Creating Model Citizens for the Information Age: Canadian Internet Policy as Civilizing Discourse

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Abstract: In the late 1990s, the Government of Canada launched a string of initiatives to usher its citizens into the “information age.” Recently, the federal government has announced “mission accomplished” in its pledge to become a “model user” of information technology, recognized around the world as the country most connected to its citizens. This paper interrogates the term “model user” as a marker of the changes occurring to techniques of government in our expanding information society. It proposes that the “model user” represents ways to negotiate the changing relationship between nation, state, and citizen associated with economic restructuring and signals a new civilizing discourse for citizen conduct amid the dynamic flows of information and ideas. Further, the “model user” suggests an emphasis on innovation that is implicated within larger discourses of economic globalization and the premium placed on adaptability and creativity. Finally, this paper makes vivid the connections between the “model user” and emerging discourses of Canada as a “model democracy” and Canadians as “model citizens” within the global context.

Résumé : À la fin des années 90, le gouvernement du Canada a créé une série d’initiatives afin de lancer ses citoyens dans « l’ ère de l’information ». Tout récemment, le gouvernement fédéral a proclamé « mission accomplie” en ce qui concerne son objectif de devenir un « utilisateur modèle » des technologies de l’information, reconnu à travers le monde comme étant le pays le plus connecté à ses citoyens. Cet article interroge le terme d’ « utilisateur modèle » en tant que marqueur des changements qui affectent les techniques de gouvernance dans notre société de l’information toujours grandissante. Il propose que « l’utilisateur modèle », d’une part, illustre les façons de négocier la relation changeante entre nation, État et citoyen qui est associée aux restructurations économiques et, d’autre part, signale un nouveau discours civilisateur pour la conduite du citoyen plongé dans les courants dynamiques d’informations et d’idées. De plus, l’ « utilisateur modèle » met l’accent sur l’innovation et s’in­serte dans un discours plus large sur la globalisation économique et sur la valeur accordée à l’adaptabilité et la créativité. Finalement, cet article met en lumière
les liens qui existent entre l’« utilisateur modèle » et les discours émergents qui présentent le Canada comme une “démocratie modèle » et les Canadiens comme « citoyens modèles » au sein d’un contexte global.

Keywords: Information economy; Governance; Citizenship; Discourse analysis

Finally, good governance has meant not only providing the leadership and catalyzing the partnerships to move Canada toward an information society and knowledge-based economy, but to become an innovative public service and model user.

—Industry Canada, 2003

Canada can be a model in another sense. It can demonstrate how to establish a strong society—much as a teacher or a consultant might do . . . . We are not claiming to be the model but a model—one that others may find useful and inspiring as they think about how to organize their own societies.

—Welsh, 2004, pp. 189-190, original emphasis

Introduction
The meanings surrounding information and communications technology (ICT) embody a strange tension when it comes to the field of governance as the constellation of practices, procedures, rules, and constitutive relations among public institutions, organizations, businesses, and citizens. For example, we may recall how the Internet, although conceived under the auspices of state security for the U.S. Department of Defence, came to be characterized as the “Wild West” or an “electronic frontier” in the mid-1990s, invoking an imagery of ungovernable spaces and subjects. John Perry Barlow, founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, declared on behalf of the members of cyberspace that “governments of the industrial world” have “no sovereignty where we gather” (quoted in Herman & Sloop, 2000, pp. 81-82). In the heady times at the dawn of the information age, the nation-state was often characterized as facing a legitimacy crisis as it struggled to govern effectively the fluidity and multiplicity of communications exchanges. Techniques of government were construed as desperately trying to catch up with technological developments through new regulations and the protection of rights or by supplementing private-sector activity and infrastructure.

Indeed, Canada’s own strategy for government in the information age pointed to a similar conclusion: technology would now set the pace of social progress. Government had to be reconfigured to ensure that citizens would be kept up to speed in this new environment. In 1999, the federal government pledged to become a “model user” of information technology by 2004. It promised that Canada would be recognized around the world as the country most connected to its citizens, prompting its “Government On-line Initiative,” which would create an integrated service-delivery network for the federal government on the World Wide Web. Recently, Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) has declared “mission accomplished” on this project, making 130 services available online and providing accurate and reliable information in
a secure electronic environment. Proclaiming that it has broken “new ground” and used “technology to create real innovation,” the federal government asserts that it has not only achieved its goal to become a “model user,” but has become a world leader in the field of electronic government or “e-Government” (Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2006, p. i).

