computer skills C33. % of individuals with internet skills E2. % of individuals using the internet for interacting with public authorities by level of sophistication **UN**: None **Other**: None	Third party assessment Random sample survey Random sample survey Random sample survey
Economic factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: eGEP 54. % increase in online public services with certified accessibility eGEP 62. % K€ cost savings for citizens (travel, postage, fees to intermediaries)	Web crawler Standard Cost Model Calculations

Economic factors cont.			**UN**: None **Other**: None	
Social factors	**UK**: COI A. Satisfaction with visit to website **UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	Pop-up survey	**UK**: None	
			EU: eGEP 54. % increase in online public services with certified accessibility	Web crawler
			eGep 55. % increase in externally assessed participation score	Third party assessment
			eGEP 60. % in time saved by citizens	Standard Cost Model Calculations
			eGEP 62. % K€ cost savings for citizens (travel, postage, fees to intermediaries)	Standard Cost Model Calculations
			eGEP 68. % in number of unique users repeatedly using elective online services	Web metrics
			eGEP 70. % in number of users reporting eGovernment services to be useful	Random sample survey
			eGEP 72. % in number of users reporting government website to satisfactorily address security and privacy issues	Random sample survey

			eGEP 74. % in overall eGovernment user satisfaction index	Random sample survey
Social factors cont.			eGEP 75. % in overall eGovernment user satisfaction index by age/income/educational attainment	Random sample survey
			C32. % of individuals with computer skills	Random sample survey
			C33. % of individuals with internet skills	Random sample survey
			E2. % of individuals using the internet for interacting with public authorities by level of sophistication	Random sample survey
			UN: None	
			Other: None	
Technical factors	**UK**: COI A. Satisfaction with visit to website **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	Pop-up survey	**UK**: None	
			EU: eGEP 12. % public servants eGov/ICT skills	Qualitative internal self-assessment/ Employee surveys
			eGEP 72. % in number of users reporting government website to satisfactorily address security and privacy issues	Random sample survey
			UN: None **Other**: None	

	Indicators that already exist	Data sources	Potential indicators	Data sources
Environmental factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	
Legal factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: eGEP 59. Availability of online appeals procedure and e-ombudsman eGEP 72. % in number of users reporting government website to satisfactorily address security and privacy issues **UN**: None **Other**: None	Third party assessment Random sample survey

Table G:3: How: How information is presented

	Indicators that already exist	Data sources	Potential indicators	Data sources
Political factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: None	

	UN: None **Other**: None		**UN**: None **Other**: None	
Economic factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: eGEP 52. % in online public information clarity and accuracy score eGEP 54. % increase in online public services with certified accessibility **UN**: None **Other**: None	Third party assessment Web crawler
Social factors	**UK**: COI A. Satisfaction with visit to website COI C(i). Ease of use of website COI C(ii). Attractiveness of design COI C(iii). Ease of finding information/services COI C(vi). Usefulness of site search COI D. Likelihood of recommending website **EU**: None	Pop-up survey Pop-up survey Pop-up survey Pop-up survey Pop-up survey Pop-up survey	**UK**: None **EU**:eGEP 45. % in number of government websites providing two-way interaction with users eGEP 52. % in online public information clarity and accuracy score eGEP 54. % increase in online public services with certified accessibility eGEP 78. % in usability score C32. % of individuals with computer skills	Admin data/Web metrics Third party assessment Web crawler Third party assessment Random sample survey

Social factors cont.	**UN**: None **Other**: None		C33. % of individuals with internet skills E1. Online availability and interactivity of 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises **UN**: None **Other**: None	Random sample survey Third party assessment
Technical factors	**UK**: COI A: Satisfaction with visit to website COI C(i) Ease of use of website COI C(ii) Attractiveness of design COI C(iii) Ease of finding information/services COI C(vi) Usefulness of site search **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	Pop-up survey Pop-up survey Pop-up survey Pop-up survey Pop-up survey	**UK**: None **EU**: eGEP 12. % public servants eGov/ICT skills eGEP 26. % in number of integrated services available in main Government portal eGEP 42. & increase in number of government websites with Constituency Relationship Management Applications eGEP 45. % in number of government websites providing two-way interaction with users eGEP 52. % in online public information clarity and accuracy score eGEP 54. % increase in online public services with certified accessibility	Qualitative internal self-assessment/ Employee surveys Admin data/Third party assessment Third party assessment Admin data/Web metrics Third party assessment Web crawler

Technical factors cont.			eGEP 78. % in usability score	Third party assessment
			E1. Online availability and interactivity of 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises	Third party assessment
			UN: None	
			Other: None	
Environmental factors	**UK**: None		**UK**: None	
	EU: None		**EU**: eGEP 45. % in number of government websites providing two-way interaction with users	Admin data/Web metrics
	UN: None		eGEP 26. % in number of integrated services available in main Government portal	Admin data/Third party assessment
	Other: None		**UN**: None	
			Other: None	
Legal factors	**UK**: None		**UK**: None	
	EU: None		**EU**: eGEP 54. % increase in online public services with certified accessibility	Web crawler
	UN: None		**UN**: None	
	Other: None		**Other**: None	

Table G:4: What: What information is provided

	Indicators that already exist	Data sources	Potential indicators	Data sources
Political factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: eGEP 41. % in number of policy drafts online for consultation eGEP 46.% change in aggregate openness score eGEP 47. % in number of government processes fully traceable online eGEP 49. % in number of public agencies reporting their budget and expenditure online eGEP 50. % in number of public agencies publishing online chart with indication of responsibility and contact information of each public servant eGEP 51. % in overall volume of administrative and legislative documentation online eGEP 53. % increase in externally assessed transparency score	Third party assessment Third party assessment Third party assessment Third party assessment Third party assessment/Web crawler Third party assessment/Web crawler Third party assessment

			eGEP 58. % increase in policy drafts downloaded	Web metrics
Political factors cont.			E1. Online availability and interactivity of 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises	Third party assessment
			UN: None	
			Other: None	
Economic factors	**UK**: None		**UK**: None	
	EU: None		**EU**: eGEP 51. % in overall volume of administrative and legislative documentation online	Third party assessment/Web crawler
	UN: None		eGEP 71. % in number of users reporting information available in government website to be accurate and credible	Random sample survey
	Other: None		**UN**: None	
			Other: None	
Social factors	**UK**:COI B Users found what they wanted	Pop-up survey	**UK**: None	
	COI C (iv). Clarity and ease of comprehension of information	Pop-up survey	**EU**: eGEP 41. % in number of policy drafts online for consultation	Third party assessment
	COI: C (v). Accuracy and timeliness of information	Pop-up survey	eGEP 46. % change in aggregate openness score	Third party assessment

Social factors cont.	COI C(vi). Usefulness of site search	Pop-up survey	eGEP 47. % in number of government processes fully traceable online	Third party assessment
	COI D. Likelihood of recommending website	Pop-up survey	eGEP 49. % in number of public agencies reporting their budget and expenditure online	Third party assessment
	EU: None		eGEP 50. % in number of public agencies publishing online chart with indication of responsibility and contact information of each public servant	Third party assessment/Web crawler
	UN: None			
	Other: None		eGEP 51. % in overall volume of administrative and legislative documentation online	Third party assessment/Web crawler
			eGEP 53. % increase in externally assessed transparency score	Third party assessment
			eGEP 58. % increase in policy drafts downloaded	Web metrics
			eGEP 71. % in number of users reporting information available in government website to be accurate and credible	Random sample survey
			E1. Online availability and interactivity of 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises	Third party assessment
			UN: None	
			Other: None	

Technical factors	**UK**: COI C (iv). Clarity and ease of comprehension of information	Pop-up survey	**UK**: None	
	COI: C (v). Accuracy and timeliness of information	Pop-up survey	**EU**: None	
	COI C(vi). Usefulness of site search	Pop-up survey	**UN**: None	
	EU: None		**Other**: None	
	UN: None			
	Other: None			
Environmental factors	**UK**: None		**UK**: None	
	EU: None		**EU**: eGEP 41. % in number of policy drafts online for consultation	Third party assessment
	UN: None		eGEP 47. % in number of government processes fully traceable online	Third party assessment
	Other: None		eGEP 49. % in number of public agencies reporting their budget and expenditure online	Third party assessment
			eGEP 51. % in overall volume of administrative and legislative documentation online	Third party assessment/Web crawler
			UN: None	
			Other: None	

Legal factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: eGEP 50. % in number of public agencies publishing online chart with indication of responsibility and contact information of each public servant **UN**: None **Other**: None	Third party assessment

Table G:5: Where: channels used for providing information

	Indicators that already exist	**Data sources**	**Potential indicators**	**Data sources**
Political factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**:eGEP 22. % in number of personnel redeployed to front line activities eGEP 44. % increase in number of government websites providing platforms for digital interaction and consultation (online forum, e-petitioning etc) eGEP 57. % increase in online forum interaction	Admin data Third party assessment Web metrics

Political factors cont.			E1. Online availability and interactivity of 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises	Third party assessment
			UN: None	
			Other: None	
Economic factors	**UK**: None		**UK**: None	
	EU: None		**EU**: eGEP: 22. % in number of personnel redeployed to front line activities	Admin data
	UN: None		eGEP 56. % increase in queries submitted online	Web metrics
	Other: None		eGEP 76. % in number of government websites providing customer service (online call centre)	Third party assessment
			eGEP 82. % in usage of public job portals	Web metrics
			eGEP 83. % in usage of public eLearning portals	Web metrics
			eGEP 84. % in usage of public eHealth portals	Web metrics
			E1. Online availability and interactivity of 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises	Third party assessment

Economic factors cont.			E2. % of individuals using the internet for interacting with public authorities by level of sophistication **UN**: None **Other**: None	Random sample survey
Social factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: eGEP 22. % in number of personnel redeployed to front line activities eGEP 44. % increase in number of government websites providing platforms for digital interaction and consultation (online forum, e-petitioning etc) eGEP 56. % increase in queries submitted online eGEP 57. % increase in online forum interaction eGEP 68. % in number of unique users repeatedly using elective online services eGEP 69. % in number of unique users cross-using services in Government portal	Admin data Third party assessment Web metrics Web metrics Web metrics Web metrics

Social factors cont.			eGEP 76. % in number of government websites providing customer service (online call centre)	Third part assessment
			eGEP 82. % in usage of public job portals	Web metrics
			eGEP 83. % in usage of public eLearning portals	Web metrics
			eGEP 84. % in usage of public eHealth portals	Web metrics
			E1. Online availability and interactivity of 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises	Third party assessment
			E2. % of individuals using the internet for interacting with public authorities by level of sophistication	Random sample survey
			UN: None	
			Other: None	
Technical factors	**UK**: None		**UK**: None	
	EU: None		**EU**: eGEP 23. % in number of IT-enabled face-to-face contact points	Admin data
	UN: None			
	Other: None		eGEP 26. % in number of integrated services available in main Government portal	Admin data/Third party assessment

Technical factors cont.			eGEP 44. % increase in number of government websites providing platforms for digital interaction and consultation (online forum, e-petitioning etc)	Third party assessment
			eGEP 69. % in number of unique users cross-using services in Government portal	Web metrics
			eGEP 82. % in usage of public job portals	Web metrics
			eGEP 83. % in usage of public eLearning portals	Web metrics
			eGEP 84. % in usage of public eHealth portals	Web metrics
			E1. Online availability and interactivity of 20 basic public services for citizens and enterprises	Third party assessment
			UN: None	
			Other: None	
Environmental factors	**UK**: None		**UK**: None	
	EU: None		**EU**: eGEP 23. % in number of IT-enabled face-to-face contact points	Admin data
	UN: None		eGEP 26. % in number of integrated services available in main Government portal	Admin data/Third party assessment
	Other: None			

Environmental factors cont.			eGEP: 44. % increase in number of government websites providing platforms for digital interaction and consultation (online forum, e-petitioning etc)	Third party assessment
			eGEP 76. % in number of government websites providing customer service (online call centre)	Third party assessment
			eGEP 82. % in usage of public job portals	Web metrics
			E2. % of individuals using the internet for interacting with public authorities by level of sophistication	Random sample survey
			UN: None	
			Other: None	
Legal factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	

Table G:6: When: Timescales and targets

	Indicators that already exist	Data sources	Potential indicators	Data sources
Political factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	
Economic factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	
Social factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: eGEP 43. % in response time to queries received online eGEP 60. % in time saved by citizens eGEP 67. % in off-hours service usage/downloads **UN**: None **Other**: None	Admin data/Third party assessment Standard Cost Model Calculations Web metrics Web metrics/Pop-up survey

Technical factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	
Environmental factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: eGEP 67. % in off-hours service usage/downloads **UN**: None **Other**: None	Web metrics/Pop-up survey
Legal factors	**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None		**UK**: None **EU**: None **UN**: None **Other**: None	

Power of Information Taskforce recommendations

This section of the annex includes each recommendation of the Power of Information Taskforce report, together with the government's response from *Digital engagement* and progress in implementing the recommendations as at 30 October 2010. See Section 8.5 for conclusions from the analysis. Progress against the recommendations, though not usually specified as such, is shown through the *digigov* (Central Office of Information Digital Policy Team blog), *Digital engagement* (the Digital Engagement Team blog – not used since the 2010 general election) and *data.gov.uk* (single access point for accessible government datasets but also including advice for developers, an ideas section and some applications developed from the datasets made available through data.gov.uk). In addition, various government policy documents relate to issues raised in the recommendations, including, for example, the changes to availability of information from Ordnance Survey. However progress was frequently hard to assess. The government responded in various instances that it would report in more detail in due course but it was not clear where and what form this would take, eg Recommendation 6 on training in public engagement as part of policy development.

