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ANALYSIS

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REVOLUTION @STATE: THE SPREAD OF EDIPLOMACY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The US State Department has become the world's leading user of ediplomacy. Ediplomacy now employs over 150 full-time personnel working in 25 different ediplomacy nodes at Headquarters. More than 900 people use it at US missions abroad.

Ediplomacy is now used across eight different program areas at State: Knowledge Management, Public Diplomacy and Internet Freedom dominate in terms of staffing and resources. However, it is also being used for Information Management, Consular, Disaster Response, harnessing External Resources and Policy Planning.

In some areas ediplomacy is changing the way State does business. In Public Diplomacy, State now operates what is effectively a global media empire, reaching a larger direct audience than the paid circulation of the ten largest US dailies and employing an army of diplomat-journalists to feed its 600-plus platforms.

In other areas, like Knowledge Management, ediplomacy is finding solutions to problems that have plagued foreign ministries for centuries.

The slow pace of adaptation to ediplomacy by many foreign ministries suggests there is a degree of uncertainty over what ediplomacy is all about, what it can do and how pervasive its influence is going to be. This report – the result of a four-month research project in Washington DC – should help provide those answers.

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Introduction

A new technological revolution is bearing down on foreign ministries. For many it is proving a difficult adjustment. There is confusion over what ediplomacy is and what it can be used for. One foreign ministry in particular has emerged as a leader in the embrace of these new technologies: the US State Department.

This report stems from a four-month Professional Fulbright scholarship in Washington DC researching State's use of ediplomacy. It included a period in the Office of eDiplomacy, dozens of meetings and interviews with officials from the different ediplomacy nodes at State, as well as participation in State's Visioning Tech Diplomacy Retreat, a Tech@State conference and TechCamp Bucharest.

This is the first part of a two-stage report and is a first attempt to map the increasingly broad spread of ediplomacy across the US State Department and conceptually frame the full scope of its ediplomacy work.

The slow pace of adaptation to ediplomacy by many foreign ministries suggests there is a degree of uncertainty over what ediplomacy is all about, what it can do and how pervasive its influence is going to be. This mapping exercise demonstrates how ediplomacy is being harnessed at State and its rapid and pervasive spread throughout the Department. There are now 25 separate ediplomacy nodes operating at State's Washington DC Headquarters employing over 150 full-time equivalent staff. Additionally, even though it is not a focus of this paper, a recent internal study of US missions abroad found 935 overseas staff employing ediplomacy communications tools to some degree, or the equivalent of 175 full-time personnel.

The second part of this report, to be completed for the Brookings Institution, will provide a detailed analysis of State's use of ediplomacy.

What is ediplomacy?

There is no agreed definition of ediplomacy. A slightly revised [working definition](#) is the use of the web and new ICT to help carry out diplomatic objectives. This definition is broad, but escapes the tendency to confuse ediplomacy with social media tools alone.

Foreign ministries have gone through several technology-driven communications revolutions before including the telegraph, the rise of international broadcasting, email and the Internet.

Even as many foreign ministries are still adjusting to the implications of some of these more recent communications technologies, a new technology-driven revolution is bearing down upon them: ediplomacy. This is at its heart a connection and customisation revolution driven by the advent of connective technologies that harness the digitisation of almost everything.

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Because information is increasingly digital and most of what diplomats produce is in digital form it is now possible to harness these previously isolated pieces of information using off the shelf as well as customised digital tools. This will allow them to retain and pool their knowledge – a challenge for organisations that have become notorious for deftly stove piping information – allowing foreign ministries to effectively become high-end consultancies for other arms of government abroad (provided they act before other international arms of government, such as recently enlarged intelligence agencies). It can also be shared, analysed in aggregate and by multiple experts dispersed across the bureaucracy and the globe.

Bespoke connection technologies will also enable foreign ministries to coordinate with other arms of government as never before, and to use these tools to continue to carry out an oversight and steering role for international policy across government even as bureaucracies become increasingly internationalised. Ediplomacy tools will also allow diplomats to connect with, listen to and engage their own and foreign publics who have moved online as well as exert influence in the new and increasingly crowded online world.

The transformative goals of ediplomacy

Various concepts have been put forward to try to capture the emergence of the new diplomatic operating environment, including the arrival of ediplomacy. These include Secretary Rice's [Transformational Diplomacy](#) and Secretary Clinton's [21st Century Statecraft](#).

So far however, these concepts have not involved setting down specific work programs or goals for ediplomacy. Mapping the various ediplomacy nodes at State though (see below) suggests these fall under the following broad categories:

- 1) **Knowledge management:** To harness departmental and whole of government knowledge, so that it is retained, shared and its use optimised in pursuit of national interests abroad.
- 2) **Public diplomacy:** To maintain contact with audiences as they migrate online and to harness new communications tools to listen to and target important audiences with key messages and to influence major online influencers.
- 3) **Information management:** To help aggregate the overwhelming flow of information and to use this to better inform policy-making and to help anticipate and respond to emerging social and political movements.
- 4) **Consular communications and response:** To create direct, personal communications channels with citizens travelling overseas, with manageable communications in crisis situations.
- 5) **Disaster response:** To harness the power of connective technologies in disaster response situations.
- 6) **Internet freedom:** Creation of technologies to keep the internet free and open. This has the related objectives of promoting freedom of speech and democracy as well as undermining authoritarian regimes.

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- 7) **External resources:** Creating digital mechanisms to draw on and harness external expertise to advance national goals.
- 8) **Policy planning:** To allow for effective oversight, coordination and planning of international policy across government, in response to the internationalisation of the bureaucracy.

A range of other work programs are likely to emerge as ediplomacy becomes increasingly embedded. For example, as other foreign ministries begin the process of adaptation it will become important to develop programs that facilitate easier collaboration with partner governments. This is seen as a serious growth area by the Office of eDiplomacy in keeping with the thrust of the Secretary's [Global Partnership Initiative](#). There have been a few examples in this space already: One initiative saw the US embassy in Mexico, the Mexican embassy in Washington, the Mexican Affairs office in State Headquarters, and the Mexican Foreign Ministry all collaborate on various protocols relating to disaster management coordination in the US-Mexico cross border regions using cloud based tools. Another area where ediplomacy holds a lot of promise is in harnessing diaspora populations both abroad and at home (the US-Haitian population was mobilised to assist with translation of Twitter messages for example during the Haitian earthquake).