Since the introduction of these and other government projects at the federal, provincial, and local level, critical communications research has been instructive in showing the connections between the official rhetoric on the “knowledge society” and the widespread adoption of neo-liberalism. What various studies show is that the central mission of government is to create favourable conditions for private enterprise and off-load public responsibility onto citizens in a discourse that emphasizes individualism and entrepreneurialism. While the federal government positions the electronic restructuring of services in a language of “citizen-centredness” in which new communications technologies provide opportunities to enhance democratic participation, numerous studies establish how entry into the information age has also included cutbacks to public services, the complete privatization of others, and the widespread push toward commercialization of knowledge and information.

While this scholarship is crucial in addressing the gap between government rhetoric and the new forms of inequality emerging in knowledge-based economies, there has been less attention paid to the ways in which Canada’s Internet strategy marks a discursive shift in the idea and practice of governance. In what follows, I want to re-establish why such discourses matter. By setting out the rules that define what is considered truth and how it is spoken, by constituting the practical field in which truth is deployed and taken up in the formation of subjects, and by setting out the possibilities of its conservation, reactivation, and transformation, discourse is tied to the systems of power found in any given social formation at any given moment in time (Foucault, 1991b). Further, the representation, knowledge, and production of truth are integral to the art of governing, or governmentality, as the ensemble of procedures that target the population to shape members’ conduct (Foucault, 1991a). All too often, the charge of neo-liberalism is left unelaborated, assuming that it is a singular ideology or agenda of advanced capitalism rather than a complex of “arts, tactics and practices of governing” (Larner & Walters, 2004, p. 4). Thus, the concept of governmentality is helpful in demonstrating that, contrary to popular misconceptions, neo-liberalism does not abolish the governance at the level of the nation-state, but transforms it. In addressing the specific, contingent, and often contradictory ways that we are implicated in these practices, the study of governmentality is also helpful in thinking through power and resistance in complex times.

I proceed by outlining the ways in which governmental application of the term “model user” can be examined as a marker of a new civilizing discourse, by which I mean an ensemble of conditions, practices, statements, and virtues that constitute a field of possibilities in which the citizen acts as a competent member of the community. In Foucault’s terms, I am interested in how the notion of “model user” influences “the conduct of conduct” in what we believe to be a more open-ended communications experience. After mapping recent theoretical
insights that point to the need to reconsider these relations of governance, I look closely at the emergence of the term “model user” and argue that its deployment has a number of consequences that extend beyond the immediate context of e-Government. Finally, this article establishes some important connections between “model user” and emerging discourses on Canada’s role as a “model democracy” and Canadians as “model citizens” within a global context, attending to the significance of such models on relations of governance between the state, the social, and the self.

**Governmentality reconsidered**

The study of governmentality is important for investigating the complex process through which the population, with its various institutions, resources, and activities, is assembled together as a political and social formation. For Foucault (1991a), the art of government concerns not the direct management of the population, but rather the population’s relations with things. It is an intervention into:

> their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities . . . men in their relation to that other kind of things, customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking, etc.; lastly, men in their relation to that other kind of things, accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc. (p. 93)

Governmentality consists of the techniques and strategies that are used to intervene in and shape our connections to one another and to our material environment. Within the modern state, the population and the economy become central sites for the application of techniques of government, designed to achieve the proper arrangement and connections between things (p. 93). The modern state turns its attention toward organizing these relations through means beyond the direct application of force, preferring to manage the population so that it effectively manages itself. The government asks what institutions, procedures, analyses, and knowledge can be deployed in order to impact the conduct of conduct. In what way can the state indirectly shape the population’s relations with things so that they all exist in their proper places? To order and organize things, be they people, resources, or territories, not only requires the application of knowledge, but also knowledge production. The art of government involves shaping the very worldview that makes such ordering possible.

Thus, developments in ICT present the need for new techniques of government that include new arrangements, organizational patterns, and forms of knowledge production. While popular characterizations of ICT present a world of free movement and flexibility, the field of governance reveals something different. Security and surveillance measures are adapted and often enhanced by electronic communication and information-gathering, used to track everything from border crossings to consumer spending patterns. State disciplinary apparatuses have also been modified, where legal regimes surrounding criminal activity, intellectual property, and issues of privacy help to normalize the field in which the subject engages with different forms of communication (Mehta & Darier, 1998). Finally, we can look to new policy instruments and regulatory codes for standard-
izing the use and production of informational content, effectively “civilizing” information flows in the unchartered territory of cyberspace (Kizza, 1998). From ASCII (the American Standard Code for Information Interchange) to ICANN (the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) to the local, regional, and international regulation of bandwidth capacity and wireless signals, we have been disciplined and subdued as ICT users by a number of interventions into our relations with them.