Progress against the recommendations is included, as far as it could be ascertained, together with the Framework elements that would apply to the recommendations. The recommendations were not generally written in a way that made progress obvious in the absence of specific government reports and did not lend themselves to evaluation. Many recommendations, perhaps inevitably, related to outputs rather than the hoped for outcomes. With the exception of the Central Office of Information (COI) annual measures of website costs, quality and usage, there are not benchmarks or other metrics that could be used to assess progress.

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 1

Recommendation of Taskforce:
Public servants should take part in online peer support forums as a matter of course. Public bodies should investigate and publish lists of the major forums in their areas of responsibility and engage with these following a published plan. A cross-governmental list and set of Departmental plans should be published by the Cabinet Office by Q3 2009 with a follow up report on progress in Q1 2010. This builds on the enabling work advised by the Taskforce on the publication of social media guidance for civil servants.

Government response:
Accepted – The Cabinet Office have commissioned COI [Central Office of Information] to produce:
- An analysis of the major online communities in the UK, broken down by policy area.
- A set of practical guides to assist policy makers in how to engage with those communities.

These will be published online and distributed to departments as appropriate, accompanied by a methodology to allow each department to review and maintain its own list(s).

Progress:

The COI has produced guidance on social engagement:

> Great Britain. Central Office of Information. Engaging through social media. <http://www.coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=264>, 2009, [accessed 27.08.2010].

Evaluation issues:

Reports can show what should happen in the way of civil servant engagement but how can one measure the quality and amount of that engagement: user satisfaction?

Framework elements:

PWhy1, PWhy2, SWhy1, LWhy2, PWho2, SWho1, SWho2, SWho3

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 2

Recommendation of Taskforce:

Public servants will require adequate internet access to take part in social media as part of their job. The Cabinet Office should work with staff involved in setting access rules and defining standard browser capabilities and issue guidance.

Government response:

Accepted in principle – Whilst each department is responsible for its own security policy, the Cabinet Office ensures that this is based on a shared assessment of the risks and benefits offered by collaboration and social media. The technical controls should mirror and reflect the trust placed in staff through other guidance like HR guidance. The Cabinet Office guidance will be ready by summer. Departments will have reviewed their guidance by the autumn.

Progress:

No published guidance on technical controls found.

Evaluation issues:

Internal staff surveys could show whether staff feel they have the appropriate access to implement the social media guidance.

Framework elements:

PHow2, TWhy2

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 3

Recommendation of Taskforce:

Unlock innovation in leading public sector sites using a 'backstage model', a standing open online innovation space allowing the general public and staff to co-create information-based public services. This capability should be a standard element of public information service design. The government should build on the new backstage service for Directgov.

Government response:

Accepted – has set up innovate.direct.gov.uk and will continue to resource the development of this for use by departments and the general public. A hosting environment for prototypes, developed using cloud computing services, will be ready by September 2009 at the latest. Directgov will work with other parts of government to take this forward. Directgov will continue to collaborate with BBC Backstage in developing this backstage capability.

There are obvious synergies with other recommendations, for example the outputs of recommendation 14 will be considered for incorporation in the innovation space.

Progress:

Directgov Innovate site available at: http://innovate.direct.gov.uk/. It provides space for developers to work with government, share actual applications based on Directgov data applications.

Evaluation issues:

This site could be evaluated by tracking the numbers of applications, ideas, comments posted, range of datasets used.

Framework elements:

EWhy2, EWhy3, EWho1, TWho2, THow1, THow4, SWhere2

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 4

Recommendation of Taskforce:

Invest in innovation that directly benefits the public by ensuring that public sector websites spend about as much on innovation as leading knowledge businesses. Directgov, BusinessLink and NHS Choices should create a combined innovation pot of 10% of their budgets, focussed on improving the public experience of government websites, through outside-in innovation not internal requirements. Some of this money should be used to support development of APIs for data with the greatest demand as demonstrated by 'backstage' communities and the OPSI data unlocking

service. Annual plans on how this £10m innovation pool is to be deployed should be published and agreed by a new Head of Digital Engagement.

Government response:
Partially accepted – The need for innovation in web services is clear. This is reflected in the aims and objectives of all of the government's major websites. Directgov, Businesslink and NHS Choices all have development plans that include innovation and will continue to do so. In particular:
Supporting the new innovate.direct.gov.uk site and growing it along the lines of BBC Backstage to provide a focal point for the community (see recommendation 3)
setting up DotGov labs, whereby a joint fund has been created that will be used to explore innovations that are of interest to all three parties
trialing the use of RDFa to enable syndication of granular information
developing feeds and widgets for their information
in house mash-ups eg of skills information

In total, the amounts to be invested in these innovations by all three parties is currently calculated to be in excess of 10% of current budgets, but separating this out is not feasible, especially as some innovations should be designed in such a way to make convergence more attractive and efficient.

The Director of Digital Engagement will be working with the boards to ensure that funding reflects their corporate priorities.

Progress:
Innovation is continuing but it is difficult to assess funding support.

Evaluation issues:
One cannot measure cost-benefit of investment if amount of investment is not clear.

Framework elements:
EWhat1

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 5

Recommendation of Taskforce:
To take advantage of the potential of new online techniques to open up the policy dialogue online the government needs to do the following:

- Clear and mandatory standards on accurate tagging and metadata which would allow consultations to be found by the subjects, interests and places they affect as well as by the policy issue
- Breaking down consultation papers from monolithic documents into navigable, searchable, separate points which can be commented upon individually
- Implementing the tools – readily available elsewhere on the internet – which allow people to comment on individual items, to comment on other's comments and to collaborate in developing and improving the content (perhaps through the sort of collective authorship we see on Wikipedia); the publication by DIUS of the Innovation White Paper and the Cabinet Office New Opportunities White Paper in this way are good examples of what can be done without major investment
- Participation by officials in the process in line with the Government's recently published code of practice on social media, so that the consultation period is one of active dialogue
- Use of the same tools to explain at the end of the consultation period, in the same level of detail, what the Government had decided and why
- Mandatory publication of consultation materials in open, semantic, electronic formats that not only allow the relevant government website to host the material but also allow others to take the material, present it, gather views and feed those back to government in innovative ways. The government should update the Code of Practice on Consultation maintained by the Better Regulation Executive in BERR to reflect these principles.

Government response:

Accepted – The internet offers Government the opportunity to engage in conversation around different elements of what can be quite broad policy areas. The government has already started to take advantage of this opportunity to engage online, with:

- Creation of commentariat in DIUS – as used by the Power of Information Taskforce report at http://poit.cabinetoffice.gov.uk .
- Aggregation of comments through #hashtags – as used for the opensource strategy
- Publication of white papers and command papers in XML as well as pdf – see the work published by OPSI.

COI has published a draft standard for marking up consultations so that they can be found through subjects, interests and places they affect and made it publicly available for all on http://code.google.com. By June 2009 a full draft standard will be published for public consultation. By summer 2009 a new service will be implemented on Directgov that gathers all consultations and online digital engagements into one place for searching.
The user will be able to select and include information about consultations into their own systems by the use of Data RSS/ATOM feeds, which will allow third parties to get access the information directly and prepare a coordinated response using their own tools.

The Cabinet Office will be working with other Government Departments to instil this best practice throughout Government. OPSI has developed a proof of concept for the conversion of Command

and House Papers (selected categories of these papers, focusing on Green Papers and White Papers) from PDF format to XML format, and an API which allows the addressing of content using a PRESTO5 style of approach. The API and new format for the information allows the data to be easily extracted and re-used. Twenty documents have been converted using this technology.

Progress:
Consultation portal through Directgov is now operational. Use of XML Sitemaps now being adopted across government electronic documents.

Evaluation issues:
Future evaluation could assess the extent to which the introduction of interactive consultations has increased public engagement. This would be only one of a number of factors affecting the engagement – social and political aspects also come into play.

Framework elements:
PWhy1, PWhy2, SWhy1, TWhy1, NWhy1, Who1, SWho2, SWho3, TWho2, PHow1, THow1, THow4, EWhat1, LWhat1, SWhere2

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 6

Recommendation of Taskforce:
A plan for supporting the change needed in policy development skills to make the most of online participation should be developed by Government Skills by end 2009, with a concomitant training plan from the National School for Government.

Government response:
The government accepts this recommendation in principle and will report against it in detail in the summer.

Progress:
The National School of Government runs a short course on engaging with citizens. A course on Stakeholder Engagement in Action: Engagement for Effective Public Policy Making had been withdrawn from the programme as at 30 October 2010.

Evaluation issues:
Evaluation would need to assess the change in culture and way of operating across government, not just whether courses exist. This is a long-term exercise.

Framework elements:
PWho1, PWho2, PWhy2

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 7

Recommendation of Taskforce:

It is the Taskforce's view that 'freeing up' geospatial data should be a priority. The Ordnance Survey requires urgent reform. Recent announcements of cost reductions at the Ordnance Survey point the way to wider reforms. This reform should include as a minimum:

- Basic geographic data such as electoral and administrative boundaries, the location of public buildings, etc should be available for (re)use free of charge to all.
- There should be simple, free access to general mapping and address data for modest levels of use by any user.
- Voluntary and community organisations pursuing public policy objects should benefit from straightforward standard provisions for ensuring access to geospatial data at all levels of use
- Licensing conditions should be simplified and standardised across the board and, for all but the heaviest levels of use, should be on standard terms and conditions and should not depend on the intended use or the intended business model of the user.
- The OpenSpace API, similar to but currently a constrained version of Google Maps, should become the primary delivery point for the Ordnance Survey's services
- Creation of a freely available single definitive address and postcode available for the UK for (re)use.

Government response:

Accepted in principle – The Government accepts the Taskforce's recommendation that geospatial data produced by the Ordnance Survey should be opened up and made more widely available in the economy and society.

A new strategy for Ordnance Survey was announced at Budget 2009 and is open for comment at http://strategy.ordnancesurvey.co.uk until 29 May 2009. The Ordnance Survey will continue to be self-funded and earn revenue by licensing its data but it will make sure it is easier for customers and other businesses to access its data and services. A key element of this will be a larger role for OS Openspace.

The strategy will be successful if it improves access to data and encourages new entrants to enter the market. The Office of Public Sector Information, in consultation with the Office of Fair Trading, will play an active part in the implementation of the Ordnance Survey business strategy to ensure that it results in better access to data and an improved market for customers. Government and OPSI, in consultation with OFT, will review progress with the strategy on a regular, on-going basis and particularly in 6 and 12 months time.

The question of addressing and a single national address database goes wider than Ordnance Survey and includes Royal Mail, local authorities and other public and private sector organisations. Government will look at this over the coming months with all parties.

The Shareholder Executive will be revising Ordnance Survey's public task and framework document to reflect the new business strategy. This process for determining the public task will include a formal Government 12-week public consultation.

Progress:
Putting the frontline first: smarter government gave commitment to opening up trading funds data, which was confirmed in the case of Ordnance Survey in the government's response to the public consultation. See: Great Britain. Department for Communities and Local Government. *Policy options for geographic information from Ordnance Survey – Consultation: Government response*, 2010. Internal and not-for profit access would be particularly significantly eased.

Evaluation issues:
It will be important to measure the difference in revenue, number of licences issued, number of users, number of companies re-using geospatial data as their core business and uses to which the data are put, comparing pre- and post- the opening up of OS data in April 2010. If results are positive, this could encourage other trading funds and bodies under Shareholder Executive, eg Royal Mail, to do likewise.

Framework elements:
EWhy1, EWhy2, EWhy3, LWhy1, PWho1, PWho2, EWho1, SWho1, SWho2, SWho3, EHow1, EHow2, THow1; LHow1, PWhat1, EWhat1, EWhat2, SWhat1 LWhat1, EWhen2

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 8

Recommendation of Taskforce:
Government should ensure that there is a uniform system of release and licensing applied across all public bodies; individual public bodies should not develop or vary the standard terms for their sector.
The system should create a 'Crown Commons' style approach, using a highly permissive licensing scheme that is transparent, easy to understand and easy to use, modelled on the 'Click Use' license, subject to the caveats below.
OPSI, part of the National Archives, should investigate how source code can be handled within the public sector information framework, and look into appropriate licensing terms drawing on best practice in the open source community.
The Government should report on the options for these three recommendations by end 2009 and if required, statutory measures should be brought forward not later than the 2009/2010 session.

Government response:
Accepted – The Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) is developing a new licence model, building on the success of the Click-Use Licence which was first launched in 2001. The new

licence model will take the licensing of government content to the next level. Users will not need to register and apply for a licence (which is the current process with the Click-Use Licence).

It will offer a high degree of interoperability in that the licence terms will be compatible with other standard licences such as Creative Commons and GNU Open Document Licence. The licence terms and conditions will be made available in beta version, for user feedback and comments on PSI Perspectives, on OPSI's website, by 15 May.

