



**Association for
Computing Machinery**

Advancing Computing as a Science & Profession

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ACM URGES STEPS TO TRANSFORM GOVERNMENT FOR A WEB 2.0 WORLD

Recommendations Aimed at Advancing Administration's Directive on Transparency and Open Government

NEW YORK, February 5, 2009 – As Congress considers how to ensure transparency in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, ACM's public policy committee ([USACM](#)) today issued recommendations to make the growing body of government data open, and accessible to all Americans. USACM issued the statement to encourage government policy makers to use these recommendations when they build federal websites, including the [recovery.gov](#) site contemplated as part of the recovery act.

Citing trends showing that individual citizens, companies, and organizations are using technology to analyze government-compiled data in creative and collaborative ways, the USACM statement urges government policies that will promote a dynamic force of third-party Internet sites and tools to enhance the usefulness of government data. The statement follows the recent release of the Administration's Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government, which is intended to establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration.

"Technology has given us powerful new tools for data gathering, analysis, social interaction and collaboration," said Edward Felten, Vice Chair of USACM. "Internet users are combining and analyzing information in innovative ways that go beyond what the data's original publishers imagined. Government has a treasure trove of data and it can unleash creative new analysis by giving users access to this data in a format that allows them the advantage of easy, fast integration, machine-readability, download capability, and authenticity measures," added Felten, Professor of Computer Science and Public Affairs, and Director of the Center for Information Technology Policy at Princeton University.

USACM applauded the [new Administration's efforts to create openness in government](#). "We are pleased that on day one, the new Administration and the new Congress have made transparency a priority," said USACM member David Robinson, "On behalf of America's computing professionals, USACM stands ready to provide expert assistance and advice to the Executive branch and to Congress as these initiatives unfold," said Robinson, Associate Director of Princeton's Center for Information Technology Policy.

The USACM statement noted that government agencies and legislators have long recognized the value of the Internet, which they helped to create. These agencies, the statement said, also share a strong

commitment to providing for the information needs of citizens and others. As a result of law, custom and technology, the statement continued, various parts of government at all levels have differing and sometimes detrimental policies toward promoting secure and accessible data.

USACM's policy recommendations for data that is already considered public information include the following:

- Data published by the government should be in formats and approaches that promote analysis and reuse of that data.
- Data republished by the government that has been received or stored in a machine-readable format (such as online regulatory filings) should preserve the machine-readability of that data.
- Information should be posted so as to also be accessible to citizens with limitations and disabilities.
- Citizens should be able to download complete datasets of regulatory, legislative or other information, or appropriately chosen subsets of that information, when it is published by government.
- Citizens should be able to directly access government-published datasets using standard methods such as queries via an API (Application Programming Interface).
- Government bodies publishing data online should always seek to publish using data formats that do not include executable content.
- Published content should be digitally signed or include attestation of publication/creation date, authenticity, and integrity.

For more information on USACM's policy recommendations for open government, please visit [ACM U.S. Public Policy Committee \(USACM\) Recommendations on Open Government](#).

About ACM

ACM, the Association for Computing Machinery www.acm.org, is the world's largest educational and scientific computing society, uniting computing educators, researchers and professionals to inspire dialogue, share resources and address the field's challenges. ACM strengthens the computing profession's collective voice through strong leadership, promotion of the highest standards, and recognition of technical excellence. ACM supports the professional growth of its members by providing opportunities for life-long learning, career development, and professional networking.

About USACM

The ACM U.S. Public Policy Committee (USACM) <http://www.acm.org/usacm> serves as the focal point for ACM's interaction with U.S. government organizations, the computing community, and the U.S. public in all matters of U.S. public policy related to information technology. Supported by ACM's Washington, D.C., [Office of Public Policy](#), USACM responds to requests for information and technical expertise from U.S. government agencies and departments, seeks to influence relevant U.S. government policies on behalf of the computing community and the public, and provides information to ACM on relevant U.S. government activities. USACM also identifies potentially significant technical and public policy issues and brings them to the attention of ACM and the community.

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