Yet studies that only investigate techniques of government that relate to discipline and security miss a crucial component of the governing relation. As Foucault (1994) himself argued in his later work, discipline and domination are only one aspect of the art of governing people and their relation to things. Of equal, or greater, concern is how relations of power exist in much less evident forms, which include technologies of the self, or the self acting upon the self (p. 177). The subject governs herself according to the behavioural norms and formal laws that are commonly accepted within the community, where indeed, the state has a role in establishing these codes of conduct. Yet she also applies techniques upon the self, engaging in self-mastery to achieve a more virtuous and truthful version of herself. This process of governing the self does not exist within a social or political vacuum. Rather, it is relational with others, where one’s project of cultivating and maintaining a truth about oneself is always interrelated with the truths of another (White & Hunt, 2000, p. 95). To conduct oneself as a free and virtuous member of a community is not only a mode of action, but also one of reaction, where the individual’s rights are always intertwined with her responsibilities to the collective.

As the contexts for knowing and managing the self have become pluralized across a widening matrix of differentiated social practices, there is a growing interest in how the subject understands membership and responsibility beyond the nation-state. In our current communications environment, aspects of the local, the national, and the global are perpetually redefined and reconstructed, pointing to the need to investigate new relationships of governance. While some commentators maintain that these flexible patterns, aided in no small part by new forms of communication, make the regulatory strategies of the national state obsolete, Nancy Fraser (2003) argues that we should not, following Baudrillard, “oublier Foucault.” Instead, we should seek to understand how governmentality is re-invented in this context (p. 160). For her, this involves looking at how changes in production and accumulation in the global economy are matched with various techniques of government that are dispersed across geopolitical scales. Social regulation does not disappear, but becomes re-organized both within and beyond the scope of the national state in a variety of contexts that encompass “free trading zones,” “humanitarian interventions,” and the “war on terrorism,” as well as the more banal sites of everyday life in the delivery of public services, or in the multiple exchanges we perform as clients and consumers (pp. 167-168). Here, our task is to delineate these different techniques of government and to examine their influence across scales, sites, and actors.

Within these complex conditions, we must also reconsider how a new subject of governmentality is conceived. For Toby Miller (1993), the self-regulating and
agreeable subject of the cultural-capitalist state is formed through competing discourses of consumer sovereignty and civic responsibility. In the persistent two-way shift between the public and private self, the subject is engaged in the continuous process of drawing upon different meanings to manage her thoughts and actions. The subject is constantly adjusting herself under the various pressures of what constitutes a “good” consumer-citizen, whether in the numerous commercial encounters promoting self-improvement or discovery, or in new electronic spaces of public engagement, such as televised parliamentary proceedings. The skills to be learned in these differentiated sites of communication and culture are those of adaptability and judgment, that is, to learn “how to articulate between technologies: when to be consuming and when to be civic” (Miller, 1993, p. 171). The emphasis on a collection of skills and resources that can be used to act and react to multiple contexts joins up new governing relations of “flexibilization,” naming “both a mode of social organization and a process of self-constitution” (Fraser, 2003, p. 169). Here, we see how processes of production such as “just in time manufacturing” are met with the proliferation of contract and part-time work. To match these new demands, workers themselves become flexible, changing jobs and changing locations; workers “whose collegial relations and friendships are trimmed to fit the horizon of no long term, and whose selfhood does not consist in a single meaningful, coherent, overarching life-narrative” (pp. 169-170). The subject does not conform to a set of rigid behavioural characteristics or prescribed modes of action, but must demonstrate an exemplary form of self-mastery that allows her to respond to her constantly fluctuating environment.

Model users and civilized flows

These investigations demonstrate the need to examine how the government’s “model use” of ICT helps to shape a wider field of relations in which the subject knows and manages herself as a member of society. To understand the “model user” as a marker of a new civilizing discourse for Canadians in the information age, I have adopted three levels of investigation from Foucault’s method for discourse analysis: the practical field in which it is deployed, the wider conditions of its existence, and its implication in the production of subjectivity (McHoul & Grace, 1997). What constitutes “model use” of ICT for the government of Canada? In a 1995 report from the Information Highway Advisory Council (IHAC), an industry-dominated group mandated to advise the federal government on an ICT strategy and policy framework, “model use” is defined as the ability of the government, through the adoption of ICT, to stimulate its diffusion throughout the economy (Simpson, 1997). In this sense, the government acts as a catalyst for technological restructuring in Canada, leading the way for private business and individual citizens to follow suit. Through the restructuring of its services and administrative processes, the federal government would indicate a clear path for a variety of public and private institutions looking for entry onto the “information highway.” In 1994, the government released the 

*Blueprint for Renewing Government Services Using Information Technology* as a guide that could be adapted by a number of organizations to digitize the delivery of services, streamline administrative processes, and develop infrastructure that would connect departments and consolidate information flows (Simpson, 1997). By design-
ing best practices and standardizing approaches that could easily be taken up by others, “model use” appears as a means of quickening the development of the information economy in the late 1990s.