Ediplomacy @State goes viral

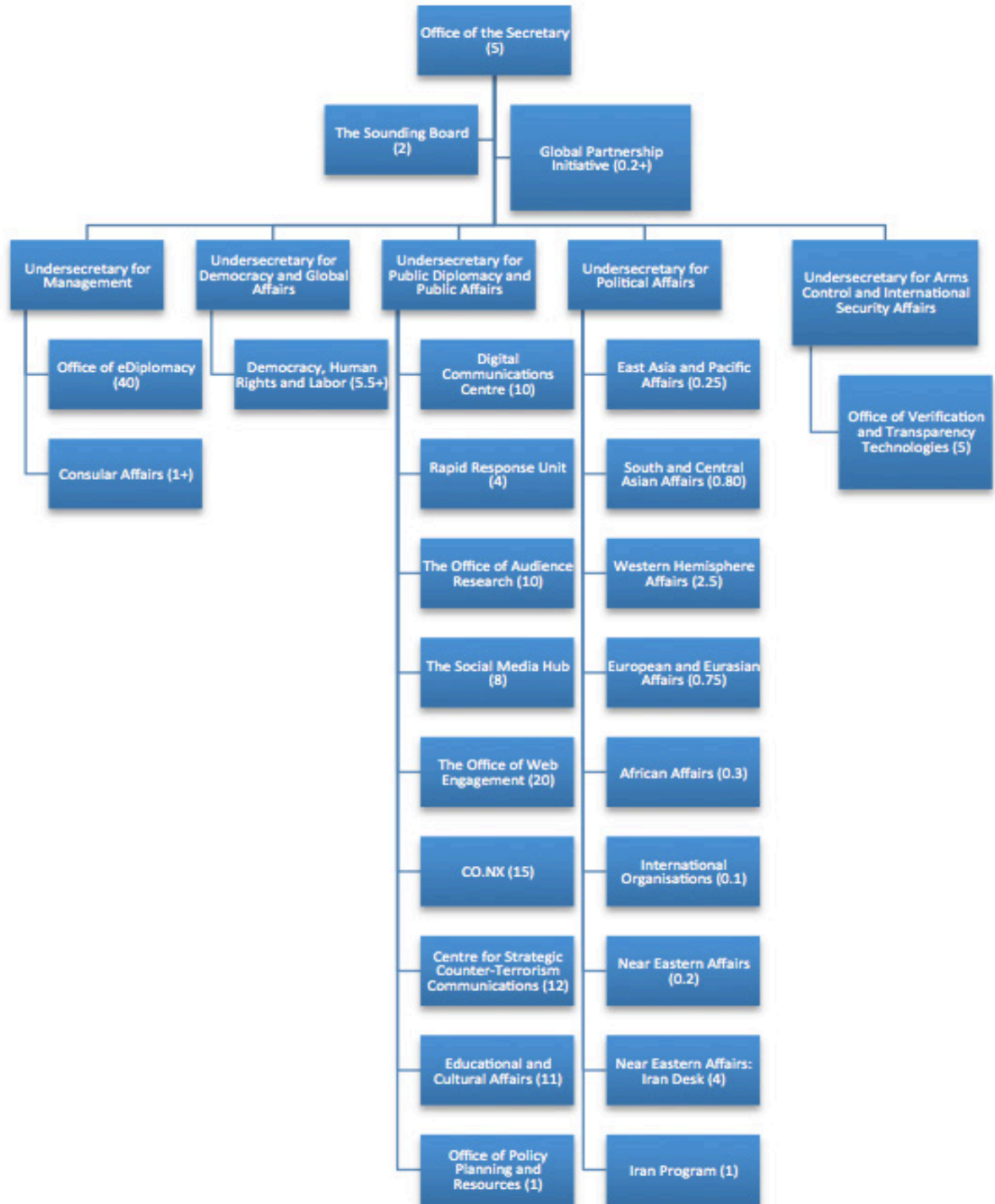
Ediplomacy might have started with the establishment of the Taskforce on eDiplomacy (now the Office of eDiplomacy) in 2002, but its utility has come to be recognised across the State Department and there are now 25 different ediplomacy nodes across the Department. These are either exclusively focused on ediplomacy-related work or have been created within more traditional work areas (e.g. regional bureaus) to assist them adapt to this new work environment. The chart below reveals the extent of this trend. It is based on meetings conducted by the author so may not reflect the full extent of the spread of ediplomacy. Notably, it excludes the very sizeable ediplomacy efforts being made by US posts across the world as well as ediplomacy work that is outsourced to NGOs and IT companies. Even excluding these positions, there are now around 150 people at State's Headquarters working on ediplomacy.

Looking at the succession of recent Secretaries of State it is unsurprising that the State Department has developed such a [substantial lead](#) over other foreign ministries in the shift to ediplomacy. Colin Powell, with his experience in the world's most technologically advanced military, brought the vision to begin the transformation. Condoleezza Rice supported and added to his early work through her [Transformational Diplomacy](#) agenda. Hillary Clinton has capitalised on this legacy with her far-reaching [21st Century Statecraft](#).

Most recently, Secretary Clinton has brought bright, energetic and visionary innovators onto her personal staff. Foremost among these are her Senior Adviser for Innovation Alec Ross and Policy Advisor for Innovation Ben Scott, who have helped embed ediplomacy at State, driven an external and internal ediplomacy promotion campaign and helped conceive of specific ediplomacy initiatives.

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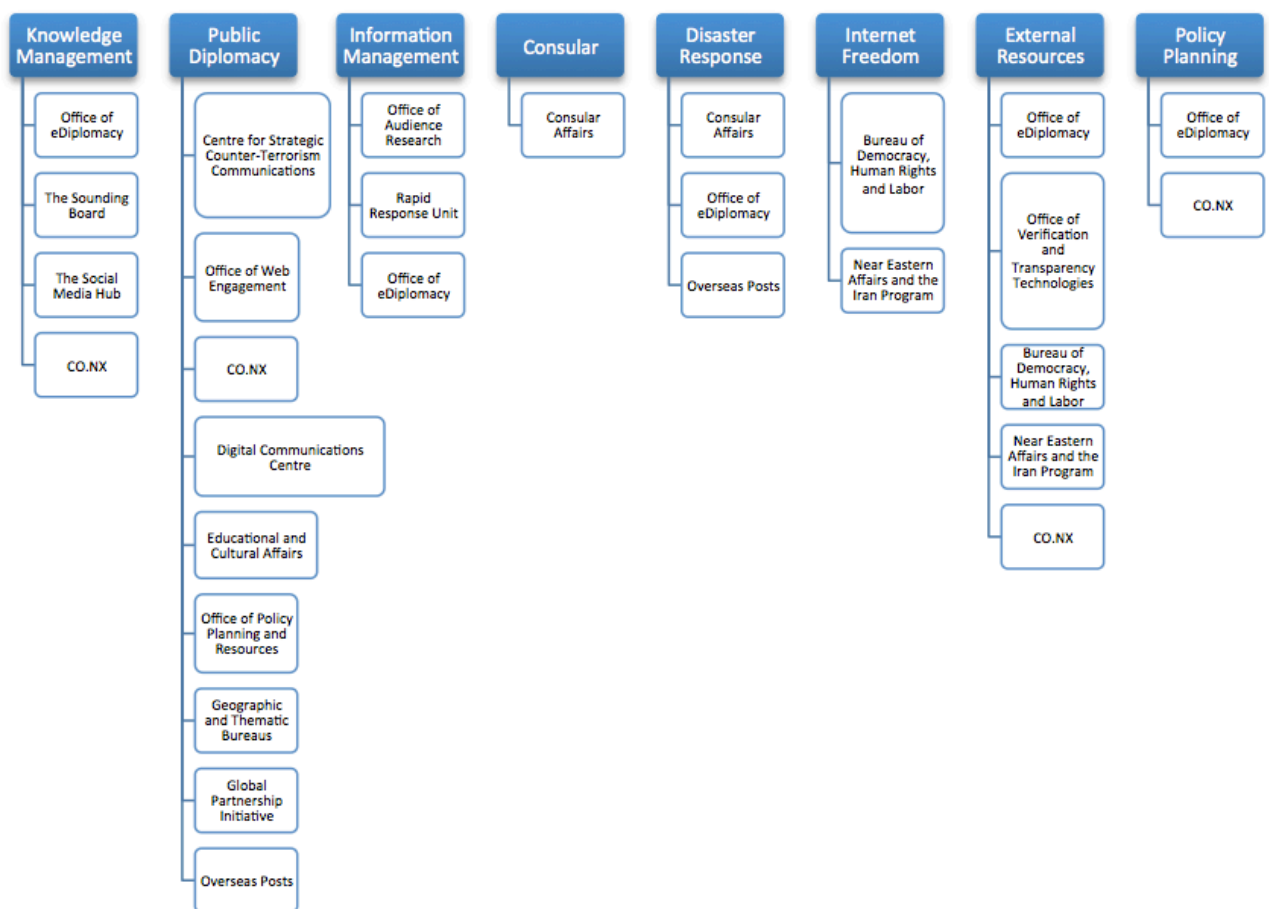
Chart 1: Ediplomacy nodes at State and staffing levels, by organisational area (+ indicates considerable ediplomacy work outsourced to external partners)



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While the above chart follows State’s organisational chart, the chart below breaks the same ediplomacy nodes down by principal work program and objectives according to the conceptual framework set out above. The following section will examine the work program of each of State’s ediplomacy nodes under the eight different work programs.

