



Open Government: A Journal on Freedom of Information

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Editorial

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<http://www.soros.org/initiatives/information>

Welcome

Welcome the latest issue of "Open Government: a journal on Freedom of Information", and the end of the second year of the journal's life.

I have some good news that should secure the long term of the journal: two years worth of funding has been secured from the Open Society Institute as part of their information program. (More information at: <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/information>). This is a development I am very excited about and will allow me to develop a more dedicated team of staff to work on the journal: to improve the quality of production process, speed of reviews and extending the reach of the journal, in terms of both issues covered and readership.

As part of the funding we've received from the OSI the journal intends to make greater efforts to publish articles from transition and developing countries and to cover the follow issues in addition to the types of content we have been publishing over the past two years:

- FOI and privacy in the digital environment
- FOI and public health

- FOI and anti-corruption/transparency efforts
- FOI and access to legal information

I'm also interested to hear from readers with views about issues of themes that the journal needs to cover. I am also willing to consider new applications to join the editorial board.

As the journal is open access and non-commercial we have a limited budget for promotion, so please do pass on and promote the journal if you deem it be to be relevant to others. If you are willing to distribute a poster or some flyers at events, conferences etc please contact me at the email address below.

This issue's articles

This issue contains another interesting mix of articles from around the world. The article by Marc-Aurele Racicot develops an interesting comparison between two contrasting FOI jurisdictions: India's newly implemented Right to Information Act contrasted with the Canadian experience (20 years) of the operation of their access to information legislation. The article focuses specifically upon third party exemptions. This article also links well to the part 2 of the article by Marcus Turler on confidentiality and sensitive information in the UK.

We also feature Spain and Switzerland for the first time: Jose Angel Martinez Usero discusses the current situation in Spain, which at present does not have a formal Freedom of Information Act and Martial Pasquier & Jean-Patrick Villeneuve discuss the situation in Switzerland where the Law on Transparency (LTrans) came into effect in July 2006.

Graham Sutton and Sarah Holsen offer an important insight into the developments in China related to Open Government and the EU-China Information Society Project.

In this issue we also feature a number of speeches presented at the 4th International Conference of Information Commissioners held in Manchester during May 2006.

Developments in 2006

2006 has been an important year for Freedom of Information: more countries have passed legislation that has enabled access to information (e.g Nigeria) and new legislation has come into force (e.g Germany). Perhaps the most important development in 2006 came in October when the Inter-American Court of Human Rights affirmed that there is a general right of access to information held by government. This was the first such ruling from an international tribunal. The Court's decision in the case of Claude Reyes and others vs. Chile found Chile in violation of the right of access to state-held information. The case dates from a request made in 1998 by three environmental activists about a controversial logging project. For more information go to <http://www.access-info.org/?id=35>

Best wishes for 2007 to all readers

Steve Wood

Editor