As a catalyst for development, “model use” also implied that the federal government would find new commercial applications for information technology and services. In another recommendation by IHAC, the federal government was urged to offer the private sector opportunities to “digitize, add value and market government owned materials, etc. for which there is a perceived profit” (Gutstein, 1999, p. 18). In the conversion to the electronic delivery of services and information for citizens, this would also provide the government with opportunities for commercialization. This strategy builds on a long tradition of the development and support of private firms that are linked to government research labs, contracts, and purchases, such as Northern Telecom (Nortel), Corel, and Mitel (Mosco & Mazepa, 2003). Yet “model use” goes beyond traditional relationships of the government supporting research and development in the information-technology sector and positions the government as a “model consumer” as well. As e-Government has matured in Canada, private enterprise has called on federal agencies to step up their spending activities based on their dominant position as the largest consumers of such ICT goods and services in the country (Bray, 2003). In a consultation paper released by the Canadian Advanced Technology Association (CATA), the federal government is urged to “become a model user, a first customer, and to create a procurement system that is fair, fast and forward-looking” (Bray, 2003, p. 6). For private industry in Canada, a “model user” is likened to what marketing and demography experts call “early adopters,” who are experimental or trend-setting actors, playing a key role in disseminating consumer products within their immediate peer groups and beyond.

By serving as an object for emulation, the federal government as “model user” of ICT also introduces modes of conduct for other levels of government, organizations, and businesses. These include working to integrate service delivery across jurisdictions and to establish a common knowledge base with the “broader information technology and service community” (PWGSC, 2006, p. 33). Yet for “model use” to be effective, this integrated approach to electronic service delivery must be taken up by clients. To this end, Public Works promotes “e-services” to the general public through marketing campaigns in an overall effort to increase “brand recognition” of the Canada Site as the government’s main Web portal. Front-line workers in Canada’s public service are also called upon to promote the use of government websites, where the “e-learning” tool explerecanadasite.gc.ca was developed to “encourage them to use the Canada Site as a resource when answering queries from the public” (p. 39). Here, “model use” helps to establish information and communication technologies as the means through which citizens interface with the state, either directly or via intermediaries in the public service. Together with the creation of blueprints and adaptable strategies for technological restructuring and the establishment of consumer practices for ICT software, hardware, and services, “model use” achieves its purpose of accelerating the development of the information economy in Canada.
Central to the discursive construction of the government as “model user” is the premise that effective use of ICTs can make the practice and processes of governance more affordable. Being the “most electronically connected government in the world” asserts a clear strategy to reduce costs, cut duplication between departments, and serve citizens more efficiently (Bray, 2003, p. 6). Measures of e-Government effectiveness are largely based on tangible cost savings in the delivery of information and services. The global consulting firm Accenture has named Canada an e-Government leader, at the forefront of countries in the take-up and innovative use of electronic services. Many of Accenture’s “high performance measures” focus on cost effectiveness and delivering value, where innovation is assessed in part by a government’s willingness to discard certain practices in favour of “technology-enabled ones” (Accenture, 2004, p. 3). Canada is hailed as a “pioneering country” in the adoption of cost-saving techniques, as well as in its development of systems for measuring these savings. Citing one Canadian study, Accenture found that an in-person transaction costs the federal government CDN$44, while an online transaction costs less than CDN$1 (p. 14). Here, e-Government is not only important for saving Canadians money, but is also implicated in the very knowledge production that supports the use of ICT as an integral component to social progress in a changing economy.

The idea of maximum public value as a social and democratic good is significant under the conditions of the deficit-slashing budgets of all levels of government in the 1990s. The perceived cost savings of ICT are implicated in the justification for restructuring the relation between government and the economy, which involves adjusting citizen expectations and value systems surrounding the provision of public services and information. Here, we see the widespread adoption of neo-liberal forms of governance that rely on the belief that market mechanisms can re-instill a “natural” measure of public value and are thus the basis for a well-governed society (McBride & Shields, 1997). The revocation of social services and access to public resources must be assisted by discursive strategies to convince citizens that the private sector is more efficient in their delivery and that inequalities are best explained by market determinations and not social considerations (Brodie, 2002). By construing cost efficiency as a social good in a climate of economic uncertainty, deficit reduction could be framed as an act of responsibility and sacrifice required for longer-term sustainability and quality of life for Canadians. These conditions also give the federal government an opportunity to play up cultural discourses in which ICT is the engine of progress with the inherent ability to solve a range of citizens’ concerns and hardships.