Chart 2: Ediplomacy nodes at State, by work programs



KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

To harness departmental and whole of government knowledge, so that it is retained, shared and its use optimised in pursuit of national interests abroad.

Foreign ministries’ principal asset has long been the knowledge held by their individual officers. However, a long-time challenge has been the storage, retention, sharing and pooling of that knowledge.

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Paper files allowed foreign ministries to store information, but not to easily retrieve, share or pool it. Electronic cables improved retrieval, but were still imperfect when it came to sharing and pooling (they silo information and tend to be one way rather than encouraging collaboration) and did nothing to capture or retain departing officers' country or area-specific expertise besides what they had put into formal cables. Email has many advantages, but also comes with challenges in all four areas: storage (how to usefully file and archive emails), retention (how to determine a policy related email and how widely to make it available), sharing and pooling (they generally silo information).

Various ediplomacy initiatives have been launched at State to try and help overcome this age-old problem.

The Office of eDiplomacy: An Introduction

The Office of eDiplomacy has become the primary knowledge management hub within the State Department. There are several stories circulating about its origins. Various, it was created after then-Secretary of State Colin Powell, on his first tour of the Department, found people working without computers, using shared internet connections or had his palm pilot confiscated by a diplomatic security agent.

The Office remains the central ediplomacy hub at State, driving internal innovation, responding to requests for ediplomacy fixes and managing new internal ediplomacy communications platforms. It has grown from its original complement of six in 2002 to some 80 people in 2011, half of whom are focused exclusively on ediplomacy-related work.

The Bureaucratic Googleplex

A device to measure stolen electricity, an app to provide US citizens living in Guangzhou with reliable data on air pollution, and a sprawling Philodendron named after a major IT firm because its tendrils touch everything in the office. Welcome to the bureaucratic equivalent of the Googleplex, the State Department's Office of eDiplomacy, the most dynamic arm of a foreign ministry you are likely to find anywhere with what one official described as, 'an unstated goal of transforming the way State does business'.

Celebrity eDiplomats like Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her Senior Advisor for Innovation Alec Ross might attract a lot of media attention, but this working hub has tended to escape the spotlight. The head of the 80-person office is an unassuming dynamo who shuns the trappings of his station and sits Intel CEO Andy Groves-like in a cubicle with the rest of his staff. In fact, after spending a week observing the office, it is hard to imagine this is actually part of a bureaucracy, let alone a staid institution like the foreign ministry. Senior managers talk about 'tolerating ambiguity' and staff need to; the place is a hive of activity where new ideas materialise from animated hallway conversations, the

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Secretary's office can request a platform overnight and a \$US2 million fund has been established to crowd source and finance innovative solutions from State Department employees themselves.

In interviews with office staff, conversation quickly turns from notional duties to 'passion projects' – the new ideas and platforms staff work on in their spare time. And there are plenty in the works. The Inspector General, whose recent [report](#) on the office made it sound like a review of a Silicon Valley start-up, noted over 40 underway. Other employees also seem to have got a message regularly repeated at the Office of eDiplomacy; Experiment. It's okay to fail. One enterprising official working on US library spaces abroad realised how costly and pointless it was sending physical books across the globe and cut a deal with Amazon to get discounted Kindles delivered instead. And in Zimbabwe, the greying US Ambassador, [Charles A Ray](#), has embraced Facebook as a way of circumventing the iron grip Robert Mugabe exercises over freedom of the press. He engages in an active and animated discussion with Zimbabweans about how they view the world.

What is perhaps most daunting about this new frontier world is that like all things technological it is unbounded. The Office of eDiplomacy is just one of over 20 ediplomacy nodes that have popped up at State.

The first head of the office, Ambassador James Holmes, reportedly said when asked to lead the office, 'I don't know anything about technology. All I can do is come at it from the perspective of a disgruntled user', an approach that appealed to senior management and shaped the future direction of the office. The original (and only recently removed) interrelated mandate of the office was a tripartite one and stemmed from perceived internal failures:

- To promote end-user involvement in decision-making on information technology;
- To improve the way the State Department connects to and works with its USG foreign affairs partner agencies, with other nations' diplomatic institutions, and with other entities involved in international affairs;
- To foster knowledge management at State.

In addition, it has set out a [vision and mission](#):

VISION: Innovative diplomacy powered by knowledge leadership, superior customer support, and collaborative technology.

MISSION: Advancing diplomacy by providing effective knowledge-sharing initiatives, guidance on the convergence of technology and diplomacy, and first-class IT consulting.

Informally, the Office is divided into three functional units: Knowledge Leadership, DiploTech, and Policy and Outreach.

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From failure to eDiplomacy

One senior ediplomacy hand, there since the Office's inception, explains the Office of eDiplomacy's creation as the result of a string of failures.

First there were the 1998 attacks on US embassies in East Africa where a Blue Ribbon Panel investigating the attacks concluded State was not very good at communicating with itself and at knowledge management.

Next came 9/11, which revealed the intelligence community had the pieces but lacked the ability to put them together, questioning the old Cold War concept of 'need to know' and the stove-piping of information.

Finally, there was an effort to set up an inter-agency technology collaborative zone that largely failed because the technology was too complicated for users, despite an investment of some \$US16 million. One of the first things the new Office of eDiplomacy did was to end this initiative, while salvaging useful components and developing greatly improved user interfaces.

From these bitter experiences, the need for an Office of eDiplomacy was realised.

Knowledge Leadership

This team of 12 people is responsible for the main internal and inter-agency knowledge management tools for which the Office of eDiplomacy has become best known. These are: Corridor, Communities@State, Diplopedia and Search (as well as assisting in technical support for the Sounding Board).

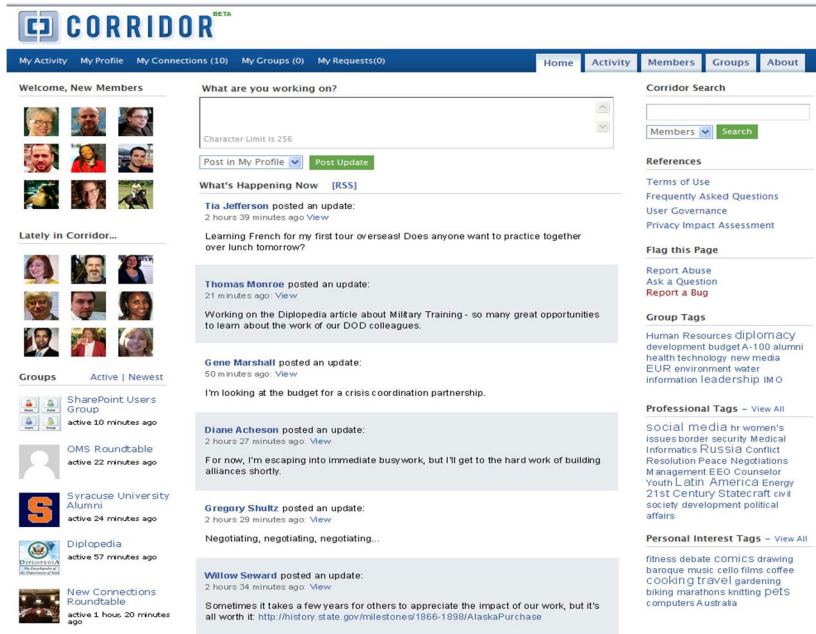
These tools were developed as part of a Knowledge Leadership Strategy (approved in August 2003) that called for:

- Use of online communities to share knowledge across organizational and geographic boundaries;
- Better ways to find and contribute knowledge;
- Better ways to find and share experience and expertise with colleagues;
- Use of technology that made knowledge-sharing simple to do, so that it became part of the everyday workflow.