The new licence model reflects user feedback from over 1,300 respondents in a survey on the OPSI website, which was available from 13 – 27 March 2009. The details of which will be published on PSI Perspectives. The survey tested user perspectives on terminology used in the licensing system, such as Crown copyright, the licence application process and asked opinions on visual representations of the licensing systems such as symbols and images. This research confirmed the need for clarity and simplicity of terms; a streamlined process with explicit signposting underpinned by a level of reassurance that content can be used without breaking any rules.

The government will report on the options outlined in the Recommendation more widely by end of 2009, with an assessment of what action should be taken.

Progress:

The new Open Government Licence, for use across central and local government and using a Creative Commons-type approach, was launched on 30 September 2010.

Evaluation issues:

The number of authorities adopting the licence should be measured, and possibly linked to measurement of increase in new information services made available.

Framework elements:

EHow1, EWhen2

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 9

Recommendation of Taskforce:

OPSI, part of the National Archives, and COI should work on updated guidance on publishing information, including requirements for publication in legislation. Guidance should help information producers publish in a form that is cost-effective, reaches the largest audience and can easily be reused.

Government response:

Accepted – There is much that can be done quickly and at relatively little cost to enable government information for re-use using the web. Quite small changes can make a big difference. The government is working to:

- identify the data that we hold
- represent that data in ways that people can use
- expose the data to the wider world

To do this the government needs a combination of distributed and central services on the web. Major information holders, like the Office of National Statistics, are well placed to surface the data they control in re-usable way. However, not every department specialises in information publishing. The government is developing simple design patterns that enable re-use, while not disrupting other business aims.

OPSI and COI have been leading this work and have already developed several implementations that are live on the web. One powerful design pattern, used to unlock information in The London Gazette, is the use of a technology called RDFa. This is a new international standard for representing data inside traditional web pages. It enables existing websites to be tweaked or adapted for re-use without changing the appearance or structures.

Progress:

The COI has provided various guidance on the structuring of data. See: http://coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=188. The Statute Book has now been made accessible using linked data. *See*: www.legislation.gov.uk.

Evaluation issues:

Potential indicators to measure progress could be:
- increase in number of datasets published per department/public body
- increase in number of datasets published with XML coding
- increase of datasets published with RDFa coding

Framework elements:

EWho1, TWho2, PHow1, THow1, THow4, SHow1, PWhat1, EWhat1, EWhat2, SWhat2, LWhat1, EWhat3

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 10

Recommendation of Taskforce:

Public information should be available at marginal cost, which in practice means for free online. Exceptions to this rule should pass stringent tests to ensure that the national benefit is actually served by charging for information and thus limiting its re-use. OPSI (part of The National Archives) should define and consult publicly upon such tests which they then enforce.

Government response:

Accepted – Consistent with HM Treasury's existing Fees and Charges Guidance, most Government content is available for re-use at marginal cost; in practice free of charge. This maximises social and economic value.

Trading funds get a derogation from this to support their commercial activity. The basis on which trading funds should make their information available was clarified in Budget 2009.

Where government departments and agencies wish to charge for re-use they will need to demonstrate to OPSI that there is a valid reason for doing so. In assessing whether charges are appropriate, OPSI will apply a series of tests. These tests, in beta version, will be made available for public comment on PSI Perspectives by the end of May.

As OPSI will be responsible for approving whether particular content is charged for, OPSI itself will cease to license any government content that involves payments. This will involve a number of transitional arrangements being made by the end of 2009. Departments and agencies that satisfy the charging tests, will undertake the licensing themselves and will be subject to verification under the Information Fair Trader Scheme (IFTS).

All licensing of government content that involves the payment of a fee will be regulated under the enhanced version of the IFTS which was introduced on 1 April 2009. Building on existing principles of openness, transparency, fairness, challenge and compliance, extended, rigorous principles of maximisation, simplicity and innovation have been added. This raises the standards by requiring public sector bodies to demonstrate a more proactive and user responsive approach to their content.

Information on the enhanced IFTS can be found at: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ifts/ifts-principles. The first detailed verification under the enhanced IFTS took place in late April with the Coal Authority, a new member of the IFTS.

Progress:
Putting the frontline first: Smarter government made it clear that there was a change of direction with more data being made available free of charge, including some Ordnance Survey data. Still much data from trading funds is only available at considerable costs but the Coalition government is also committed to distributing many datasets free of charge.

Evaluation issues:
Potential indicators could be:

- % increase in number of documents/datasets available free of charge online
- number and nature of rulings by OPSI on what can be charged for/number where charging agreed

Framework elements:
EWhy1, EWhy2, EWhy3, EWho1

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 11

Recommendation of Taskforce:

Public bodies are often required to publish notices and other information in newspapers, by physical notices or by other means. The same information should now also be published directly to the internet. This will increase the opportunity for those people and businesses affected to see the information, either directly (for example, by search) or by others "mashing" the information in the ways promoted elsewhere in this report. In doing so, public bodies should follow the OPSI guidance and many may find it cost-effective to use the *London Gazette* service rather than develop their own systems.

Government response:

Accepted in principle – The government welcomes the recommendation to publish statutory notices online. It is in line with the broad direction of government policy in this area, e.g. the reform of the *London Gazette* itself and the work on insolvency notices.

The practical steps needed to implement this will be considered over the next few months and progress will be signposted via the Digital Engagement blog. Substantial reforms (e.g. legislative change) will be consulted on by the departments involved, including the degree to which use of online publication replaces other forms of notification.

Progress:

No details of proposed legislation regarding statutory notices have been found yet.

Evaluation issues:

Potential indicators could be:

- number of statutory and other notices published online only
- number of statutory notices published offline only
- number of statutory notices published online and offline

plus information on progress of legislation required to implement changes to online publication.

Framework elements:

NWhy1, PWhat1, EWhere1, TWhere1

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 12

Recommendation of Taskforce:

OPSI should begin a communications campaign to re-present and improve understanding of the permissive aspects of Crown Copyright along the lines of creative commons by end June 2009.

This should be combined with "permission to scrape" being given over Crown Copyright data, removing any risk of prosecution under the Computer Misuse Act. This might fall under the banner of a "Crown Commons" brand. OPSI should begin a communications campaign to that end by end June 2009.

Government response:
Accepted – The current Crown copyright regime is in general permissive and grants extensive rights to re-use government information. OPSI carried out detailed user testing around licensing and terminology targeted at a wider range of users of government information. The feedback confirmed certain negative user perceptions around the term "Crown copyright" as well as "copyright" and "licence". Many users felt that this language presented a barrier to use and re-use.

The same research shows a lack of awareness about the term "Creative Commons". This suggests that incorporating the word "Commons" would do little to overcome the perception that the process of re-using government content is opaque and complicated.

Based on the user responses OPSI is developing a simplified licensing model, supported by easy to understand guidance that will provide a level of clarity and reinforce the enabling aspects of licensing government data. This will be discussed on both the new PSI Perspectives and the Digital Engagement blogs.

Progress:
The Open Government Licence was formally launched on 30 September 2010. *See*: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/.

Evaluation issues:
Potential evaluation could be through comment on the PSI Perspectives and Digital Engagement blogs regarding clarity and usability of new licences. The take-up of the licence regime by other public bodies should also be measured but web metrics on the number of licences taken out will no longer be valid.

Framework elements:
EHow1

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 13

Recommendation of Taskforce:
As the internet changes, so should the way information is published. The taskforce has developed with stakeholders a model to inform online publishing. This breaks out information into several layers with external interfaces at each layer, allowing re-use both of the raw data

and the intervening software interfaces. OPSI should develop and further test the model and publish it with a delivery mechanism, implementation plan and explanatory material by end June 2009. It should become the standard to which new systems, or re-implemented versions of existing systems, are implemented from a date determined by the CIO Council.

Government response:
Accepted – OPSI will work with COI to make sure that this model is robust and works across the spectrum of government business. It will then be reviewed by the CTO council and will then be submitted to the Chief Information Officers Council for ratification. It should approved and published in final form by December.

Progress:
Guidance on the structure of data has been published on the COI website. See http://coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=188.

Evaluation issues:
Evaluation measures could be the number of departments using the new model to publish information, as well as the % increase in the datasets that they apply the structure to. Qualitative assessment by departments could identify the ease of use of models and problems in implementation, plus qualitative assessment by third party re-users of the ease of re-use of data produced using the new model.

Framework elements:
TWho2, THow1, THow4

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 14

Recommendation of Taskforce:
The government should ensure that public information data sets are easy to find and use. The government should create a place or places online where public information can be stored and maintained (a "repository") or its location and characteristics listed (an online catalogue). Prototypes should be running in 2009.

Government response:
Accepted – OPSI and the Chief Information Officers Council will create a data service, akin to the proposed data.gov, which will expose government's data feeds in a well ordered and useful way. It will provide a focal point for development using Government information. A basic service will go live in the next 3 months, with iterative improvements after that.

Government will be discussing the precise form that this service should take on the Digital Engagement blog.

Progress:
Data.gov.uk was formally launched in January 2010 after beta testing. It includes access to thousands of datasets, plus advice for developers and some of the applications that have been constructed using the data provided.

Evaluation issues:
The wiki on the data.gov.uk website provides space for feedback on the use of the datasets to produce new information services. Feedback to the site can give an indication of number of outputs of new services but not of the impact of these. The link between the new services and increased tax revenue to HM Treasury would be difficult to assess, as well as the impact of the new services on the ability of the citizen to find and use the information they need to run their lives.

Framework elements:
T How1, THow4, SWhere2

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 15

Recommendation of Taskforce:
Stay at the leading edge of customer driven service improvement. The Permanent Secretary for Government Communications should regularly publish best practice and innovation in engaging large number of people online such as Show Us a Better Way, Dell Ideastorm, Apps for Democracy, etc. An initial readout should be published on the Cabinet Office website by Q3 2009.

Government response:
Accepted – This guidance will be ready and published by Q3 2009. As soon as it is ready it will be published on the new Digital Engagement blog.

Progress:
Applications developed from datasets on the data.gov portal are now available but it is not clear what other guidance is intended. The digital engagement blog gave information on some initiatives but the COI guidance on public engagement refers to public relations campaigns.

Evaluation issues:
The publishing of information on initiatives does not necessarily lead to staying "at the leading edge of customer driven service improvement."

Framework elements: TWhy1, PWhy2, NWhy1, EWho1

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 16

Recommendation of Taskforce:

Communities and Local Government should work with local government to develop and adopt a Power of Information Beacon award. The criteria for this award should start with the Taskforce's proposed licensing model and be extended as best practice develops.

Government response:

Accepted in principle – The benefits to the citizen of increased accountability, personalisation and efficiency appear in local government as much as central government. The Government has already taken steps towards these goals through the Timely Information project run by CLG.

The Government recognises the need to reward local authorities who demonstrate best practice and will report more substantively on how best to achieve this in the summer. Beacon status is only one of the options we are considering.

Progress:

Professor Nigel Shadbolt is chairing the Local Data Panel to take forward the work on making local government data available for re-use. See: http://data.gov.uk/blog/local-public-data-panel-third-meeting-1st-june-2010.

Evaluation issues:

The Timely Information project is being evaluated by the Tavistock Institute. *See*: http://www.esd.org.uk/esdtoolkit/Communities/InformingCitizens/ContentView.aspx?ContentType=Content-361. Further work on rewarding good practice has not yet been identified.

Framework elements:

PWho2, PWho6 EHow1, SWhat1

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 17

Recommendation of Taskforce:

Government should encourage and assist the development of capability outside government in online empowerment or mutual support for public service outcomes, particularly in the Third Sector. It should also address the issue of those online organisations or people which are delivering clear, highly leveraged social value but which do not have a sustainable funding model. HMT and Cabinet Office, particularly the Office of the Third Sector, should bring forward proposals by end June 2009.

Government response:

Accepted in principle – The UK is in the privileged position of having a vibrant ecosystem of online communities and Third Sector providers of online services. These online communities often help to build social capital in excluded communities. In these strained times, their funding models will face increased pressure – leaving the sector overstretched.

The government has already taken steps to support these online providers. The Office of the Third Sector has a variety of programmes which are open to all third sector organisations including online communities and social networks. This includes the Innovation Exchange programme, an online platform for third sector innovators to collaborate, share knowledge and connect with other innovators, commissioners or investors.

To ensure that existing funding is easy to find and apply for, the Office for the Third Sector are introducing a funding gateway. The Funding Central website which will be launched in June, will contain comprehensive information about 4000+ funding opportunities for third sector organisations, including online social networks and communities. In addition, the website will contain:

- a help and support tool that will assist fund seekers in securing funding
- a partners' zone where fund seekers can identify relevant funding streams, collaborate on a contract, and provide mutual support and advice.

Progress:

The Funding Central website is available at: http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk/Default.aspx and the Innovation Exchange at: http://innovation-exchange.org/overview. The latter site is difficult to understand unless you already know what it is about. Evidence could not be found of specific proposals to support the third sector.

Evaluation issues:

It is difficult to evaluate implementation of this recommendation without the specific proposals for taking forward support, financial and otherwise, for the third sector's online engagement activity.