Consequently, the “model use” of ICT constitutes more than employing new communications “channels” effectively, but plays a role in re-organizing relations among citizens, the state, and the new “information economy.” “Model use” helps consolidate conditions in which market determinations prevail over the meaning and practice of “good government” by reinforcing myths that new information and communications technologies are not only more efficient, but also afford instantaneous, universal access (Mosco, 2004). However, as Crow and Longford (2000) demonstrate, the promise that ICT can enhance social equality, access, dialogue, and democratic participation makes digital restructuring appear
benign and inevitable, obscuring its real impact in terms of deregulating services and re-organizing labour. Characterizing the Internet as integral to social progress veils disparities in equity, access, and participation based on gender and class. The authors bring into view the wider implications of digital restructuring: Rather than obtaining personal freedom on the “information highway,” many citizens are experiencing a lack of autonomy in the context of contract work, low-paying data entry, and the conditions of “flexibilization” that make job security a luxury. Moreover, popular meanings of ICT obscure the implications of the ongoing deregulation of communications and information industries and the commercialization of knowledge in both local and national contexts (Mosco & Mazepa, 2003). With the view to multiplying efficiencies in which innovations in service delivery can also be claimed and sold as intellectual property, the privatization of information and the digitization of service provision raise important questions for governance when these objectives may come into conflict.

Continuing research focusing on Internet policy is essential in attending to such conflicts as well as addressing social, economic, and political inequalities associated with digital restructuring. This work is complemented by research examining how existing components of e-Government may be improved to advance opportunities for citizen participation, such as research evaluating recent efforts by the federal government to use ICT in public consultations (Hurrell, 2005) and looking to other institutions for avenues to strengthen citizen engagement.

Yet as significant as this research is, I am also interested in the ways in which the “model user” discourse plays out beyond the immediate context of e-Government as a mobilizing story for citizenship. As Jim McGuigan (1996) argues, what tends to get lost in policy studies focusing on the governmentality of communications media is “the specifically cultural, culture as communication and meaning, practices and experiences that are too complex and affective to be treated adequately in the effective terms of economic and bureaucratic models of policy” (p. 28, original emphasis). Culture figures prominently in the way in which the subject does not simply conform to governmental practices but endeavours to govern her conduct with an eye to virtue, happiness, and personal fulfillment. What this means for the present study is that it must consider the ways in which the concept of the “model user” interacts with a more complex set of operations that includes articulating forms of national identity and fantasies of global connectivity in which “model subjects” are constituted for the information age. In other words, political and economic concerns can be fully appreciated through the lens of culture and the wider stories that citizens use to make sense of these complex changes (Mosco, 2004). These stories are important to the ways in which Canadians feel a common bond and commitment to enhancing the knowledge-based economy, and they may also play a role in maintaining a sense of trust in government and other institutions, both online and off-line. Therefore, I would like to now turn to how narratives of Canada as a “model user” of information technology and a leader in e-Government relate to other representations of Canada as a “model society” for the global knowledge economy. Here, I consider the ways in which Canadians are appealed to as “model citizens,” that is, as exemplars of success or worthy of imitation, as well as how the promotion of
Canada’s role as a “model nation” has important implications concerning the governing of communication and culture at the international level.

From model user to model nation?
The transformation of governing relations in Canada’s “information society” requires new ways of generating a sense of identity and maintaining aspects of social solidarity, not only to catalyze economic activity in knowledge sectors, but also to replace older understandings of what constitutes “Canadianness” in the context of the eroding social citizenship regime (Brodie, 2002). Consider, for example, this statement from the final report delivered by IHAC:

As the 21st century dawns, Canada and the world are making a profound transition that reaches into every aspect of human life. A new knowledge society is replacing the industrial society that prevailed in the developed world during most of the 19th and 20th centuries. This transformation is fundamental, and our success in making this transition will determine our success as a nation and as individuals in the 21st century. It will determine whether we as a people can achieve those economic, social and cultural goals that make us Canadian. (Information Highway Advisory Council, 1997, p. 123)