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Corridor, Est. 2011

Corridor is an internal professional networking site that has deliberately been designed to have the look and feel of Facebook, given employees' existing familiarity with this platform. Corridor uses free [BuddyPress](#) software, tweaked to State's needs. The newest ediplomacy platform, as of October 2011 it



had almost 6,800 members (about 800 of whom were active) and over 440 groups.

Unlike Facebook, everything on Corridor is publically available to all State employees (i.e. users cannot hide messages or their profile). In its existing form, Corridor offers a number of advantages, but its full potential will be unleashed when improvements currently under development are released. Corridor's advantages include:

- The ability to form groups. These serve multiple functions from use by managers to post meeting minutes, make dot action points for the week and have staff report back to the group on their activities to other professional and personal interest groups.
- The ability to search for colleagues with specific skill sets (e.g. language skills or other expertise).
- The ability to message and communicate with staff in a more informal manner (and often with a quicker response time).
- The ability to share knowledge and information e.g. through links (both to internal documents and from the Internet).

Discussions are currently underway with Human Resources to allow staff to automatically propagate standard biographical material provided to Human Resources on Corridor. Over time Corridor could come to have more up to date biographical information than Human Resources, helping Human Resources maintain better databases. Corridor could also come to play a central role in the posting and assignment space and as a communications vehicle with staff. It will also likely come to be used by managers to identify suitable staff for open positions.

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Diplopedia, Est. 2006

Diplopedia is the State Department’s internal Wiki, with the same look and feel as Wikipedia, and also using the same free software ([MediaWiki](#)). In early October 2011 it had 14,519 articles, 4,698



registered users, 42,217 weekly page views and over 196,356 cumulative page edits. The most popular pages for the week ending 6 October 2011 were Desk Officer, Promotion List, Administering the FSOT [Foreign Service Officer Test] Overseas, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Portal and Embassy Khartoum Portal.

Since its creation, Diplopedia has come to serve a number of useful functions:

- It has become a central repository for State Department information, particularly useful when dealing with an irregular or unfamiliar issue such as administering the foreign service officer test;
- It has been used as a centralised knowledge exchange and dissemination tool. An example is Deskpedia, a page of practical information and links for new desk officers.
- As a potential reporting space. One Washington D.C. based officer, for example, tasked with compiling a Religious Engagement Report that required input from posts around the world, created a Diplopedia page and asked posts to submit their country reports directly to the page. The final report was then drawn from Diplopedia.

Communities@State, Est. 2005

Communities are issue-specific blogs. There are now over 70 active communities, with more than 46,500 entries and over 5,600 comments that cover a broad range of areas from policy and management, to language and social interests. Below are a few of the communities with their description from Diplopedia:

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Community	Description	Website
ACS Plus Plus	This site is moderated by the Office of Overseas Citizen Services in the Consular Affairs Bureau and is designed as a means for Washington to facilitate conversations about ACS work and to disseminate information about policies and best practices and a forum for practitioners everywhere to share experience and solutions to ACS work. Note: ACS Plus Plus is almost always the most viewed community each week.	OpenNet
China Economic Strategy Review Community	China Economic Strategy Review is an interactive dialog to discuss SinoEconomics.	Interagency
Commercial Diplomacy Portal	A community to exchange ideas, highlight your success stories, and communicate with you on business advocacy issues.	OpenNet Interagency
Dr. Hamza's Home Page	On this site we hope you, the community who use Arabic on the job, will share your Arabic language experiences, challenges and victories.	Interagency
Iran Watchers Community	The purpose of our site is to establish a community that can work collaboratively on Iran by sharing information and thinking.	Interagency
Mission Mexico	Convened by DCM Mexico City for all constituent posts in Mexico.	Interagency
Smart Leadership	A site for exchanging best practices, discussing issues of common interest, and challenging ourselves to grow as professionals in terms of leadership qualities.	Interagency
The Two-Wheel Deal	A resource for people who bike to work.	OpenNet
Vox Populi	A site moderated by the Visa Office in the Consular Affairs Bureau intended to foster discussion and communication around the world about the visa issues all visa officers face in their work.	OpenNet

Communities can be easily set up. A short request is filed online (an 18-question survey), setting out the objective(s) and purpose of the community, and once approved the requestor can either build the site themselves or request the assistance of the Office of eDiplomacy. It uses free [WordPress](#) software. Communities serve a variety of functions:

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- Perhaps most importantly, they allow a quick, easy means of intra-departmental and/or inter-agency communication/collaboration on any topic and on both the classified and unclassified systems.
- They facilitate knowledge retention, by allowing experienced officers who are rotated out of a position to continue to contribute their expertise via the community group.
- They foster knowledge sharing, exchange and retention, on topics as diverse as smart leadership, consular services and reducing office waste and energy consumption.
- They promote more efficient business practice. For example, the US Embassy in Tokyo used to send out a regular interagency email on Japanese economic developments. This required extensive follow-up with contributors and management of a significant and constantly changing email database. It replaced the list with a community group users could subscribe to themselves, with the option of an automatically generated email notification when posts are added.

The advantage of Communities over Corridor Groups is that they allow for more detailed discussions that are more permanent in nature (and are archived and searchable for future reference).

Search, Est. 2004

Initially created as Enterprise (iNet) Search in 2004, this instantly made hundreds of thousands of documents (now millions) available to State Department personnel. In the week ending 1 October 2011, there were 65,792 search queries entered.

The Future of Knowledge Leadership

With ‘all the key components of a framework to enable State personnel to share in the collective experience, expertise and knowledge of the Department’ now in place, the Knowledge Leadership unit, along with other colleagues in the Office of eDiplomacy and offices such as the Sounding Board are looking ‘to integrate these tools so that people can share knowledge more readily and tailor how they receive information’. With this ambition future projects include:

- Deploying a new Enterprise Search function – *Search Agents*, a form of saved, repeatable and ‘trainable’ search.
- Enabling Idea Exchanges by making the application that powers the Sounding Board available to bureaus and posts for their own idea exchanges.
- Integrating reporting and other information from multiple sources such as cables, Communities@State, and Diplopedia.
- Strengthening Corridor’s search, notification and invitation features.
- Deploying a new analytical tool that will help measure success and show where more needs to be done.

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- Ensuring that the Department’s KL [Knowledge Leadership] tools are fully available for remote use, not just at the office desktop.
- Educating State personnel, in cooperation with FSI [the Foreign Service Institute] and through other efforts, on why these tools can make a difference to the Department and to them professionally.¹

Another Knowledge Management program (but falling under the Policy and Outreach Team within the Office of eDiplomacy) is the newly launched Innovation Fund. Secretary Clinton set aside \$US2 million annually for the Fund that aims to crowd source innovations from staff. The method for approving projects is under review, but will likely involve staff submitting a basic proposal that will then be reviewed by a panel of experts. If they see merit in the proposal the panel will go back with further questions and request a more detailed proposal, which will then be assessed for a final determination. Staff who propose the idea are then awarded the funds and expected to manage the delivery of the project.

Successful awards to date include:

Project description	Award
Embassy Minsk is developing a web browser environment that would provide access to a variety of state-of-the-art browsers available on the web, while also isolating and protecting the Department’s intranet from these browsers and the potential security challenges they might pose.	\$US80,000
Air quality app (Guangzhou): to provide the US community in Guangzhou with an app linked to the mission’s air quality monitor.	\$US17,500
Humanitarian Info Unit: to use Office of Intelligence and Research data in various web 2.0 applications.	\$US168,460
Study in USA mobile app: to provide an app that helps Chinese students locate information on opportunities to study in the US, to promote US colleges, as well as advance US-Chinese educational exchange.	\$US59,000
Social media monitoring and engagement pilot: to create a global monitoring system for all State Department social media.	\$US150,000
OpenSource telephone system: to develop an open source phone system for non-secure phones.	\$US38,000

¹ Bruce G. Burton, ‘Knowledge Leadership at the Eight Year Mark’, Internal working document of the Office of eDiplomacy, 12 July 2011.