Framework elements:

SWho2, SWho3, EWhat1, SWhat1

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 18

Recommendation of Taskforce:

The Taskforce repeats Steinberg and Mayo's recommendation 12 on resourcing OPSI, a part of National Archives:

'*To ensure that OPSI can regulate the public sector information market effectively, government should review the fit between OPSI's functions and funding, and recommend options that will ensure it is fit for purpose.*'

Government response:
Accepted in principle – OPSI play an important role in delivering the Open Information elements of Digital Engagement. OPSI are part of the National Archives. National Archives will allocate resources across their corporate priorities.

Progress:
Funding of OPSI is hard to assess, particularly since its greater absorption into The National Archives. The effect of the Comprehensive Spending Review is too soon to ascertain but the opening up of reporting on government spending may show how much funding is going towards supporting the functions undertaken by OPSI.
.
Evaluation issues:
Evaluation is difficult without budgeting information.

Framework elements:
EWhat1

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 19

Recommendation of Taskforce:
The taskforce endorses the NAO report and urges the government to ensure that the NAO findings are implemented.

Government response:
Accepted – The Government is working to improve the cost-effectiveness of its web presence. The NAO Report "Government on the Internet" was considered by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) who subsequently published Report 16: Government on the Internet. The Government's response, accepting the NAO recommendations, was laid before the House on 17 September 2008.

COI has delivered a set of standards that meet the recommendations, publishing standards and guidance on: accessibility and delivering searchability in 2008; and cost and usage on 30 March 2009. A public consultation on "Improving Government Online", incorporating quality measures, ran from 17 March to 7 April 2009 and new quality standards will be published by May 2009.

A new interactive online Usability Toolkit was launched on 24 April 2009 to ensure that minimum standards of good practice are well understood and available. This can be found at www.coi.gov.uk/usability.

In summary, the COI has launched a package of tools and guidance that will make Government's web presence accessible, searchable and measurable. These can be found here www.coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=188.

Progress:
The toolkit has been published plus guidelines on website quality with timescale for implementation of guidance. The first annual report on websites was published in June 2010.

Evaluation issues:
The COI is now reporting annually on the results from the audits of websites, including costs, usability and quality. The number of websites covered will grow,

Framework elements:
THow1, THow2, THow3, THow4, THow5, TWhen1

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 20

Recommendation of Taskforce:
The Taskforce worked with the COI to produce 'usability' criteria and guidance for central government websites. These criteria should be published with an implementation plan to central government websites. The criteria and guidance should be published as soon as possible with an implementation plan by June 2009. The approach should be extended to the websites of the wider public sector including local government, health and police.

Government response:
Accepted – Following the Usability Review commissioned by the POI Task Force, an online interactive Usability Toolkit encompassing the findings was launched on 24 April 2009 www.coi.gov.uk/usability. This is available for use by all the public sector. COI is working with partners across the public sector to develop workshops and other training opportunities to improve quality and usability.

Progress:
The Toolkit has been published plus guidelines on website quality with timescale for implementation of guidance.

Evaluation issues:

The uptake of use of the toolkits on websites and training are quantitative measures. Impact of use of the toolkits may be shown through the annual audits of websites.

Framework elements:
THow1, THow2, THow3, THow4, THow5, TWhen1

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 21

Recommendation of Taskforce:
The web is developing all the time; so are ideas about how it and public sector information could be used. The Cabinet Office should have a modest fund for leading-edge R&D to continue to test ideas and incubate new capabilities, and it should co-ordinate R&D work in this area elsewhere in the public sector.

Government response:
Accepted – The government recognises the need for the Cabinet Office to coordinate R&D work and funding in this area across the public sector. The Cabinet Office's budget plans for 2009-10 includes a provision for Digital Engagement work. Urgent R&D work could be funded from this in advance of agreement of other sustainable funding streams.

Progress:
It is hard to tell whether the finance is sufficient but much work was done 2009/10 led from within the Cabinet Office. It remains to be seen how the research will be affected by the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review.

Evaluation issues:
Success would be continued investment in R & D for the Cabinet Office to maintain the momentum in developing access to public sector information. Budgeting for this would not be easy.

Framework elements:
EWhat1

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 22

Recommendation of Taskforce:
A new external high level advisory panel should replace the Taskforce, reporting to the Minister for the Cabinet Office. The Panel should advise Ministers and public servants on the latest developments in the area in the UK and overseas, scrutinise departmental plans and capabilities,

set priorities for the Cabinet Office's R&D fund, have a dialogue with the information community inside and outside government and drive and monitor progress in implementing the recommendations set out above. The Panel should work closely with the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information. It should publish regular reports on the internet about developments and the government's progress. The panel should be established by June 2009.

Government response:

Accepted – The Power of Information Task Force has now been disbanded. The Government would like to retain this capacity for genuine sector experts to feed directly in to Government thinking on how we can use the web. We will therefore be forming a new expert group to provide that challenge and insight. Experts from this group will work closely with Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information.

Progress:

Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Professor Nigel Shadbolt were appointed June 2009 to advise on making government data publicly available in a re-usable format. Both now sit on the Public Sector Transparency Board within the Cabinet Office and Shadbolt chairs the Local Government Data Panel to advise on making local government data more accessible. Also a Digital Engagement Team was set up within the Cabinet Office, under the direction of a Director of Digital Engagement (Andrew Stott, previously Deputy Chief Information Officer) which maintained the Digital engagement blog until the general election of 2010.

Evaluation issues:

The influence of Professor Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Professor Nigel Shadbolt, together with the impact of the Public Sector Transparency Board, will take time to become clear and will probably not be measurable in anything other than qualitative terms.

Framework elements:

PWhy1, PWho5

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 23

Recommendation of Taskforce:

The Government IT Profession initiative – which covers the whole public sector – should specifically develop skills and cultures for IT professionals needed to support the implementation of this report. In particular, skills relating to the web, re-use of information including data mashing and delivering modern web functionality.

Government response:

Accepted in principle – The Government accepts this recommendation in principle and will report against it in detail in the summer.

Progress:

No report has been identified and it was not made clear where or whether the report would be published.

Evaluation issues:

A skills audit would demonstrate the skills available amongst IT staff but measuring the culture would be much more difficult.

Framework elements:

TWho2, THow1, THow2, THow3, THow4, THow5

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 24

Recommendation of Taskforce:

The Taskforce has commissioned online training material on website usability from COI that can be deployed rapidly at relatively low cost. The Permanent Secretary Government Communications should bring forward a plan to train communications staff in the basics of social media and a modern web presence by Q3 2009. Consideration should be given to adapting and extending this training to public sector leaders and then more widely.

Government response:

Accepted – Improving website usability is covered by Recommendation 20. All government and public sector communications staff will be invited to undertake the training.

Progress:

The COI has produced the Website usability toolkit. *See* http://usability.coi.gov.uk/. It is also clear form the COI website that training is available but not its extent.

Evaluation issues:

An analysis of annual reports would show the take-up of training and relevant skills obtained by staff. Alternatively internal staff surveys could be used. The would measure the outputs but not the impact of the training.

Framework elements:

PWho2, TWho2, THow5

Power of Information Taskforce Recommendation 25

Recommendation of Taskforce:

The government should bring forward a plan to work with the higher education community on an increased UK capacity and capability for data mashing, including a focal point or virtual centre of excellence. The Cabinet Office should bring forward a plan by Q3 2009.

Government response:

Accepted – The Cabinet Office welcome discussions with the higher education community and will be publishing a plan through the Digital Engagement blog over the summer.

Progress:

No plan identified as published at 30/01/10 however the interview with John Sheridan made it clear that government was working with the academic community.

Evaluation issues:

The output of the recommendation is the production of a plan and the outcome should be increased capacity for data mashing for the UK, not just government, and thereby increasing economic benefit.

Framework elements:

TWho2, PHow1, THow1

Annex H: Recommendations by constituency

Initially it was intended that this research should make recommendations to government about how it could improve its policy on the provision of public sector information to citizens, as well as make suggestions to the academic community for further research required. However it became clear during the research that there were also lessons for the information profession, so a further set of recommendations has been compiled which relate to the profession. In this annex the recommendations have been re-ordered to reflect the constituency that they are aimed at, be it government, the information profession or the research community, but their original numbering has been kept. Where a recommendation is made to two constituencies, it appears under both. The objective which relates to each recommendations is indicated in brackets.

Recommendations for government

1. Government should consider moving the Office of Public Sector Information and the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information to the Cabinet Office under the Efficiency and Reform Division. (OB4)

4. The Knowledge Council should promote its activities outside government, including publishing the minutes of its meetings, working and papers, following the lead of the Public Sector Transparency Board. (OB4)

13. Formal responsibility for co-ordinating information policy should reside with the Cabinet Office as part of the brief of a minister. (OB4)

15. Government should encourage local authorities to consider the implications of replacing trained staff with volunteers without the necessary training to support citizens in meeting their information needs. (OB5)

17. Government should co-ordinate (through BIS, DfE, DCMS, DCLG) specific policies on developing literacy and information literacy skills for children, students, adults and the workforce. This would be part of the responsibility of the Minister in the Cabinet Office and would integrate with the work of the Digital Champion. (OB5)

18. Government should commission an evaluation of how civil servants are using social networking to communicate with citizens, and to assess whether the guidelines on social networking are being followed and are still fit for purpose. This could include a comparative study with use of social networking by civil servants in other countries. (OB6)

Recommendations for the information profession

2. Research should be undertaken to identify what new professional information skills are needed within government and if a new profession is needed or whether the information profession might have the appropriate skills to fill the gaps. (OB4)

3. University departments of information and relevant professional bodies should investigate what education and training is required to develop the appropriate skills for taking forward the open government agenda, either within the information profession or within a new profession. (OB4)

4. The Knowledge Council should promote its activities outside government, including publishing the minutes of its meetings, working and papers, following the lead of the Public Sector Transparency Board. (OB4)

5. Information professionals should consider what wider skills they need to be able to take on less traditional roles in government where an information background would be advantageous, for example information policy-making and managing social networking within departments. (OB4)

6. A co-ordination mechanism should be set up within the library and information profession to campaign and advise government on specific policies as appropriate. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals should take the lead on setting up such a mechanism, although it would not necessarily lead on all issues. (OB4)

7. Information professional bodies should further encourage leadership within the profession, identifying and working with champions for specific areas of policy. (OB4)

8. Information professional bodies should identify and work more with policy champions (whether individuals or organisations) from other disciplines where there is a common purpose. (OB4)

9. Professional bodies should take a wider approach to information policy, looking beyond the boundaries of institutions that provide and manage information. (OB4)

10. Research should be undertaken into the extent that courses of the schools of information within universities address how information policy is developed within government and also how students are helped to develop skills in influencing

government on information policy issues, with a view to building on the courses already available. (OB4)

11. Professional bodies and the research community should work together to articulate the value of information to government and develop case studies to show how the profession can be of benefit to information policy-making. (OB4)

16. Public libraries should engage more with developing information literacy skills for citizens. (OB5)

Recommendations to the research community for future research

Various themes for new research were identified during the course of this research. Some directly relate to the subject of this study whilst others have a more philosophical basis; some fit within the information profession whilst others may sit more comfortably within public policy and administration.

2. Research should be undertaken to identify what new professional information skills are needed within government and if a new profession is needed or whether the information profession might have the appropriate skills to fill the gaps. (OB4)

10. Research should be undertaken into the extent that courses of the schools of information within universities address how information policy is developed within government and also how students are helped to develop skills in influencing government on information policy issues, with a view to building on the courses already available. (OB4)

11. Professional bodies and the research community should work together to articulate the value of information to government and develop case studies to show how the profession can be of benefit to information policy-making. (OB4)

12. The research community should build a framework for government information policies, founded on an international history of national information policies and their relevance today. (OB4)

14. Research should be undertaken into the usability of the Directgov portal and recommendations made to government about how the design could be improved. This includes how the user testing may also be improved. (OB5)

19. The role of geospatial data in underpinning UK public sector information should be assessed and the results used to evaluate the implementation of the Location Strategy, the UK's response to the European Commission's INSPIRE directive. (OB6)

20. Case studies of good practice overseas in the provision, and evaluation of provision, of open government data should be developed, and lessons for the UK identified. (OB6)

Finally, the following research questions were suggested by this research, to be followed up at some point in the future when there has been further development of government policy:

i.   What information/datasets have been released and how does this compare with data that could be made available.? And what mechanisms are, or could be in place, to make decisions about what to release?

ii.   To what extent has departmental culture become more open, and how can this be measured?

iii.   To what extent does EU policy influence UK policy, using directives relating to PSI as case studies?

iv.   What does a social network analysis of the key players in the development of UK PSI policy tell us about the relationships between them, as well as the main influencers?

Annex I: Conference papers and presentations

ECEG 2009
UK Government Policy on Citizens' Access to Public Information

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Abstract: This paper is based upon early findings of PhD research at the Department of Information Science, Loughborough University, 2007-2010. The research aims to identify the different strands of UK government policies on improving citizens' access to public sector information (PSI) over the last 10 years, investigating how policies were developed and implemented, and by whom. It will particularly look at how the 2007 *Power of Information Review* (Mayo and Steinberg 2007) is influencing government information provision in the era of Web 2.0. eGovernment initiatives have already transformed the provision of PSI, whether directly through digital channels or through third parties, but use of Web 2.0 has considerable potential to expand information services still further.