Citizens are provided with a story in which the transition toward the “information society” is not only inevitable, but the only way in which Canadians can maintain the conditions for the national community to exist. Yet where citizens are presented with the task of ensuring the very survival of what makes them Canadian, they are also constituted as ideal subjects who may take up this work. From a sampling of Throne Speeches throughout the 1990s, Janine Brodie (2002) highlights the ways in which Canadians are addressed as subjects with a unique history of being “builders and achievers,” and who “welcome innovation and new ideas” as “citizens in a global economy” (p. 390). Here, the production of subjectivity within the contemporary nation-state has shifted from a focus on “character” to one that privileges “personality.” According to Melanie White and Alan Hunt (2000, p. 103), whereas exhibiting “character” was important to the subject of disciplinary societies that advocated forms of social purity, self-mastery, and “deferred gratification to idleness,” by contrast, “personality” aligns with flexibilization models that privilege self-realization, creativity, and multiple forms of expression (p. 104). In the creation of a new personality for Canadians in the information age, the historic absence of a coherent or definitive national identity is worked to the government’s advantage. Canadians are assured that their diversity is a source of strength in a world of change and increasing interdependence. Consequently, cultivating aspects of one’s own dynamism, creativity, and love for diversity will also provide the competitive edge required to innovate and achieve in the global economy.

Such practices align easily with state goals of global competitiveness, where meanings of ICT that emphasize agency, connectivity, and opportunity for networking can be applied to enterprising citizens who pursue personal choices through the application and evaluation of information. Yet these meanings also join up with narratives that imply a constructive role for Canadians as members
of the global economy, rather than simply conforming to its demands. As Brodie explains, Canadians’ capacity to be globally competitive is often framed within a “national tradition” of being “a responsible, engaged, committed world citizen” (2002, p. 390). Consequently, Canadians’ capacity to innovate and to be leaders of knowledge-based societies can also fulfill a desire to help others. For example, foreign-policy commentator Jennifer Welsh (2004) has developed a “model citizen” agenda for Canada, which outlines familiar international priorities such as reforming institutions for effective multilateral governance and promoting human rights and the rule of law. Significantly, her agenda also includes less conventional items, such as assisting “the developing world with the transformational policies needed to bring them into the Information Age” (Welsh, 2004, p. 219). As a “model citizen,” Canada could “teach” other nations how to develop innovative, cost-saving practices to govern emerging knowledge-based societies. In doing so, Canada would not only attract emulators, but would also build closer economic and political ties with others (p. 189). Here, “model citizenship” involves producing original solutions to problems, enhanced by a maturing knowledge economy, which can in turn be promoted to gain influence in the international community.

However, as Welsh makes clear, “model citizenship” also requires tempering the idea of Canada as an international “boy scout” and establishing strategic avenues of engagement that can further Canadian interests (2004, p. 201). She argues that rather than acting as a “middle power” or “honest broker” in which Canadian state officials negotiate the interests of others, a “model” approach suggests that Canadian interests are inherently compatible with international interests. In an interesting encounter between “model use” of ICT and the “model citizen” of the international community, Welsh elaborated her agenda in a policy “e-discussion” on the Department of Foreign Affairs website in 2004, claiming that,

[a] huge aspect of Canadian foreign policy is simply being what we are, which is a highly successful model of a liberal democracy. And that has a foreign policy function, because it is an incubator of ideas, of models, of experiments in nation-building for other countries around the world.

(Dr. Jennifer Welsh discusses the concept of the Model Citizen, 2007)

This entrepreneurial approach to “modelling” is also advanced in a 2004 position paper developed by Canada25, a policy think tank for young Canadians aged 20-35, entitled “From Middle to Model Power.” Canada25 advocates a new direction for international relations that eschews a global hierarchy of state actors in favour of creating conditions that will enhance Canadian leadership in promoting global markets, trade relations with the United States, solutions for environmental sustainability, and the internationalization of our health policies (Canada25, 2004). Central to this strategy is the development of Canada as a “network node” to promote innovation and the exchange of ideas between non-governmental organizations (NGOs), individuals, companies, and government agencies. Networks, according to Canada25, are systems that are self-organizing and adaptable, where members are connected directly to one another and where “behaviour is governed by simple norms,” giving Canadians the “medium by which to have an impact”
Enhancing Canada’s role as a “model power” means developing networking capacities, promoting activities such as the electronic production and distribution of news and Internet simulcasting, and investing in universities and global cities, which provide the necessary infrastructure for the circulation of ideas. A “model power” agenda simultaneously advances Canada’s interests while “improving” the world (p. 67). By establishing Canadian leadership and partnering capacities with successful development and promotion of information industries, practices of “model behaviour” imply simultaneous advancement of national interests with those of the international community.