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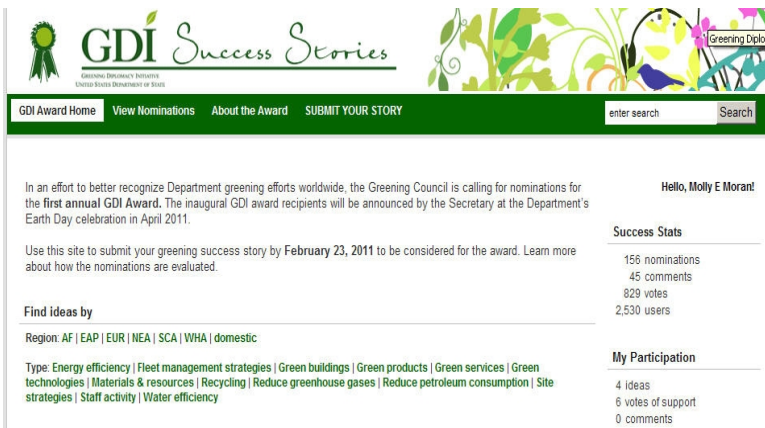
The Sounding Board



The Sounding Board is an initiative of Secretary Clinton to source ideas and innovation directly from State Department

employees. It started as a blog, but now uses ideation software (Bright Idea) to make management of the large volume of ideas more practicable. The Sounding Board is prominently displayed on the opening page of State’s intranet and is widely read across the Department (it averages 20-30,000 page views a month).

Since its launch in February 2009, 2,300 ideas have been submitted with around 22,000 comments (these are moderated by two officers). The Sounding Board has also come to act as a forum for sharing best practice. Staff frequently post ideas or comments only to be informed by other users that a solution already exists. The Sounding Board also hosts community groups, such as the Greening Diplomacy Initiative (see image), which features posts by users on best-practice ways to achieve environmental improvements at US missions and included a competition to identify the best greening initiative at a post (won by Embassy Ulaanbaatar, the first mission to calculate its carbon footprint and implement various measures to offset its environmental impact).



Tag Cloud

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 shuttle smart software soundingboard
 technology training travel

To date, most of the ideas that have been taken up tend to relate to relatively minor improvements (lights at a pedestrian crossing and showers for cyclists and runners). However, there are plans to have the most popular ideas fed directly to managers who will then be required to respond to the community with a plan for implementing the idea or an explanation as to why it is not feasible.

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The Social Media Hub

The Social Media Hub is staffed with a young, Silicon Valley-esque team, expert in all things social media. Although created to help public diplomacy efforts, the Hub itself is primarily a knowledge management centre for all things social media. The staff offer a range of services to posts including:

- Maintenance of the Social Media Hub web portal, with detailed information for posts on how to use social media effectively and advice on which social media platforms would work best in specific markets, as well as examples of best practice worldwide.
- Provision of bespoke advice to posts looking to use social media or with specific social media related queries (including on State Department policies).
- Troubleshooting social media problems (e.g. hacking of accounts).
- Ensuring compliance with legal obligations and advising on (emerging) State Department policy on the use of social media.
- Running educational ‘Ask the Experts’ webinars.
- Development of various public diplomacy related applications and tools, such as those available at the apps@state [website](#).

The application of CO.NX in relation to Knowledge Management is discussed below.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

To maintain contact with audiences as they migrate online and to harness new communications tools to listen to and target important audiences with key messages and to influence major online influencers.

Social media has dramatically shifted the ground rules of public diplomacy. In the past a competent diplomat might have been able to reach hundreds and possibly thousands of individuals through external engagement. For a rare few, it might have been possible to occasionally reach hundreds of thousands or millions of people via newspapers, radio and television, but that required going through gatekeepers.

Social media has changed this old dynamic. State now effectively operates its own global media empire reaching more than eight million people directly through its 600 plus social media platforms. To provide a sense of the scale of this operation, this reach is as large as the paid subscriber base of the ten largest circulating daily newspapers in the United States, combined (although the impact and influence of the two platforms is likely quite different). This reach is still considerably smaller than Voice of America’s [estimated](#) 187 million weekly audience, but State has no editorial control over its content. After launching State’s new Turkish Twitter feed Deputy Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs for Digital Strategy Victoria Esser put it [this way](#): ‘We are always seeking to expand the ways in which we can inform and engage Social media offered us a way to do that in real time with much broader reach than we could ever hope for with traditional shoe leather public diplomacy.’

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A single US diplomat can now communicate directly with a million people every day through one of States' larger social media platforms. This provides State with the potential to communicate in an unfiltered way to mass audiences at very low cost as well as the opportunity to listen. The segmentation of audiences that social media facilitates also allows it to communicate multiple messages ranging from counter-terrorism narratives to the soft promotion of US scientific expertise.

Centre for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications

The Digital Outreach Team located within the Centre for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications was first established in 2006 and began by promoting soft messages about the United States among the Arabic blogosphere.

It has since had its mission more tightly focused on countering extremism online and has a team of 11 bloggers and one manager working in Arabic, Urdu and Somali.

These bloggers openly acknowledge they work for the US State Department. Given this, they cannot gain access to the most extreme websites so tend to target radicals posting comments on more mainstream sites like Al Jazeera and the BBC. They tend to counter misinformation about the US posted on these sites, correct conspiracy theories (such as one claiming Vice President Dick Cheney had ordered the assassination of Benazir Bhutto) by providing factual information disproving them, and also work to highlight the most negative and hypocritical sides of extremists (such as Taliban bomb attacks on girls' schools, and reports that terrorist and US dual citizen Anwar al-Awlaki had solicited prostitutes). The Team also work on developing video content designed to undermine the extremist narrative, like [this video](#) ridiculing Osama bin Laden, and operate Arabic and Urdu YouTube channels.

It is a free-wheeling office, where staff are given great leeway in crafting messages they deem appropriate for their audience.

Office of Web Engagement

The Office of Web Engagement has 20 staff members and:

- Manages several social media platforms, including the four largest social media sites at State, all of which have followings of over one million, including the Facebook sites [Ejournal USA](#), [Democracy Challenge](#), [Global Conversations: Climate](#) and [CO.NX](#). It also operates various foreign language sites promoting soft messages about the United States, including in Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Russian and Spanish.
- Develops content for the social media platforms it manages as well as for others at State.
- Designs web engagement strategies.
- Maintains a dashboard listing almost all of the State Department's more than 600 social media sites and audience reach (in excess of eight million people).
- Hosting and deployment of various mobile apps, including a product designed to supplement social media during major events such as overseas visits by the president.

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CO.NX

This office of 15 people is responsible for operating and maintaining State's CO.NX platform, which is a live streamed video and interactive chat platform used in a broad range of State Department discussions, both internal, intra-agency and public.

The CO.NX team organises speakers, preps them and moderates the presentations. It also responds to requests from posts to have various speakers present. The speaker series it runs are Public Diplomacy orientated, but CO.NX also has Knowledge Management and Policy Planning components. It is used for training purposes, resulting in considerable savings (from saved airline costs or video teleconferencing fees) and internal discussions.

Digital Communications Centre

This team of ten is responsible for some of the State Department's more formal social media platforms such as the official blog [DipNote](#), official Twitter feed [@StateDept](#) and official [Facebook](#). It also operates the official foreign-language Twitter feeds in Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish and Urdu (State Department missions overseas Tweet in many other languages).

Because of their more formal nature, the material on these sites is usually pre-cleared (if coming from the Secretary) or sticks closely to other cleared text such as speeches or blogs. It has proved most useful during crisis situations (such as providing consular advice during the Mumbai attacks) and for correcting false rumours (such as when it was [claimed](#) Madagascar's ousted president had sought refuge inside the U.S. Embassy in Antananarivo). The platforms were not as responsive to more fluid events such as the early stages of the Arab Spring when official US policy was difficult to discern. In these cases, less official State Department feeds have been able to put a more humanitarian face to the US position.