A review of the literature has so far found that much of the academic writing on eGovernance and eGovernment relates to business/systems re-engineering – ie technological aspects rather than policy aspects – and little has been written in the UK on national information policy, as opposed to IT policy, since 2002. Where policy aspects of eGovernment are covered, they tend to have a more general focus than the specific provision of public sector information, and increasingly address eDemocracy. There seem to have been few investigations into how information policy developed over time: a gap which this research is intended to fill.

Using a critical realist approach, policies will be analysed through a content analysis of the policy documents, triangulated with analysis of published comment on the policies and in-depth semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from a range of perspectives. The intention is to gain a three-dimensional picture of the policy-making *process* and make recommendations on how it could and should work in future.

Semi-structured interviews with approximately 50 individuals with different perspectives started in March 2009. Early findings show that co-ordination of policy across government is a problem, there is a need for leadership at the heart of government to make things happen, there is a lack of clarity on who actually makes information policy, and government needs a better understanding of the nature of information and information skills.

Central to the research will be identifying what mechanisms, if any, were used to evaluate the success of the relevant eGovernment policies, and how the results of the evaluation were used to develop future policy. Unlike many other studies, the focus will be on qualitative measures, not just on metrics. Drawing on experience of evaluation in other countries, it is intended to develop a framework for the evaluation of current and future eGovernment information policy on the provision of PSI to citizens.

Based on the research findings, we aim to make recommendations on how policy on access to public information might be measured and evaluated, and on future directions for research in this area.

Keywords: public sector information; PSI; information policy; G2C; access to public information; iGovernment

1. Introduction

"To improve the way we provide services, we need all parts of government to work together better. …. And we need to make sure that government services are brought forward using the best and most modern techniques, to match the best of the private sector including one-stop shops, single contacts which link in to a range of government Departments and especially electronic information-age services." (Cunningham 1999)

This quote from Minister for the Cabinet Office Jack Cunningham introduces the 1999 UK White Paper *Modernising government*, which put forward a vision for citizen-centric services and paved the way for the UK's eGovernment agenda.

In the nine years since the publication of the white paper, there have been many UK government initiatives using digital technology aimed at making open government a reality. 2009 can be seen as a turning point, with many eGovernment initiatives coming to fruition and Web 2.0, third (and even fourth) generation mobile phone, and digital television technologies, enabling new ways of doing business. For example:

- the Transformational Government Implementation Plan (Great Britain. Cabinet Office [n.d.]) is addressing citizen-centric government services
- government websites aimed at the citizen are being channelled through the Directgov website to make it easier for citizens to find the services and information they need (Great Britain. Department for Work and Pensions 2008)
- the UK government is following up recommendations from the *Power of information review* (Great Britain. Cabinet Office 2007), which it commissioned to look at how it could improve access to public information in the Web 2.0/social networking environment
- and, most recently, the government has published *Information matters* (Great Britain. Cabinet Office 2008a), a strategy to improve the way government departments manage and share information and knowledge, with an action plan due by April 2009.

It is therefore a good time to assess how the UK government has developed its eGovernment policies, from the *Modernising government* agenda to the present.

1.1 Focus of the research

This paper is based on PhD research at the Department of Information Science, Loughborough University which began in October 2007. This research is investigating how a specific aspect of eGovernment services – the provision of public sector information (PSI) to citizens – has been developed by ministers and senior civil servants in the UK and co-ordinated across departments. The focus is on top level policies which have an influence government-wide and the information policy implications of new technologies rather than the technologies themselves.

Whilst the literature review identified the majority of recent research in eGovernment information policy as revolving around technology-based issues, this research is not limited to electronic channels of communication; indeed, observations from the literature suggest that it is important not to forget that there are still many individuals who do not have the skills, the opportunity or the desire to use these channels, points made by Selwyn (2004) and Chadwick (2006). However, eGovernment information-based initiatives play a part in ensuring that those who act as intermediaries to the information 'have nots' have efficient electronic information sources on which to draw.

Semi-structured interviews with approximately 50 individuals in this domain with different perspectives started in March 2009. Early findings suggest that co-ordination of policy across government is a problem, there is a need for leadership at the heart of government to make things happen, there is a lack of clarity on who actually makes information policy, and government needs a better understanding of the nature of information and information skills.

A key driver of the research which has become apparent over the last year has been the difficulty of evaluating implementation of information policy. To address this, the research aims to identify what mechanisms, if any, were used to evaluate the success of the policies, and how the results of the evaluation were used to develop future policy. Drawing lessons from overseas practice, it is intended to develop a framework for the evaluation of current and future government information policy on the provision of PSI to citizens.

It is hoped that the results will be of value to the UK government and the information profession, but also to eGovernment and social policy researchers as an exemplar of policy evaluation over time.

2. Methods used

2.1 Research philosophy

The framework used for this research is that of dynamic policy analysis, looking at the development of policy over time, as described in the work of Adrian Kay (2006), for example. Preliminary results from the literature review suggest that there has been little work undertaken to analyse the development of information policies, rather snapshots of what it is at any one time or future projections for what it ought to consist of. This research adopts an inductive approach (Silverman 2005), and is looking at what has actually happened, how, why and by whom, in order to draw conclusions and make recommendations for the future.

In doing so, the research will try to uncover the values that underpin the individual policies, and be sensitive to the perspectives of the individual stakeholders. As such, it falls within the research philosophy of critical realism (Robson 2002), rejecting both the positivist emphasis solely on the measurable and the relativist emphasis on the perceptions of the stakeholders. There are specific policies to be objectively analysed but the motivations of policy-makers and critics/commentators on the policies need to be explored to get a fuller understanding of what is happening (Browne 1997).

It is worth noting here that this research is being funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and therefore there is no bias as regards the funders' requirements, as there might be if, for example, it was being funded directly by government for its own purposes, by industry or by a pressure group.

2.2. Summary of methods adopted

This research has identified the major eGovernment policies enacted by the UK central government since 1996 with regard to citizens' access to public information, for example *Our information age* (Great Britain. Central Office of Information 1996) and *Enabling a digitally United Kingdom: a framework for action* (Great Britain. Cabinet Office 2004). These policies are being analysed through a content analysis of the policy documents, however published material only gives part of the picture. It is important to capture the views and experience of key players, and triangulate (Denscombe 2007) this with analysis of the policy documents and comment on those documents, to obtain a clear view of how information policy is working and has worked, how it has developed and been evaluated, and what the main influences and influencers have been.

Building on work already done by others, a framework will be developed for evaluating implementation of eGovernment information policies in the 21st century, especially in relation to access to public information. To inform the recommendations, the study will also examine examples of evaluation practice from other countries.

2.3 Interviews

Interviewees were selected using a purposive approach.

The literature review confirmed that internal co-ordination of policy-making and the skills elements of the digital divide (as opposed to the technological elements) were central issues to be addressed in the interviews. However, grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin 1998 and Silverman 2005) is being taken with the interviews, analysing the concepts actually used by the interviewees rather than imposing a set of concepts.

Six categories of players were considered in order to capture the knowledge and understanding of those on all sides of policy development implementation and study:

- *policy-makers*: those who make the decisions about what the policy should be
- *policy implementers*: those who carry out the instructions of the policy-makers and have to cope with the realities and problems that the implementation produces
- *policy regulators and advisers*: those who advise on what the policies should be and assess whether they are being properly/efficiently implemented, ie those who influence
- *academic researchers*: those who have investigated and commented upon policy, and most particularly those who influence government or have been commissioned by government, or who have most influenced academic thinking
- *information professionals*: those who have responsibility for recommending information policy to government
- *other lobbyists*: those who have lobbied government on particular issues, for example the Freedom of Information Campaign.

A total of approximately 50 interviews will be needed adequately to cover the range of appropriate individuals. The initial list of potential interviewees is regularly being reviewed in the light both of interviews already undertaken and changes of personnel in particular posts. These key players are being approached for their specific experience and expertise; they are not intended to be a representative sample from which inferences could be drawn. The individuals will have very different

comments to make from their various perspectives. Citizens will not be interviewed as the research is trying to illuminate the policy-making process rather than the effect of the policies on the public.

The semi-structured interviews began in March 2009 and will continue until September. Initially one representative from each section was interviewed, and the results used to guide the future direction of the interview questions. Fifteen top-level questions were developed, however these were tailored to the individual interviewees to reflect their perspectives and experience and will evolve during the course of the interviewing to reflect the emphasis on issues arising from analysis of the previous interviews. Seven headings for questions were identified, based on the literature review and open interviews held in 2008:

- *values and principles*: importance placed on the provision of public sector information and whether there is a need for an overarching framework of information policies in the UK
- *policy-making*: who has been responsible for making information policy over the last 10 years and how this has changed
- *co-ordination*: how well information policy is co-ordinated across government and how this has changed of the last 10 years, as well as the key relationships across departments
- *access to public sector information*: success of the drive to make services citizen-centric; provision of access for ALL citizens through various channels; who decides content; policy on developing citizens' information skills
- *evaluation*: how implementation of information policy is and could be evaluated
- *Power of Information Review*: opinions on the value of the Review and its influence on government, together with the influence of the work of the follow-up Taskforce
- *Information profession*: the influence and involvement of the information profession in developing and implementing information policy.

3. Early findings

A review of the relevant academic literature has identified much writing that is tangential to the research topic, but little specific research, supporting the need for research in this area. The literatures of information policy and eGovernment have been the most relevant to focus on in the first instance, as issues around access to information, and the skills to make best use of that access, fall at the overlap between the two spheres.

Similar criticisms have been levelled at the research in both areas, reflecting to some extent the relative youth of the disciplines. eGovernment research draws on public administration, public policy, business studies, political science and information systems, but there are now a number of dedicated peer review journals and it is becoming a discipline in its own right (Heeks and Bailur 2007). The majority of information policy scholarship is drawn from the information studies domain; this has been noted by Nilsen (2001) and Browne (1997), amongst others, in the past and still seems to be the case. There is recognition in both that a more interdisciplinary approach is desirable (Browne 1997).

3.1 Gaps in research

Possibly because it is a new field, eGovernment has attracted various senior academics in public information systems to analyse published research in this area – a useful place to start when undertaking one's own review of such a large subject area, both for the findings and the methodology employed. Papers analysing information policy research identified many of the same issues.

Conclusions from various published literature reviews and other academic research papers (for example Hernon 1996) suggest that there is a need for an over-arching analysis of information policy as much research tends to look at individual specific aspects. Trauth (1986), in her analysis of the published research, found a lack of studies that were both prescriptive – made recommendations – and integrative – covered a range of disciplines or policy aspects. This was partly because of the lack of time and/or money for individual research; having three years of research funding for this project will permit a more holistic approach.

Initial findings from a review of the literature undertaken for this study, and confirmed by Grönlund and Andersson (2007), also show that much research has been undertaken on the systems re-engineering aspects of eGovernment – the implementation – but there appears to be less on the policy side and little focussing on the provision of information to citizens, the first stage of eGovernment initiatives. Andersen and Henriksen concluded that: "at present, e-government research is founded primarily on the legacy of IS research and fails to incorporate disciplines such as public administration and political science in an adequate manner. Changing this path could offer rewarding research and help move the research field to a unique position." (Andersen and Henriksen 2005, p. 38-39)

This literature review found little research looking at the development of information policy over time to get a broad understanding of how the development process works. As to geographical coverage, much of the research relates to local/state government rather than the national government perspective and research in/about the United States predominates. Benchmarking studies and large-scale surveys are mostly undertaken by international agencies, eg EU, OECD, World Bank and the United Nations (for example United Nations 2008),which have the funding and infrastructure, or large consultancies such as Gartner, Capgemini and Accenture. Much of the writing by academics is based on the work of others or international policy documents, especially from the UN and OECD. Positivism is the most common research philosophy in both eGovernment and information policy, but this is rarely explicit; and descriptive, rather than prescriptive, studies predominate.

3.2 Values and principles

Those interviewed so far all stressed the high importance they placed on the provision by government of public sector information and there has been some consensus on the value of having an overarching framework of information policies, of which this element would form a part. Interviewees external to government felt that government itself did not have a clearly understood view on the value of information, for itself, for the economy and for citizens.

3.3 Policy-making and co-ordination

Chadwick reported that in the UK the e-Envoy "experienced significant problems with spreading the gospel of e-government throughout British central and local government" (Chadwick 2006, p.191). The UK government has now put in place the Chief Information Officer Council and the Knowledge Council, both with a cross-government remit, and it remains to be seen how effective they are in co-ordinating information policy, as opposed to IT policy. Rowlands (1997) points out that seamless co-ordination of information policy across government may not be possible as the players have differing, and possibly unresolvable, visions and goals. He highlights the problems of co-ordination when information policy is so complex, and much is latent rather than explicit.

Co-ordination of services for the users is at the heart of eGovernment agenda (Chadwick 2006). Deloitte's influential six-stage model of eGovernment progress stressed the move towards clustering of common services, leading to full integration and enterprise transformation (Chadwick 2006). But Fountain, in her 2001 case study on the building of the Business Advisor Interagency Network, backed by Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review, found that: "the very concept that made the Business Advisor responsive to the varied needs of business owners – its interagency approach – make the project difficult to sustain politically and organisationally. Although the site was designed to be functionally driven, the limitations of interagency cooperation have constrained its ability to be fully responsive to the needs of its users." (Fountain 2001, p.161)

From the interviews held so far, no clear picture has emerged of how information policy has been, and is being developed. According to some, it is driven by ministers whereas others consider that there has been very little ministerial involvement or interest, however there was a view that buy-in from the highest levels in government was essential to ensure that policy was rolled out and implemented across all departments. There was disagreement about whether current ministers within the Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Justice, the two main departments with an information policy focus, had sufficient leverage.

