

Teledemocracy: Using Information Technology to Enhance Political Work

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Abstract

Norway's Telenor Research and Development developed and implemented a communication system to support local politicians. The system's graphical interface makes it easy for politicians to make phone calls, set up telephone conferences, and send and receive e-mail and faxes. An integrated document handler supports the exchange of documents between politicians and local government officers. A two-year field trial demonstrated that the system provides useful and effective information technology support for local politicians. The field trial also provides insights into furthering the development of teledemocracy.

Keywords: Teledemocracy, interface design, graphical interface, local politics, telecommunications, field trial, participatory action research, telephony

ISRL Categories: AI0101, BC0102, CA10, HD01

Below the authors explain their reason for submitting this work to "MISQ Discovery." The complete text of the work appears on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.misq.org/discovery/articles96/article1>

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Why Publish in MISQ Discovery?

Communication is a central activity of scholarship. It can be significantly enhanced by using multiple media to escape the confines of the page while enhancing scholarly communication in two ways.

First, electronic publishing gives us more space, while multimedia lets us more clearly communicate with readers. The article occupies more than eight Mbytes, whereas a print journal article occupies around 100 kbytes. A graphical directory is the major characteristic of the system discussed. A context-sensitive map lets us demonstrate the directory's main attributes. Those wishing to try it out can download demonstration software.

Second, academic journals typically have a small circulation, often limited to those with ready access to a research library. Using electronic publishing, we can reach a much larger audience, many of whom will be from outside the domain of MIS research.

Other factors influenced our decision. The research is a good fit. Plus, there are many aspects of the study that lend themselves to multimedia presentation. For example, readers unfamiliar with Norway can locate the research site on a map. Generally, this research lends itself well to show-casing the advantages of electronic publishing.

Finally, we saw "MISQ Discovery" as a challenge to be accepted.