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

This Bureau, responsible for the United States' vast cultural affairs exchanges, has 11 people working on ediplomacy-related activities in the Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Team. This group is responsible for State's [ExchangesConnect](#) website, which has some 37,000 members and aims to link prospective exchange visitors (both US and foreign) with alumni of the exchange programs and is working on a range of website improvements such as the newly launched J1 Visa [site](#). The team also manages the ExchangesConnect Twitter feed [@ConnectStateGov](#) (with some 11,000 followers) and [Facebook](#) (with over 5,800 likes).

The Team also has a dynamic senior adviser for innovation, looking at how technology can be integrated into the Bureau's work. Examples of this digitisation process include the launch of a recent mobile phone-based English-language program in Tunisia (which the Bureau for Western Hemisphere Affairs is now looking to replicate in Latin America), using social media to attempt to create lasting

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communities among groups visiting the United States on exchange, and the provision of educational advisory services via social media and shortly to mobile phones.

Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources

The Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs has an official dedicated to making sure nothing slips through the cracks in the social media public diplomacy space and who acts as a link between the various public diplomacy ediplomacy nodes at State. The officer, for example, ensures all staff working on social media abroad for public diplomacy purposes have the necessary hardware and software. He also works to strengthen internal digital processes, for example, using SharePoint (Microsoft collaboration software deployed across State) to standardise processes.

Political Affairs

A noteworthy development in the spread of ediplomacy and its incorporation into daily work at State has been the creation of dedicated social media officers within each of the geographic bureaus.

The uptake of ediplomacy varies somewhat across bureaus, but each one has an officer spending at least part of their time on ediplomacy-related work. Often this involves servicing social media practitioners in the field through the creation of content, whether that is blog, Twitter or Facebook posts, videos or pictures and/or providing guidance on State's social media policies. It also often involves managing the Bureau's own social media platforms and those of its senior managers. In a few bureaus the day-to-day use of social media and ediplomacy might be limited, but can be dramatically scaled up for major events such as Presidential visits or the roll-out of campaigns like the UNESCO [Teaching Respect for All](#) initiative with which the Bureau of International Organisations is involved.

Global Partnership Initiative

[The Global Partnership Initiative](#) aims to help facilitate public-private partnerships and has four flagships: the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, Diaspora Engagement, Global Impact Economy Forum and Partners for a New Beginning. Each of these groups has their own external secretariat, but State employees also spend at least part of their time dedicated to ediplomacy activities specific to these projects, whether that is social media engagement or other digital outreach activities. Most of this activity is public diplomacy related, promoting the various initiatives.

Overseas Posts

Although not covered in detail by this research project, State has a large number of staff at overseas posts working on social media outreach. As mentioned, an internal study conducted by the Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in Spring 2010 found 935 people spending at least part of their time working on or supervising use of social media at missions abroad. This equated to an estimated 175 full time employees.

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INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

To help aggregate the overwhelming flow of information and to use this to better inform policy-making and to help anticipate and respond to emerging social and political movements.

The amount of information that is now digital is overwhelming. As Joseph Nye recently [characterised it](#) (p115):

By one estimate, 161 billion gigabytes of digital information were created and captured in the year 2006 alone (that is about 3 million times the information in all the books ever written). In 2010, the annual growth in digital information is expected to increase more than six-fold to 988 billion gigabytes. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, computer users sent roughly 25 trillion e-mail messages per year. By 2010, 70 per cent of all information generated every year in the world came from e-mails, online videos, and the World Wide Web. This dramatic change in the linked technologies of computing and communications is changing the nature of government and accelerating a diffusion of power.

This mine of information is a potentially important new resource for foreign ministries seeking to understand the world around them. In most instances it is cost prohibitive to use manual human labour to aggregate and make sense of such an overwhelming amount of data. Two diplomacy nodes at State are working on overcoming this challenge.

The Office of Audience Research

The Office of Audience Research, within the Office of Innovative Engagement is a relatively new creation with a staff of ten people and has several diplomacy functions:

- The development of useable social media analytics, including honing data visualisation.
- Working on a way to capture in digital form all public diplomacy activity in a single platform to aid in tracking and evaluation.
- Leveraging social media analytics to optimise outreach.
- Establishment of an Audience Research Kiosk to put syndicated research into a central location (including polling data).
- Conducting field research to identify the best ways to direct limited resources.
- Training of staff at the Foreign Service Institute on the use of social media and audience research.
- Conduct evaluations of public diplomacy activities.

Rapid Response Unit

The Bureau of Public Affairs' Rapid Response unit has a small team of three staff monitoring social media responses to developments that have the potential to impact US national interests. They produce short daily briefing notes characterising the online response to specific events/issues (for example, the

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closing of the US embassy in Syria) across the English, Arabic and Spanish social media spheres. A fourth team member - a Chinese language expert - will be added shortly.

Office of eDiplomacy

The Office of eDiplomacy has begun work analysing various information aggregation tools, and is looking in particular at the potential to use Ushahidi's [Swift River](#) platform, which 'enables the filtering and verification of real-time data from channels like Twitter, SMS, Email and RSS feeds.'

CONSULAR COMMUNICATIONS AND RESPONSE

To create direct, personal communications channels with citizens travelling overseas, with manageable communications in crisis situations.

With some [six billion](#) mobile phone subscriptions, an increasing proportion of which are smart phones able to access the web, it is now technically viable for foreign ministries to easily reach an increasingly large proportion of their citizens travelling or living overseas in crisis situations. Consular Affairs is at the centre of this effort.

Consular Affairs

Measuring the ediplomacy effort in the Bureau of Consular Affairs is difficult, as much of its work is focused on digitising the whole consular process, from visa processing to security checking and passport technology. There are large numbers of staff managing this transition including hosting a wide array of internal communications platforms. However, beyond these substantive efforts there are a number of other specific ediplomacy initiatives underway.

For example, there is an officer dedicated to managing the main consular website, [travel.state.gov](#) as well as the [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts. They also oversaw the development of the iPhone travel [app](#) (with an Android version currently under development).

Other planned developments are the roll-out of a basic framework to guide consular officers using social media at posts based on a 'train and trust' model. There are also plans to simplify the Smart Traveler registration process, which is currently extremely laborious, and to start utilising [QR code](#) technology.

The crisis response team is also working on new ediplomacy tools, such as moving crisis hotline callers online (traditionally these have been done via an 800 telephone number). This was piloted halfway through the Japan earthquake crisis, where concerned family members and friends could submit details directly online rather than having to wait on hold using the hotline (and also reducing the risk of transcription errors). There are also efforts to further develop the use of Twitter and Foursquare in crisis response situations.

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DISASTER RESPONSE

To harness the power of connective technologies in disaster response situations.

Disaster response is only a limited focus of State's ediplomacy work, outside the Consular Affairs Bureau. The Office of eDiplomacy has done a limited amount of work in this area through its TechCamp on Haiti (although its officers have been informally involved through the [Crisis Commons](#) movement).

Although beyond the focus of this paper, Embassy Jakarta is also considering ways to harness social media tools during crisis situations in Indonesia (for example, by seeking government agreement and pre-advertising uniform Twitter hashtags for use in emergency situations).

INTERNET FREEDOM

Creation of technologies to keep the internet free and open. This has the related objective of promoting freedom of speech and democracy as well as undermining authoritarian governments.

Internet freedom became a flagship US foreign policy goal after Secretary Clinton's Newseum [speech](#) however, some work on this had already begun at State.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) has one of the more interesting ediplomacy programs at State.

Funding for DRL's ediplomacy work was originally a Republican initiative, driven by the Falun Gong lobby. As a consequence, DRL's initial work was focused on China, but it has since been greatly expanded to other authoritarian regimes (such as Iran), particularly in the wake of the Arab Spring and the government-backed censorship of the web that sparked around the world.

Since 2008, DRL has received some \$US70 million in funding. About half this amount has been spent on developing circumvention technologies to help activists get around government internet censorship, and the other half on protecting websites and blogs under attack from governments and more indirect proxy attacks.