Those of the early interviewees from outside government were of the opinion that there was still a long way to go before services were truly citizen-centric and much more needed to be done to improve the design of the digital services to make them user-friendly. There was, however, an acknowledgment that the quality and quantity of information available had improved.

3.4   Information literacy and the digital divide

Providing universal access to public information is wasted if citizens do not have the skills to find and use the information effectively. Access and information literacy go hand-in-hand and government policy should address information literacy skills, not just ICT skills. The 'digital divide' is not just between those who have access to ICT and those who do not, but those who have the skills to access and those who do not.

Too often reference is made to the need for ICT or Internet skills without an understanding of the value of *information* skills (for example Newholm *et al* & Livingstone and Helsper 2007). Selwyn (2004) recognised that the digital divide was not as clear cut as those who have access to IT and those who don't, for example access in the home is very different to access in a public space, but even he refers to ICT skills and not information handling skills.

As computers become more intuitive to use, the level of ICT skills needed may be less but the reverse may be true of information skills; the more information you find, the more you need the skills to evaluate and manage it. Chadwick (2006) argues that information skills are more important in the online environment than elsewhere because of the high volume of unmediated data and a recent report by CIBER (2008) highlights the importance of information skills for children with the move to more self-directed learning. The data also needs to be in a form that is comprehensible to the user. As Heeks eloquently puts it: "Data remains data unless citizens have the skills to turn it into information." (2000, p.12)

The UK government is in the process of rolling out a digital inclusion strategy, but results from the early interviews suggest that government still has not yet fully understood the concepts of digital and social inclusion, or information handling skills.

4. Power of Information Review

This research is firmly rooted in the academic sphere, but engaging the policy-makers themselves in the research process, and drawing on considerable experience of developing advice for policy-makers, should ensure that the recommendations are relevant to government. This is helped by the current (2008) UK government's adoption of the *Power of information review* (Mayo and Steinberg 2007), the most significant policy initiative for this research in the last ten years – public information is on the agenda again. The review recognised the value of social networking in the realm of the provision of public information, the importance of which has been highlighted by Castells (2007), and the UK government has accepted its recommendations about how it should work with outside organisations in providing information to citizens (Great Britain. Cabinet Office 2007).

The taskforce to carry forward the work on the recommendations was announced by Tom Watson MP, Minister for Transformational Government, on 31 March 2008 (Watson 2008) and is chaired by Richard Allan, Cisco. There have already been guidelines produced for civil servants to encourage them to interact with third parties (Great Britain. Cabinet Office 2008b) and considerable work has been done on data mashing within the Department for Transport (Great Britain. Department for Transport 2008).

The *Show us a better way* competition, sponsored by the Cabinet Office and Ministry of Justice and suggesting new information products that would be useful to the public, has resulted in five projects to be implemented and a further five ideas which will be developed further (Great Britain. Cabinet Office 2008c). The taskforce is also pushing forward exemplar projects in information on criminal justice, health and education, as these seem to be the topics of most importance to citizens (Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce 2008a). The taskforce blog is already proving a valuable source of information and providing a forum for ideas (Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce 2008b). The Taskforce's own report with recommendations on the way forward was published in March 2009 (Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce 2009) and the response from the UK government is awaited.

The implementation of the Power of Information Review recommendations and the work of the taskforce will be tracked throughout this research. However it is worth noting that the Review was a policy exercise and not an academic one, and should be considered in that light.

5. Conclusion

It is recognised that this research is at an early stage but the findings to date suggest that there is a gap in research on how eGovernment information policy has been developed and implemented over time, and particularly how it has been evaluated. It is hoped that a continuation of the research will address this gap in relation to how the UK government provides public sector information to its citizens and in the development of a framework for policy evaluation that will be of value to policy makers and information professionals.

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Citizens' Access to Public Sector Information: an investigation into UK government policy

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Abstract

This research looks to investigate how a specific aspect of eGovernment services – top-level information policy on the provision of public sector information (PSI) to citizens – has been developed by ministers and senior civil servants in the UK since 1996 and co-ordinated across departments. It consists of five elements: a review of the research literature; assessment of UK government policy initiatives, thorough analysis of policy documents and comment on those documents, as well as interviews with key players; examples of international best practice in evaluating information policy; a framework for evaluating information policy on citizens' access to PSI; and recommendations to the UK government, the information profession and academic researchers. It will particularly look at how the 2007 *Power of Information Review* is influencing government information provision in the era of Web 2.0.

The review of the literature to date has found that much of the academic writing on eGovernance and eGovernment relates to business/systems re-engineering: ie technological aspects rather than policy aspects. Little has been written recently in the UK on national information policy, as opposed to IT policy, and there had been little evaluation of UK government information initiatives. Where policy aspects of eGovernment are covered, they tend to have a more general focus than the provision of public sector information, and increasingly address eDemocracy.

Three common findings from the interviews held so far have been: the lack of co-ordination across government departments in the developing and implementation of eGovernment information policies; the need for central leadership at the highest level to make change happen, particularly in the culture of departments; and the lack of influence of the information profession on government policy in this area.

Keywords

Public sector information; eGovernment policy; information policy; access to information; G2C

Research aim

The research aims to investigate United Kingdom (UK) government progress in improving citizens' access to public sector information since 1996. Public sector information is defined as: Information collected or created by government and government agencies which is made available to individuals and organisations to help them run their lives, make decisions and prosper.

Starting in October 2007, this research is intended to gain an understanding of how a specific aspect of eGovernment services – top-level information policy on the provision of public information to citizens – has been developed by ministers and senior civil servants in the UK since 1996 and co-ordinated across departments. It focuses on those policies which have an influence government-wide, the over-arching policies, rather than those more specific policies promulgated by individual government departments and relating to specific sets of information.

It is the information policy implications of new technologies rather than the technologies themselves that will be instigated in the research. Whilst the literature review identified the majority of recent research in eGovernment information policy as revolving around technology-based issues, this project is not limited to electronic channels of communication; indeed, informal feedback from talking to a wide range of citizens whilst undertaking this research have shown that it is important not to forget that there are still many individuals who do not have the skills, the opportunity or the desire to use these channels, points made by Selwyn[1345] and Chadwick[1346]. However, eGovernment information-based initiatives play a part in ensuring that those who act as intermediaries to the information 'have nots' have efficient electronic information sources on which to draw.

A key driver of the research which has become apparent over the last year has been the difficulty of evaluating implementation of information policy. To address this, the research aims to identify what mechanisms, if any, were used to evaluate the success of the policies, and how the results of the evaluation were used to develop future policy. Drawing lessons from overseas practice, it is intended to develop a framework for the evaluation of current and future government information policy on the provision of PSI to citizens.

Theory/Method

The research consists of five elements:

- a review of the research literature
- assessment of UK government policy initiatives, through analysis of policy documents and comment on those documents, as well as interviews with key players
- identification of examples of international best practice in evaluating information policy
- devising a framework for evaluating information policy on citizens' access to public information
- and recommendations to the UK government, the information profession and academic researchers.

Research philosophy

The framework used for this research is that of dynamic policy analysis, looking at the development of policy over time, as described in the work of Adrian Kay[1347], for example. Preliminary results from the literature review suggest that there has been little work undertaken to analyse the development of information policies, rather snapshots of what it is at any one time or future projections for what it ought

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[1345] Selwyn, N. Reconsidering political and popular understandings of the digital divide. *New Media & Society*, 2004, 6(3), 341-362.

[1346] Chadwick, A. *Internet politics: states, citizens, and new communication technologies*, 2006.

[1347] Kay, A. *The dynamics of public policy: theory and evidence,* 2006.

to consist of. This research adopts an inductive approach[1348], whilst focusing on the elements of co-ordination of information policy and the skills gap in the digital divide. The research is looking at what has actually happened, how, why and who brought it about, in order to draw conclusions and make recommendations for the future.

In doing so, the research is trying to uncover the values that underpin the individual policies, and be sensitive to the perspectives of the individual stakeholders. As such, it falls within the research philosophy of critical realism[1349],rejecting both the positivist emphasis solely on the measurable and the relativist emphasis on the perceptions of the stakeholders. There are specific policies to be objectively analysed but the motivations of policy-makers and critics/commentators on the policies need to be explored to get a fuller understanding of what is happening[1350].

Research questions

An initial list of 20 research questions was drawn up based on professional experience of the previous 15 years. The questions were gradually refined in the light of the initial open interviews and literature review. The current research questions can be found in Annex A. Issues that were found to be adequately covered by other research are referred to but will not be researched further. The focus has moved to how the UK government makes and promulgates information policy, rather than user studies, and most particularly, policy relating to the provision of public information to citizens.

Collection of published data

The literature review concentrated on academic research in the field. In the course of this review, where the findings related specifically to the situation in other countries, they were noted for consideration in the assessment of international good practice. Also any policy documents that were identified, whether UK-focussed or international, were catalogued for possible inclusion in the analysis of policy initiatives.

Previous work was reviewed, for example on policy analysis and research methodology, as well as studies of modelling, benchmarks and frameworks to inform the framework for national information policy evaluation. This drew on public policy and public administration literature as well as eGovernment and information policy studies.

Main initial sources of monographs relevant to the research topics were the catalogues of the Loughborough University Library and the British Library; however many influential works cited by other authors were followed up and these often proved the most fruitful. Searches on the Amazon database were also helpful as the results mostly included abstracts and covered more up-to-date and forthcoming material. Also, book reviews in the major journals were useful in identifying relevant new texts.

Journal articles were identified using various databases. Of particular value was *Library and Information Science Abstracts*, which showed these journals to be most relevant:
- *Government Information Quarterly*

[1348] Silverman, D. *Doing qualitative research*, 2nd ed., 2005, pp.78-84.
[1349] Robson, C. *Real world research*, 2002, p. 41.
[1350] Browne, M. The field of information policy: 2. Redefining the boundaries and methodologies. *Journal of Information Science,* 1997, 23(5), 339-351.

- *Journal of Government Information*

- *Information Polity*

- *International Journal of Electronic Government Research*

- *Electronic Journal of e-Government*

- *International Journal of Electronic Governance*

- *Electronic Government: an International Journal*

- *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*.

This was also supported by the list of journals highlighted by the European eGovernment Society as being the major titles.[1351] Where possible, these journals were scanned manually back to 1995; due to the common terminology used in this research area, for example 'information' and 'access', electronic searches could not guarantee to find all references that were relevant but would pull out much that was irrelevant. Muir *et al*[1352] found false drops a problem in their 2001 study of national information policy.

Table of contents alerts have also been set up for the major academic journals in order to check for articles on new research.

Google Scholar was most useful in linking to other works by authors. Back issues of *Update*, *Information World Review*, *Managing Information* and Royal Statistical Society journals were also scanned for relevant news items and articles, although this mostly produced references to government initiatives and policy comment rather than academic research. The *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* a key journal in this area, was also scanned back to 1996.

Only two potentially useful theses, one a Masters[1353] and one a PhD thesis[1354], both from City University, were identified through searches of the *Index to Theses*, *Dissertation Abstracts*, Loughborough's Institutional Repository and the Sheffield University Thesis catalogue.

The academic literature review has already uncovered many references to UK government information policy initiatives, and comment on these policies, but in order to identify and draw up a more comprehensive list, an initial systematic search of websites of government departments and agencies, the Policy Hub, research bodies and major international organisations was carried out and re-run on a regular basis. All references have been recorded and classified by subject and level of relevance in RefWorks.

To keep up to date with current policy initiatives and policy comment, 24 RSS feeds and email alerts have been set up. These are reviewed from time to time to assess their value and those that do not produce significant new material will be dropped. Surprisingly, the Information Policy blog from Belarus has proved one of the most useful sources of information, monitoring a wide range of resources

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[1351] European eGovernment Society. *Scientific journals.* <http://uni-koblenz.de/FB4/Contrib/ EGOVS/Journals>, [no longer available], [accessed 31.10.2007].

[1352] Muir, A. *et al. Report on developments world-wide on national information policy: prepared for Resource and the Library Association,* 2001.

[1353] Briggs. M. *Access to information: an evaluation framework analysis*. MSc dissertation, 2001

[1354] Rowlands, I. *Mapping the knowledge base of information policy: clusters of documents, people and ideas*. PhD thesis, 1999.

throughout the world. The Power of Information Task Force set up a blog in April 2008 and this has included valuable leads and *GC Weekly* from Kable is a major source of policy comment.

Gaining personal perspectives

Published material only gives part of the picture. It is important to capture the views and experience of key players, and triangulate[1355] this with analysis of the policy documents and comment on those documents, to obtain a clear view of how information policy is working and has worked, how it has developed and been evaluated, and what the main influences and influencers have been. For example issues that emerged from the literature review which could not easily be answered from published documents were:

- are ministers or civil servants taking the lead in terms of development of eGovernment and information policy in the UK – in terms of Habermas's models of decisionism, technocracy and pragmatism[1356]?
- how do policy advisers, think tanks, lobby groups and the media influence information policy?
- what are the government's shared values and goals?
- to what extent does current UK information policy stem from international policies?
- who in UK government departments is responsible for enacting EU directives, and how?
- how does the UK government interact with UN/Unesco/OECD and adopt their information-related policies?