Significantly, developing strategies to promote a “national interest” alongside “internationalist” aspirations of contributing to a peaceful and sustainable world order has characterized many debates over Canadian foreign policy since World War II (Munton & Keating, 2001). Representations of Canada as a “model nation” are thus continuous with this dilemma of how to assert national autonomy while not disrupting necessary political and economic ties with other nations, especially the United States. A vision of the betterment of the international community thus establishes Canada’s unique character and independence, balancing commitments to the U.S. with a variety of multilateral partnerships. However, the discursive formation of Canada as a “model nation” addresses this old problem in the new context of the global “information society,” in which complex and uneven connections proliferate through communication and cultural flows. By construing “Canadianness” as synonymous with innovation and Canada as an “incubator of ideas,” communication and culture become important aspects of advancing nationalist and internationalist goals simultaneously.

This approach is vivid in the federal government’s efforts, working with private industry and NGOs, to position Canada as a “model nation” in emerging international governing frameworks for communication and culture, such as the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The Convention, now ratified and entering into force March 18, 2007, affirms the rights of states to “protect and promote the diversity of cultural expression on their territory” and establishes objectives to “strengthen international cooperation and solidarity in a spirit of partnership with a view, in particular, to enhancing the capacities of developing countries” (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005, Article 1). The success of the campaign for ratification is credited to Canadian efforts in particular, representing a major achievement in Canadian diplomacy (Raboy, 2006). These efforts can be traced to the 1990s, where the formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and ensuing trade negotiations highlighted the need for a New International Instrument on Cultural Diversity (NIICD). The Canadian government promoted initial discussion and drafting of the NIICD, established as a policy priority in the 1999 Speech from the Throne and subsequently pursued through the Department of Heritage’s International Relations and Policy Directorate.

In the lead-up to the October 2005 UNESCO General Conference, where the Convention received the endorsement of 148 members (the United States was one of only two members who voted against the Convention), the Canadian govern-
ment participated actively in a number of international forums. Governmental and non-governmental partners with which it engaged included the International Network of Cultural Policy (INCP), designed as a networking organization for national ministers of culture; the International Network for Cultural Diversity (INCD), as an umbrella group for cultural NGOs; and the Coalition for Cultural Diversity (CCD), which also represents cultural workers and activists. The government also collaborated with various industry representatives, such as the Cultural Industries Sectoral Advisory Group on International Trade (SAGIT). The capacity for Canadian collaboration between government, civil society, and business has been characterized as integral to the successful promotion of the Convention (Department of Heritage, 2003a; 2003b).

By facilitating resource-sharing across stakeholders and approaching issues of global cultural diversity with an eye for balance between national protection, international collaboration, and promotion of economic prosperity, Canada has created an international cultural policy agenda reflective of “model” practices. The exchange of ideas and the leveraging of resources across a broad range of partnerships are combined with support for the “enabling forces” of the market, similar to Canada’s ICT strategy and various “model nation” proposals. Further, Canadian diplomatic efforts may be seen as the catalyzing force that proliferates the Convention through a network of institutions and actors at the level of both government and civil society. For example, in 2002 the Cultural Industries SAGIT published the report *An International Agreement on Cultural Diversity: A Model for Discussion*, outlining the concrete elements that should be included in the NIICD and their practical applications. By taking a lead role in these policy discussions, the Canadian government also reaffirms its position as presenter of an important alternative model for cultural policy, which Marc Raboy (2006) describes as “what is desirable and what is possible” in negotiating the tension between commerce and culture (p. 294). Together, knowledge-production, networking, and advocacy performed by Canadian policymakers and arts professionals and activists make a significant contribution to making cultural diversity a priority on an international level.

Yet while the ratification of the Convention represents a major victory for the many organizations and actors seeking to balance cultural diversity against international trade constraints, Canada’s continued function as “role model” for the world remains in question. This is due in part to the much-debated Article 20, which outlines the Convention’s relationship to other treaties. Here, the Convention is to be applied in a complementary, non-subordinate, and mutually supportive manner, not to modify the rights and obligations of other treaties (UNESCO, 2005). The extent to which the Convention will impact negotiations involving culture in the WTO is yet to be determined, particularly regarding how the United States will respond to increasing international pressure on such matters. Proponents of the Convention see it as necessary in establishing an alternative forum for cultural policy, while also legitimizing existing cultural policies of individual states. Joost Smiers (2004) argues that, more than a political statement, the Convention attacks the basic doctrine of the WTO insofar as it holds that not all aspects of international relations should submit to the “trade-only-principle”
With widespread ratification, the Convention could hold sufficient influence as the expression of the international community to promote governing frameworks that are not submitted to the exigencies of global markets.