Last financial year DRL was allocated \$US30 million that was used to fund 12 new projects. Up until now, most projects have been won by not-for-profit organisations, although in some cases these NGOs have outsourced the technical development side to private companies.

Some of the organisations that have won funding prefer not to be identified because of the sensitive nature of the work they are doing. However, there are several projects that have been made public.

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One that the media has latched on to is the so-called [Internet in a suitcase](#). This is an initiative from the New America Foundation's Open Technology Initiative to build a mobile mesh network that can literally be carried around in a suitcase, to allow activists to continue to communicate even when a government tries to shut down the Internet, as happened in several Arab Spring countries during the recent uprisings.

Another interesting project is one from [Mobile Active](#) that developed a panic button called [InTheClear](#) (currently in early Beta release). The application allows activists to instantly erase all the contacts and messages on their phone if they are arrested. It also lets them send a message to their contacts warning them that they have been arrested.

Another project is run by [InterNews](#), a global NGO working on the promotion of local media. One recent circumvention campaign it developed and rolled out operated in 12 authoritarian countries: Bahrain, Burma, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Syria, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Yemen.

The campaign lasted for between six to twelve months in each country and ran advertisements on Google, Facebook and local social media platforms as well as local banner campaigns on popular websites (see examples below). So, for example, if a user were searching for a blocked site on Google, instead of just getting a government message that the site was blocked or unavailable, they would also get a Google ad offering them the opportunity to get around the government firewall.



The result of the campaign was over seven million page impressions, 1,558,567 ad clicks, and almost half a million (476,713) downloads of the tools. These included circumvention and digital safety tools.

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Another aspect of this campaign was in-country training of journalists and activists on the risks of communicating online and how to protect themselves using these tools.

Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and the Iran Program

One of the more interesting geographic units harnessing ediplomacy is the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs's Iran desk and the Iran Program.

The Iran desk has two full-time bloggers working in Farsi who manage the Desk's three main Farsi social media sites (Facebook, YouTube and Twitter) as well as support a Farsi spokesperson, who has a blog and a monthly question and answer program on YouTube and Facebook. The Iran desk jointly manages the program with the Office of Press and Public Diplomacy in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

State's Farsi twitter ([@USAdarFarsi](#)) has around 8,500 followers, the [Facebook](#) page, with its regular 'Ask Alan' [State's Farsi spokesperson] segment has some 48,000 likes and the [YouTube](#) channel has had over 350,000 views.

Another recent development has been the launch of State's first purely digital embassy: [Virtual Embassy Tehran](#). This has been billed as distinct from the old Virtual Presence Posts (for example, that in [Somalia](#)), which have been allowed to die a quiet death, but has only a few minor extra features. Its main appeal is as a hub for all Persian language State Department material.

The Iran Program had been focused on more traditional democracy promotion efforts until 2010 when it had its direction significantly altered by a \$US10 million Congressional earmark that had to be spent on internet freedom in Iran.

The Iran Program subsequently started building up its capabilities and now runs three types of internet freedom programs:

- Circumvention tool development.
- Secure communications and platforms: for example, hosting websites that are victims of Denial of Service attacks.
- Digital safety training for Iranian activists.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Creating digital mechanisms to draw on and harness external expertise to advance national goals.

The low cost of digital communications has significantly improved foreign ministries' ability to draw on and harness the expertise of those outside the foreign ministry.

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Various attempts are being made at State to help achieve this goal.

The Office of eDiplomacy: Diplo Tech Team

Another operational unit within the Office of eDiplomacy is DiploTech (with 12 team members). It is responsible for some of the Office’s more outwardly focused ediplomacy initiatives: TechCamp, Tech@State and the Virtual Student Foreign Service, all of which seek to actively collaborate with external partners and groups and harness their expertise to advance US Government objectives.

TechCamp

[TechCamp](#) is an initiative that brings together a mix of civil society and technologists (IT experts) and stems from the following [statement](#) by the Secretary:

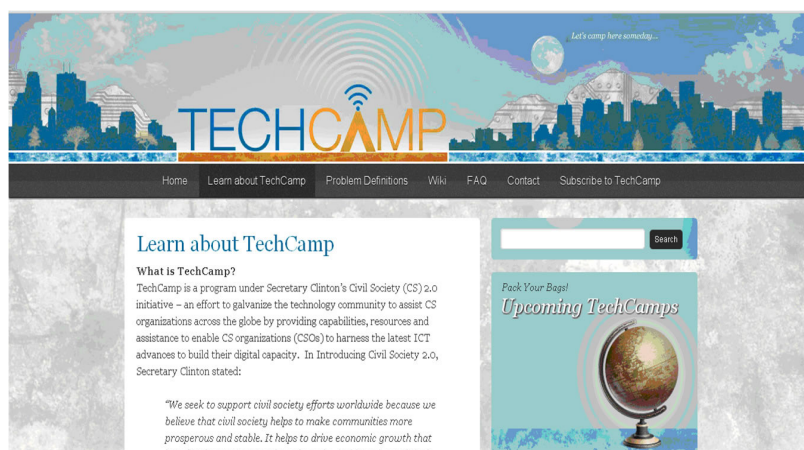
We seek to support civil society efforts worldwide because we believe that civil society helps to make communities more prosperous and stable. It helps to drive economic growth that benefits the greatest number of people. And it pushes political institutions to be agile and responsive to the people they serve. So the United States is launching an initiative called Civil Society 2.0. This organized effort will provide new technologies to civil society organizations. We will send experts in digital technology and communications to help build capacity.

There have been six camps to date covering a range of topics of interest to civil society. The topics of these camps have been so diverse that TechCamp activities could fall under a number of different work programs besides External Resources including: Disaster Response, Public Diplomacy and Internet Freedom.

TechCamp	Themes
Santiago (Chile), 20 November, 2010	Disaster preparedness, climate change, civic engagement, economic opportunity
Jakarta (Indonesia), 19-20 May, 2011	Disaster preparedness, climate change
Vilnius (Lithuania), 29-30 June, 2011	Democracy and civic engagement
Moldova, 15-16 July, 2011	Open government
Montevideo (Uruguay), 30 September – 1 October, 2011	Education
Bucharest (Romania), 15-16 December, 2011	The Roma population and other socio-economically disadvantaged communities, social inclusion and civic engagement

TechCamps are targeted at an Executive Director level so are often relatively small (40-120 participants). The camps attract considerable attention from the Office of the Secretary, who initiated them as part of her Civil Society 2.0 program.

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the interpreter

[A dispatch from TechCamp Bucharest](#)

The one to two-day camps first aim to expose civil society leaders to available technologies, allowing them to identify how they can use the technologies to solve problems. The second part of the camp

tends to involve hands-on assistance from the technologists on how to use the tools to solve specific problems faced by civil society groups. The camps emphasise low-cost solutions as well raising digital awareness, including in authoritarian states, protecting activists from their digital footprint.

Tech@State

[Tech@State](#) has the mission statement of ‘connecting technology with opportunity to aid U.S. diplomacy and development’. In practice, the Tech@State events bring together a large, lively and diverse crowd of innovative US bureaucrats, civil society, IT entrepreneurs and external experts for discussions around a set topic. [Previous](#) Tech@State topics have included: Real-Time Awareness, Data Visualization, Serious Games, OpenSource, Civil Society 2.0, mWomen, Mobile Money and Haiti.

The events have an informal and Silicon Valley-esque feel about them and aim to foster a lively discussion and promote linkages across the technology-bureaucracy divide.

The Virtual Student Foreign Service

The Virtual Student Foreign Service (VSFS) was announced by Secretary Clinton in her 2009 New York University commencement [speech](#). A platform to facilitate this was subsequently hurriedly created by the Office of eDiplomacy in a testament to its responsiveness and flexibility. These traits were duly acknowledged in a recent [report](#) by the Office of the Inspector General which found:

In a story the inspectors encountered several times, eDiplomacy was commended by a senior official at the White House as "the go-to group" for the Open Government initiative and for making the Department “one of the most responsive” of the Federal agencies. Other senior Department officials extolled eDiplomacy’s leadership for being highly responsive to last-minute, high-level taskings.