Four approaches for gaining personal perspectives were considered: focus groups, questionnaire, a Delphi study and targeted interviews:

- *Focus groups:* Focus groups, as the name suggests, are group interviews on a specific topic and can be an efficient way of collecting data from several people at the same time.[1357] The interaction between group members can stimulate a greater flow of information[1358], however they cannot draw out the complexities of different individuals' perspectives in the same way that a one-to-one interview would. There may be group dynamics which discourage all group members from participating fully and some group members may be unwilling to share confidential information[1359] in the way that they may talk 'off the record' in one-to-one interviews[1360]. It was therefore felt that focus groups would be unsuitable for gathering the rich data needed. On a practical note, it is unlikely that many of those identified would be willing to participate in a focus group, and the problems of trying to identify suitable dates when enough players in each of the categories could be free could make this methodology unworkable.

[1355] Denscombe, M. *The good research guide*, 2007, p. 134.
[1356] Sager, F. Habermas' models of decisionism, technocracy and pragmatism in times of governance: the relationship of public administration, politics and science in the alcohol prevention policies of the Swiss member states. *Public Administration,* 2007, 85(2), 449-427.
[1357] Robson, ref. 5, p. 284.
[1358] Denscombe, ref. 11, p.178.
[1359] Robson, ref.5, p. 284.
[1360] Stedward, G. *On the record: an introduction to interviewing. In:* Burnham. *Surviving the research process in politics*, 1997, pp.161-162.

- *Questionnaires*: Self-completion questionnaires are useful for obtaining uncomplicated information from a large number of respondents [1361] but generally have a low response rate[1362]. Neither can it be guaranteed that it was the person to whom it was sent who completed the questionnaire, particularly in the case of senior officials and politicians[1363], yet it is their personal perspectives that would be valuable. A single questionnaire approach was not deemed appropriate for this research as each person receiving the questionnaire would have to get the same set of questions[1364]. All those identified to be approached would have different stories to tell, from their own perspectives; one would need to have many different questionnaires and, again, they would not produce the rich data necessary.

- *Delphi study:* In a Delphi study a group of experts are separately given research questions to answer.[1365] The results are then circulated anonymously to all for comment and the answers gradually refined through several rounds. This methodology was not considered suitable for many of the same reasons as questionnaires and focus groups – the divergent nature of the data to be elicited from the participants. Also, as many of the individuals would be extremely busy, and in some cases high-level, people, it is unlikely that they would be able to spare the time to participate in a Delphi study. However, this approach may be used at a later date to gain feedback on the recommendations. Some of those already interviewed have agreed to take part in principle.

- *Interviews:* Targeted interviews were deemed the most appropriate methodology for eliciting the views of key players. They are "the preferred empirical tool of political scientists"[1366], allowing the flexibility to draw out complex data, taking into account the background and perspectives of those interviewed, as in grounded theory[1367]. Interviews overcome the problems identified in the other three potential methodologies and are a common research tool for critical realist research studies. They formed the basis of data collection used by the original Power of Information Review Team[1368] and IpsosMORI research for the Statistics Commission on opinion-formers' perceptions of the UK statistical system[1369]. It is recognised that this methodology will be time-consuming and the scheduling will be complicated, so nine months (January 2009 – September 2009) has been allocated for the finalising of participants, planning and undertaking of interviews and analysis of transcripts.

Six categories of players were considered in order to capture the knowledge and understanding of those on all sides of policy development implementation and study:

- *policy-makers*: those who make the decisions about what the policy should be

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[1361] Denscombe, ref. 11, p. 154.
[1362] Robson, ref. 5, p. 233.
[1363] Researcher's own experience on commissioning and receiving questionnaires.
[1364] Denscombe, ref. 11, p.153.
[1365] Robson, ref. 5, p. 57.
[1366] Stedward, G. *On the record: an introduction to interviewing. In:* Burnham. *Surviving the research process in politics*, 1997, p.151.
[1367] Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*, 1998, pp.12-13.
[1368] Mayo, E. & Steinberg, T. *The power of information: an independent review by Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg.* <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ strategy/power_information.pdf>, 2007, [accessed 25.02.2008].
[1369] Great Britain. Statistics Commission. *Official statistics: perceptions and trust*, 2005.

- *policy implementers*: those who carry out the instructions of the policy-makers and have to cope with the realities and problems that the implementation produces
- *policy regulators and advisers*: those who advise on what the policies should be and assess whether they are being properly/efficiently implemented; ie those who influence but do not have the power to take decisions or make policy
- *academic researchers*: those who have investigated and commented upon information policy, and most particularly those who influence government or have been commissioned by government, or who have most influenced academic thinking
- *information professionals*: those who have or have had responsibility for recommending information policy to government from the perspective of the profession
- *other lobbyists*: those who have lobbied government on particular information issues, for example the Freedom of Information Campaign.

The key players are being approached for their specific experience and expertise, which are diverse in nature; they are not intended to be a representative sample from which inferences could be drawn. The research is not aiming to get a consensus of opinion on a particular topic and the individuals will have very different comments to make. Citizens will not be interviewed as the research is trying to illuminate the policy-making process rather than the effect of the policies on the public.

An initial list of relevant professional contacts who had already given permission to be interviewed was developed whilst preparing the research proposal. This was supplemented with other significant players, at the most senior level possible, to provide a purposive balanced sample of 50 on which to draw. These were chosen because of their, mostly, unique position in the policy-making/implementation process; where possible they were those with the highest responsibility.

To make the best use of the time and availability, three types of interview were identified, reflecting the different stages of the development of the research ideas:
- open discussions with individuals who would be prepared to share their broad outlook on the relevant issues; these early, informal, discussions helped to scope the issues and frame the research questions
- semi-structured interviews, based on the research questions, to help formulate the conclusions and framework for information policy evaluation and to draw up initial recommendations. This format allows for a free-ranging discussion within the areas relevant to each interviewee, giving the opportunity to uncover some of their values and perceptions
- structured interviews based on the research conclusions, framework and recommendations, to provide feedback on, and refine, the recommendations so that they are both appropriate and do-able. The interviews would be more structured as the research findings would form a basis for the topic sheets. The interviews would be with some of the same individuals who had participated in the open discussions and semi-structured interviews but would also include the more high-level players who would be unlikely to spare the time for more than one session and who would have the most to contribute at this stage of the research.

The literature review informed the questions to be asked in the interviews and confirmed that internal co-ordination of policy-making and the skills elements of the digital divide (as opposed to the technological

elements) were central issues to be addressed. Listening to speeches and questions at relevant professional events also suggested a lack of policy evaluation in this area.

The initial schedule of interview questions is at Annex B. The interview schedules are being tailored to the individual interviewees and constantly updated to reflect the results of previous interviews, in line with Glaser and Straus's[1370],[1371] grounded theory approach. Usually circa 15 broad questions have been put to interviewees, leaving scope for them to develop their answers as they wish; however, supplementary questions have also been prepared to be put as appropriate.

In addition to the interviews, various events at which key stakeholders have been speaking have been attended in order to supplement the comments on policy in published material.

Analysis

A content analysis of the policy documents and comment on the policies will be compared with the analyses of the interviews to draw up a picture of how information policy in relation to the provision of public information to the citizen has developed since 1996 – a dynamic policy analysis. This will draw on the work on policy-making in general of Parsons[1372], Hogwood and Gunn[1373], Baumgartner et al[1374], Hill [1375]and particularly that of Adrian Kay[1376] in developing structured policy narratives. To focus the work more specifically on *information* policy and *eGovernment* policy analysis, the work of Rowlands *et al*[1377, 1378,], Burger [1379], Esteves and Joseph[1380], Mayer-Schönberger & Lazer[1381], and Mullen & Horner[1382] will be considered. A framework for the policy evaluation will be developed, tested and finalised early in the new academic year. Published documents and interview transcripts are being analysed using ATLASti6 and the same coding framework is being applied across the various types of document.

Building a framework for evaluating information policy

An issue which has arisen through the course of the research so far is the lack of evaluation of information policy *per se*, not just of policy in the provision of public sector information. To address this gap, this research will attempt to develop a framework for evaluating this policy, drawing on the published literature on policy evaluation, current and past UK practice and good practice in other countries. Research on frameworks, benchmarking and modelling policy by, amongst others, Schlager[1383], Finger and Pécaud[1384], Carbo and Williams[1385], McClure[1386], Kunstelj and Vintar[1387],

[1370] Strauss & Corbin, ref 1367.

[1371] Silverman, ref. 4, pp.170-180.

[1372] Parsons, W. *Public policy: an introduction to the theory and practice of policy analysis,* 1995.

[1373] Hogwood, B.W. & Gunn, L.A. *Policy analysis for the real world*, 1984.

[1374] Baumgartner, F.R., Green-Pedersen, C. & Jones, B.D. *Comparative studies of policy agendas*, 2008.

[1375] Hill, M. *The policy process: a reader*, 1997.

[1376] Kay, A. *The dynamics of public policy: theory and evidence,* 2006.

[1377] Rowlands, I. ed. *Understanding information policy*, 1997.

[1378] Rowlands, I., Eisenschitz, T. & Bawden, D. Frame analysis for understanding information policy. *Journal of Information Science*, 2002, 28(1), 31-38.

[1379] Burger, R. H. *Information policy: a framework for evaluation and policy research*, 1993.

[1380] Esteves, J. & Joseph, R.C. *A comprehensive framework for the assessment of eGovernment projects*, 2007.

[1381] Mayer-Schönberger, V. & Lazer, D. *Governance and information technology*, 2007.

[1382] Mullen, H. & Horner, D.S. *Ethical problems for e-Government: an evaluative framework,* 2004.

[1383] Schlager, E. A comparison of frameworks, theories, and models of policy process. *In:* Sabatier, P.A., ed. *Theories of the policy process,* 2007, pp.293-319.

[1384] Finger, M. & Pecoud, G. From e-Government to e-Governance? Towards a model of e-Governance. *Electronic Journal of E-government*, 2003, 1(1), <http://www.ejeg.com/volume-1/volume1-issue-1/issue1-art1.htm>, [accessed 19.06.2008].

Janssen, Rotthier and Snijkers[1388], and Nour, AbdelRahman and Fadlalla[1389], will inform the framework. The elements relating to citizens access to public information will be tested against the UK government's responses to the *Power of Information Review* and the *Power of Information Taskforce Report* to assess their validity and applicability in the UK context.

Lessons learned

It is intended that lessons for the UK will be drawn from the conclusions arising from the academic literature review, analysis of UK government initiatives and studies of international best practice. These lessons will be used to inform recommendations for improving citizens' access to public information and on how evaluation of information policy could work in the UK.

Recommendations

The main targets for the recommendations will be the UK government and political parties, to give advice, based on solid research, on how they could improve citizens' access to public information.

The library and information profession has much knowledge about user needs but the research so far has shown that it has little influence on government policy. Arguably the *Guardian's* Free Our Data campaign[1390] has had more impact. This low level of influence is not new. Mahon[1391] noted in 1997 that there was a lack of information professionals and information policy researchers involved in the EU information policy debate. It seems appropriate to make recommendations to the profession on how it could build up its influence.

Finally, with the broad scope of this thesis, it was not possible to follow up all avenues of research in detail so ideas for future academic work will be gathered as the research progresses.

Early results

Results from the literature review, policy document analysis and interviews so far have suggested some common findings, although it should be stressed that the data collection phase of the research is still at an early stage and the literature review will be continuing until 2010.

Academic research in the subject area

The review of the literature in eGovernment and information policy found that:

[1385] Carbo, T. & Williams, J.G. Models and metrics for evaluating local electronic government systems and services. *Electronic Journal of E-government*, 2004, 2{2}, <http://www.ejeg.com/volume-2/volume2-issue2/v2-i2-art3.htm>, [accessed 19.06.2008].

[1386] McClure, C.R. Frameworks for studying federal information policies: the role of graphic modeling. *In:* McClure, C.R., Hernon, P. & Relyea, H.C. *United States government information policies: views and perspectives*, 1989.

[1387] Kunstelj, M. & Vintar, M. Evaluating the progress of e-government development: a critical analysis. *Information Polity 2004,* 9(3-4), 131-148.

[1388] Janssen, D., Rotthier, S. & Snijkers, K. If you measure it they will score: an assessment of international eGovernment benchmarking. *Information Polity,* 2004, 9(3-4), 121-130.

[1389] Nour, M. A., AbdelRahman, A.A. and Fadlalla, A. A context-based integrative framework for e-government initiatives. *Government Information Quarterly*, 2008, 25(3),448-461.

[1390] *Free Our Data*. <http://www.freeourdata.org.uk/index.php>, 2008, [accessed 29.07.2008].

[1391] Mahon, B. European information policy: the role of institutional factors. *In:* Rowlands, I., ed. *Understanding informational policy*, 1997, p.113.

- *Subject coverage*: Much of the academic writing on eGovernance and eGovernment relates to business/systems re-engineering. ie technological aspects rather than policy aspects. Little has been written in the UK on national information policy, as opposed to IT policy, since Rowlands[1392] and the work of the Library and Information Commission[1393],[1394] and the Library Association[1395] in 2000/1. The academic literature revealed little evaluation of UK government information initiatives, as opposed to IT initiatives.