However, because of the many different ways of interpreting cultural diversity, defined as the “manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression” (UNESCO, 2005, Article 4), achieving it requires robust commitment of individual states to the development of policy tools that allow for the necessary “shelf-space” in international cultural markets while also securing rights and access for cultural minorities within the nation-state. Some critics argue that definitions of cultural diversity tend to the side of cultural production, but may not be sufficient enough to address the status of intrastate cultural diversity vis-à-vis issues of ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities, nor “redress the historical disenfranchisement of cultural minority communities worldwide” (Albro, 2005, p. 249). While critics see the Convention as only a mechanism to protect domestic creators and cultural industries, it nevertheless addresses “the need to ensure dialogue between cultural traditions and exchanges between multicultural nations and amongst diasporas” (Coombe, 2005, p. 42). Consequently, the weight of the Convention will also be determined by the ways in which individual signatories continue to make cultural diversity a policy priority in a variety of areas that include industry, access, and rights, as well as in international humanitarian efforts.

These activities point to Canada’s most significant contribution as a “model nation.” If cultural diversity requires conditions for production and access to markets as well as citizenship regimes in which cultural rights may be claimed, critics wonder what a subject speaking on behalf of diversity itself might look like (Albro, 2005). Given the ways in which cultural diversity is articulated and institutionalized in Canada through both national frameworks and internationalist policies, is it possible that Canadians indeed constitute these “model subjects”? This is an important question in light of recent federal budget cuts and the “refocusing” of spending priorities set out in the fall of 2006 that appear to be in conflict with the Canadian government’s support for international cultural diversity. These include the reduction of a discretionary fund allocated to the Department of Foreign Affairs public diplomacy program, making many commentators sceptical about whether the promotion of Canadian artists and cultural producers abroad is a priority (Atwood, 2007; Saunders, 2007). Cultural diversity in the domestic context may be affected by spending cuts not only to arts programming, but to programs such as the Court Challenges Program, which is designed to provide funding for legal test cases concerning language and equality rights. Combined with the withdrawal of funding to the INCD by the Department of Canadian Heritage, the future role the Canadian government will play in promoting cultural diversity is tentative.

Such developments thus underscore an important tension within new discourses of “Canada-as-role-model.” By straddling aspects of entrepreneurialism and activism within the international community, being a model for the world was a compelling way to imagine the dawning information age and Canadians’ role within it. Now, it is increasingly difficult to envision the ways in which applica-
tion of new communications technologies alone can resolve debates concerning Canadians’ responsibilities both within a national setting and as members of the international community. As features of the information age have become increasingly commonplace within Canada, including electronic delivery of public services, flexible work conditions, and premiums placed on the “innovation” needed to succeed in global markets, the ways in which these contribute to a common identity or shared sense of obligation have become less obvious. However, the discontinuities inherent in these relations reveal important opportunities for citizens to challenge them. Indeed, as Robin Highman (2004) suggests, there is growing evidence of a public desire for Canada to live up to the international image it has constructed for itself. By tracing the ways in which relations of governance have not disappeared but are instead transformed through the intersections of communication, international trade, delivery of services, and the delineation of the responsibilities of the state to its citizens and to the international community, we might find practical sites for citizens to express this desire.

Conclusion

The widespread adoption and implementation of ICT in Canada have had an impact on the ways in which relations of governance have been reinvented that stretches beyond the immediate provision of public information and services online. The concept of governmentality provides us with a rich understanding of the ways in which relations of power are reconfigured and new modes of social regulation emerge within the changing dynamics of the economic globalization of communication and culture. Applied to the Canadian government’s use of the term “model user,” this conceptual framework demonstrates the practical ways in which new relations between the nation-state and its citizens are produced. Here, the “model user” is tied to a host of techniques, strategies, and practices designed not only to stimulate knowledge-based economic activity in Canada, but also to help shape new social practices, systems of meaning, and behavioural norms in which the individual becomes a “model citizen” ready to engage these changes. Finally, the “model user” of ICT is also taken up in other discourses that suggest a new role for Canada as an ideal or exemplar within the international community.

While the concept of governmentality effectively demonstrates the intricate connections that make up the term “model user,” our analysis of relations of governance should not end there. By identifying the specific ways in which particular agents, practices, and objects are assembled, we can discern the governmental field in which subjects practice their freedom. This requires that we attend to the ways in which citizens internalize, adopt, or adapt governmental models, as well as how they can find alternatives to them. However, fruitful insights cannot be developed without overcoming the pitfalls of assuming that all governing relations can become “liberated” in the information age or that they have become completely subjected to the logic of global capitalism. Instead, relations of governance in Canada’s “information society” exhibit signs of both opportunity and constraint. As subjects of a “model society,” organized on the fault lines of “doing good” and “doing well,” we now must attend to these tensions insofar as they configure Canadians’ relationships to one another as well as their role in an increasingly interconnected world.
References