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The VSFS program is [described](#) in the following way:

Working from college and university campuses in the United States and throughout the world, eInterns (American students working virtually) are partnered with our U.S. diplomatic posts overseas and State Department domestic offices to conduct digital diplomacy that reflects the realities of our networked world. This [introductory video](#) provides an overview of the VSFS program.

Many posts have found the VSFS program a useful way to draw on talented, additional resources that are free. A new approach currently being trialed is crowd sourcing from a pool of eInterns, where the embassy sends out a request to perform a specific task to a pool of eInterns who can then opt in to complete it.

Office of Verification and Transparency Technologies

The Office of Verification and Transparency Technologies (VTT) within the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance has begun work on a range of intriguing efforts, including using ediplomacy tools, to harness external resources to advance US arms control policy goals. VTT has a team of people exploring ways new technology can help the AVC Bureau do its job better. This has involved reaching out to universities to identify the latest research, bringing in external experts to discuss technological gaps and possible fixes, examining the technologies coming out of Silicon Valley and whether they can be modified to assist with verification and transparency issues and working with

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the private sector on developing technical solutions. One possibility under active development is running an international challenge through [InnoCentive](#), a crowd sourcing innovation platform.

As the Bureau's Assistant Secretary [recently put it](#): VTT is exploring:

...citizen-run verification and monitoring projects that could augment standard international safeguards or verification of a country's nuclear declarations.

This year, VTT is getting ready to launch prize competitions, posing challenge questions with arms control applications to the internet masses. ...We are looking for garage tinkerers, technologists, gadget entrepreneurs, and even students in this room to help us advance our arms control and nonproliferation agenda. For example, Smart Phone and tablet apps could be created for the express purpose of aiding inspectors in the verification and monitoring process.

VTT has also been reaching outside of the State Department building. They hosted a transparency workshop for emerging leaders in the field where they solicited the next generation of arms controllers, steeped in new technologies, for new ideas and ways to incorporate them into our diplomacy....We look to expand and grow all of these efforts in 2012.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor/Iran Program

As discussed, the bulk of the technical and outreach aspects of the Internet Freedom agenda are outsourced to NGOs and IT companies, relying on their expertise to help achieve this policy goal.

Other External Connections

Other platforms already discussed also help harness external expertise. These include the CO.NX platform which brings in external speakers and the Office of eDiplomacy's Communities@State platform which fosters inter-agency collaboration.

POLICY PLANNING

To allow for effective oversight, coordination and planning of international policy across government, in response to the internationalisation of the bureaucracy.

Globalisation has brought change to government. One recent [study](#) by the Lowy Institute, for example, found 18 of 19 Australian Federal departments now have a dedicated international policy area. This internationalisation of the bureaucracy and the low cost of international communications has removed foreign ministries' former monopoly over inter-government communications. However, the responsibility of foreign ministries to coordinate international policy across government remains. In this new environment ediplomacy has a promising role to play.

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Of all the ediplomacy work programs, Policy Planning is one of the least developed at this stage. Some of the platforms discussed above serve a dual function as Knowledge Management and Policy Planning platforms. An example is Communities@State which is an inter-agency platform that allows for across government coordination and communication for example through ‘Mission Mexico’ convened by the Deputy Chief of Mission for all constituent posts in Mexico. However, use for whole of government coordination has been limited.

Risks of social media

One of the first things foreign governments interested in exploring ediplomacy want to know about is the risks of using social media. So what are the risks of unleashing 600 social media platforms on the world?

At first glance, having all these extra voices communicating publicly would seem to dramatically increase the chances of a scandal. But several years into its social media empire-building, controversies at State caused by social media have been the very rare exception. This is all the more surprising given State’s lack of clear policy guidance on the use of social media and its general laissez-faire approach.

At a Twitter training course for State Department employees attended by the author, the 50 or so officers present – some of whom admitted to never having used social media – were exhorted to give it a go, you can’t go wrong. Policy guidance was barely mentioned.

Closer examination reveals why this has not led to disaster. To begin with you are dealing with highly educated employees with a strong desire to keep their jobs. Diplomats have always had opportunities to (illegally) disclose government secrets, but rarely choose to do so. Twitter doesn’t change that. This is also not rocket science. Writing a one-sentence tweet promoting a government program or initiative is not difficult. There are thousands of on-the-record speeches and documents to draw from and in-house communications experts drafting ready-to-use social media material. Even though it is unofficial, there is also an oversight function: bosses watch their junior officers’ online activity and intervene if they start moving beyond acceptable bounds. There are also traditional turf wars that keep social media in check: officers are likely to be advised if they stray into others’ areas of responsibility (where they have less expertise). There is also a widespread sensitivity to the ramifications of what is said online and employees tend to approach the use of social media in the same way they would an interview with the media. Finally, not everyone at State is using social media. Often accounts are run by central communications hubs staffed with communications experts and by senior officials, who already have experience communicating publicly.

There are certainly efforts to advise and train staff on the use of social media, but there is also a parallel push to minimise regulation so as to maximise the opportunity for innovation and creativity. This is certainly not without its costs. Some staff report a feeling of risk when they use social media and a recent [article](#) (page 13) in the Foreign Service Journal discussing blogging put it this way:

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Anyone who has been called on the carpet for blogging — especially those who have been summoned more than once — can tell you that the only consistent aspect of the department's feedback is inconsistency....Some individuals have been warned that their careers could be harmed by their or their spouse's blog — but when they press on this in subsequent meetings, their hair is blown back by the force of the wind generated by the back-pedaling.

However, top-level support for engaging publicly and innovating with new technologies continues to push back against more traditional views. When the DiploPundit blog brought 'the harassment and discouragement of State Department bloggers' to the attention of Secretary Clinton's Senior Adviser for Innovation Alec Ross he [responded](#): 'If I'm given specific names of people doing the "discouraging" then I will take it up with those individuals (or their bosses or their boss' boss) directly.' And the message from Mr Ross' boss, Hillary Clinton, both publicly and privately has been unequivocal: be 21st century.

Conclusion

The State Department has been the first foreign ministry to realise the potential of new digital tools. Although the embrace is far from complete and the spread of these new platforms is still only at an early stage, it is far more advanced than at any other foreign ministry.

This mapping exercise has revealed that ediplomacy has spread somewhat organically across State from its initial home in the Taskforce on eDiplomacy. As one senior State Department official characterised it: the growth of ediplomacy has been typical of an American approach; getting on with doing and worrying about the theory later.

Ediplomacy is such a new phenomenon that a free-wheeling period of experimentation and innovation has been entirely justified. However, it is ten years since the Taskforce on eDiplomacy was established and it should now be possible to begin laying down a more concrete conceptual framework to guide the future roll-out of ediplomacy at State.

At present each ediplomacy node has a vision of what it is doing, but in most areas there appears to be a lack of clarity about how this fits into the broader State-wide ediplomacy effort. As a result there is considerable overlap between ediplomacy nodes and it is difficult for senior management to determine how to distribute ediplomacy resources.

This paper has suggested ediplomacy efforts at State can be structured around eight different work programs. Using this conceptual framework, Public Diplomacy is currently the largest component of this ediplomacy effort if measured in human resources terms, although more money is probably spent on Internet Freedom, with much of the work in this space outsourced.

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The eight work program model, also suggests areas where future ediplomacy work could be amplified, with Policy Planning and Disaster Response, surely high priority areas.

For other foreign ministries that have been concerned about developing the theory before they get to the doing, the message is clear. Ediplomacy has arrived. The choice for them is to either embrace the opportunities and advantages ediplomacy presents or to be passive and be shaped (and sidelined) by this latest technological revolution.

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