- *Policy aspects*: Where policy aspects of eGovernment are covered, they tend to have a more general focus than the provision of public sector information, and increasingly address eDemocracy.

- *Geographical coverage*: Much of the research relates to local/state government rather than the national government perspective; research in/about the United States dominates. Rowlands found this in his bibliometric study and it still seems to be the case. Implications for Freedom of Information of the Patriot Act after 9/11 are currently the dominant US concern.

- *Timelines*: There has been scant longitudinal research looking at how information policies have developed over time.

- *Methods used*: Benchmarking studies/large-scale surveys are mostly undertaken by international agencies, eg EU, OECD, World Bank and the United Nations[1396],which have the funding and infrastructure, or large consultancies such as Gartner, Capgemini and Accenture. Much of the writing by academics is based on the work of others or international policy documents, especially from the UN and OECD. There are not many empirical studies, although again, the work of the Oxford Internet Institute is an exception. Positivism is the most common research philosophy in both eGovernment and information policy, but this is rarely explicit. Descriptive, rather than prescriptive, studies predominate.

Regarding lessons for this research, the literature review highlighted a need for empirical research that:
- is methodologically rigorous
- draws on the disciplines of public administration, policy evaluation and political science
- addresses the needs of the citizen rather than the internal needs of government to make itself more efficient and cost-effective
- takes a holistic look at how government information policy is made, and by whom
- traces the development of policies over time
- and makes practical, doable recommendations to government.

Early results from the interviews, attendance at events and analysis of policy documents

Data collection and analysis is at an early stage. As of 15 April 2009, 3 open and 6 semi-structured interviews have been undertaken; 40 UK policy documents have been identified for analysis and the analysis itself is ongoing. However some messages have emerged:

[1392] Rowlands, I., ed. *Understanding informational policy*, 1997.

[1393] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission. *Towards a national information policy for the UK,* 1997.

[1394] Great Britain. Library and Information Commission. *Keystone for the information age: a national information policy for the UK*, 1999.

[1395] Library Association. *Report of the Policy Advisory Group on a national information policy.* <http://www.la-hq.org.uk/directory/prof_issues/nip_report.rtf>, 2002, [accessed 12.08.2008].

[1396] eg. United Nations. *United National e-Government survey*, 2008.

- *Values/principles*: Those interviewed so far all agreed that government provision of public sector information (PSI) was of great importance, however there was also a widely-held view that government did not really have a clear idea of the concept of information and its value, both to citizens and the government itself, as well as the economy. Various interviewees agreed that it might be helpful if there was a framework of information policies, some of which would relate to the provision of PSI.

- *Policy-making*: No clear picture has yet emerged of how information policy has been, and is being developed. According to some, it is driven by ministers, whereas others consider that there has been very little ministerial involvement or interest, however there was a view that buy-in from the highest levels in government was essential to ensure that policy was rolled out and implemented across all departments. Responsibility for eGovernment/information policy-making is split between various second-tier ministers in different government departments and none of them have the power to enforce implementation of policy across government. Interviewees have suggested that leadership needs to come from the Prime Minister in order to ensure real change across the board. It was also suggested that it was necessary to have the backing of the HM Treasury, but this was lacking because the Treasury tends to focus on short term goals and getting income quickly, rather than the long term possibilities of increased tax revenue as a result of an economy benefitting form the re-use of public sector information to produce new products.

- *Co-ordination*: There is still a silo mentality within departments and a culture of not sharing information. Various structures have been put in place to improve co-ordination: the Chief Information Officer Council, made up of all the Chief Information Officers of departments, has the responsibility for implementing the Transformational Government agenda – the UK's eGovernment strategy, but its focus is on technology, not content of services. A Knowledge Council has been set up within the UK Civil Service, a third of whose members are Chief Knowledge Officers, a third Chief Information Officers and a third Chief IT Officers, giving a preponderance of those with a technology background, rather than a background in how information should be presented and managed.

- *Citizen-centric services*: The rhetoric in eGovernment policy documents regarding the need to make services citizen-centric has changed little over the last 12 years. Interviewees from outside government were of the opinion that there was still a long way to go before services would be truly citizen-centric and much more needed to be done to improve the design of the digital services to make them user-friendly. Government policy is to rationalise the number of individual government websites and concentrate services through the DirectGov portal in order to make it easier for citizens to find information that they need. There are still hundreds of separate websites and interviewees outside government were critical of the quality of the search engine and the design of services. There was, however, an acknowledgment that the quality and quantity of information available had improved. Responsibility for the portal has moved from the Central Office of Information within the Cabinet Office to the Department of Work and Pensions – away from the centre of power which would have been able to put more pressure on departments to comply with the policy.

- *Provision of public sector information*: The Internet has become the preferred medium for the provision of PSI – it is easier, cheaper and quicker than print publishing; however there is a lack of clarity over who decides WHAT should be provided rather than HOW. There seems to be little attempt to find out what users actually want, or even what the government itself needs. Concern

was also expressed about the lack of access for those that cannot or will not use the Internet, mobile phones or digital television to obtain information. There is still a need for intermediaries to assist these citizens, although the problem is likely to decrease over time as more people become digitally literate.

- *Information handling skills*: Providing universal access to public information is wasted if citizens do not have the skills to find and use the information effectively. Access and information literacy go hand-in-hand and government policy should address information literacy skills, not just ICT skills. The 'digital divide' is not just between those who have access to ICT and those who do not, but those who have the skills to access and those who do not. The UK government is in the process of rolling out a digital inclusion strategy, but results from the early interviews suggest that government still has not yet fully understood the concepts of digital and social inclusion, or information handling skills.

- *Re-use of PSI*: To fulfil its obligations under the EU 2005 Directive on the re-use of public sector information, the government has set up the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) to oversee the implementation in the UK. Originally part of the central Cabinet Office, OPSI has been moved to the National Archives, which has the responsibility for information management across government. There have been benefits of synergy but the move has also meant that OPSI is further from the leadership that could have more influence on departments to release information for re-use by third parties. Also, the Directive itself does not make the provision of information mandatory, which makes it harder for OPSI to enforce access, particularly by local government. The Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information (APPSI) was set up as an independent regulator and advisor to ministers on issues around the re-use of PSI. Interviews so far suggest that its influence was limited at first but that there is now more ministerial interest.

- *Crown copyright*: OPSI also has the responsibility for managing copyright of official publications and manages the Click Use licence scheme which gives permissions for re-using and copying Crown copyright documents. Staff are currently considering how to make the permissions system simpler to facilitate and encourage re-use of data.

- *Power of Information Review*: To identify what the UK government should do to take part in the world of Web 2.0 it commissioned the *Power of Information Review*[1397] from two external consultants. This was favourably received by government[1398] and was followed up by the setting up of a Taskforce to take forward the recommendations and develop exemplars. The Taskforce itself has now produced a report[1399] on its recommended way forward and a government response is expected later in April 2009. One of the recommendations of the original review was that civil servants should provide information to social networking groups rather than set up rival websites and the Office of Public Sector Information drew up guidelines for civil servants to use. As yet, there is little evidence of how much civil servants have adopted these guidelines – or indeed how use of the guidelines will be assessed; sharing information outside departments would require a significant change of culture. Some work is being done on data mash-ups, but one interviewee suggested that this was one senior individual civil servant who had an interest in this area, rather than a general commitment to working in this way.

[1397] Mayo & Steinberg, ref.24.
[1398] Great Britain. Cabinet Office. *Government's response to* The power of information: an independent review by Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg (2007), 2007.
[1399] Great Britain. Power of Information Taskforce. *Power of Information Taskforce report*, 2009. <http://poit.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/poit/>, [accessed 09.04.2009].

- *Influence of the information profession*: The information profession has had little impact on the development of government information policy generally or on the provision of public sector information. Problems identified have been the lack of leadership within the diverse professional bodies representing the information profession, and lack of co-ordination between these bodies, making it difficult for government to know who to talk to.

Next steps

Approximately 35 further semi-structured interviews will be held by the end of September and analysis of the transcripts, together with analysis of policy documents and policy comment will continue during 2009. Lessons will be drawn out early in 2010 and draft recommendations to government, the information profession and academic researchers developed.

All the various strands of research so far have shown that there is a lack of evaluation of information policy in the UK and it was therefore decided to address this in the future research, drawing up a framework for this evaluation in 2010. This would be informed by good practice from outside the UK and tested on the implementation of the recommendations of the Power of Information Review and Taskforce. Analysis of the interviews to date suggests that evaluation of the impact of particular information on individuals is problematic as this impact is unlikely to be obvious at the point of finding the information.

Structured interviews will be held in 2010, possibly supplemented by a Delphi study, to gain feedback on the recommendations and evaluation framework before finalising them.

AHRC PhD Seminar 8 July 2010

Interviewing the great and the good: What the textbooks don't tell you – A checklist

Before

Why you are interviewing
1. Decide if you interviewing people for their expertise, their experience or their influence.
2. Decide if it needs to be on or can be off the record.
3. Devise short paragraph to describe your research and why you need their input, to use in face to face contact and/or letter/email – and learn it.

Channel of communication
4. Decide your preferred method of communication for the interview: face-to-face, over the telephone or by email. You may have to use other methods as a fall back position.
5. Face-to-face gives you both verbal and visual signals in combination. It may be easier to build a rapport with the interviewee if you don't already know them.
6. Telephone interviews may take less time and may therefore be the preferred choice of the interviewee. They also save you travelling time. However you don't get the above benefits of face-to-face.
7. Email correspondence can be easier for the interviewee if they are busy. You also get considered, probably shorter, answers that don't need transcription. However it may be difficult to ask supplementary questions or get as much detail as you would like. Your questions must be very clear and unambiguous to make sure your question can't be misinterpreted.

Interview questions
8. Decide what type of interview: structured, semi-structured, open.
9. Some open interviews at the start can help refine the research questions.
10. Devise standard questions that you can adapt for each interviewee if you need to.
11. Have supplementary questions you can ask if you want to probe further.
12. Work out how long you ideally need to ask them. Prioritise questions in case time is shorter and put nominal times against each one: this may vary for each interview.
13. Pilot the interviews, especially if you are inexperienced at interviewing.

Interviewees
14. Decide how many people you need to interview and identify double that number. The list may evolve as other people are suggested in the course of the interviews – the snowball effect.
15. Prioritise them by importance to research and appropriate order of approach.

Getting your interviewee on board
16. Learn your subject very well before approaching interviewees so that you can do so with confidence and they can have confidence in you – it's worth their while participating.
17. If interviewees are not known to you personally, ideally go to where they are and introduce yourself eg when they are speaking at an event or attending a meeting. Have your own business card ready. Get their contact details and follow up straight away.
18. If this is not possible, get a personal recommendation from someone you both know or get someone senior to you to intervene on your behalf.
19. Saying who else you have already interviewed can lend credibility, provided that they have agreed to go on the record.
20. Go through a personal assistant if necessary: they can be blockers but can also be unblockers.

Venue

21. Interviewee's office or a meeting room works best – assuming they have one and allow access.
22. Avoid cafés if you can as they are very noisy and you can't stop people sitting near you. If this is unavoidable, don't order cappuccino or thick hot chocolate – you don't want the distraction of worrying if you have a ring round your mouth.
23. Have your own suggestions of somewhere quiet – try out some in advance eg Royal National Theatre foyer

Timing

24. Allow plenty of time for planning the interviews – this will take longer than you think.
25. The great and good are busy people so you have to assume you might not be able to get an appointment for 3 months.
26. Preferably don't do more than one a day. If not possible, leave plenty of time in between. Preferably build in time for transcribing between interviews so you don't get behind with this.
27. Don't book an interview immediately after you are due to return from holiday in case you are delayed travelling back.

During

28. Take 2 recording devices and check that they work at the start. Put in new batteries.
29. Clarify whether on or off the record and any conditions attached.
30. Get agreement to record the interview.
31. Confirm how long the interview will last.
32. You need to keep control. The great and the good may be opinionated and go off at tangents. These may be helpful but you must know your subject well enough to know whether to, and how to, bring them back to your agenda or respond to theirs.
33. Keep track of timing, using your pre-determined schedule.
34. Be flexible in the order of questioning if the interview raises something earlier than you planned to ask about it or if you are running short of time.
35. If the interviewee is interested, they may give you more time than they originally intended, so be prepared for this.
36. Keep your own speech to a minimum and especially try not to make noises of agreement that can drown out the recording.

After

37. Send a thank-you email straight away, reminding the interviewee of anything they promised. This is not just good manners – you may get a response of 'Don't hesitate to get back to me if I can help further' – giving you an entrée to do just that in the future.
38. If you have a digital recording, make copies straight away in several places, including possibly emailing it back to base if you are away travelling.
39. If you are transcribing yourself, allow at least 5 times as long as the interview. The text may be very dense with little you can leave out. Expect around 6000 words in an hour as a rough guide.
40. Transcribe, or arrange transcription for, as quickly as possible after the interview while it is fresh in your mind.
41. Get approval for use of quotes from interviewees if that was agreed at the interview.
42. Send findings/recommendations/conclusions to any interviewee that requested them or showed sufficient interest.