KEYS TO THE FUTURE OF OPEN DATA
Boston’s Model for Building a Next-Generation Open Data Program

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## INTRODUCTION: A BRIEF HISTORY OF OPEN DATA IN BOSTON

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<th>2012</th>
<th>2013 - 2014</th>
<th>2015 - PRESENT</th>
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<td>City’s first open data portal launches with assorted datasets, runs on commercial software</td>
<td>Portal grows to &gt;350 datasets, but quality is inconsistent</td>
<td>Knight Foundation funds 2-year project to upgrade our open data program</td>
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<td>Some dynamic datasets, but mostly one-off data pulls</td>
<td>Minimal end user support → low awareness and usage</td>
<td>By 2017, we will have a new open data portal, a drastically-improved collection hosted there, and an extensive program to educate the public and promote the use of our data</td>
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<td>Initial documentation and public education is minimal</td>
<td>BostonMaps website is launched by GIS team as an entirely separate resource</td>
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FIVE KEYS TO THE FUTURE OF OPEN DATA
When it comes to data, **quality > quantity**

A cluttered collection makes it harder for users to find what they want, and a smaller, well-curated collection can actually provide more value.

Because our collection will always be evolving, providing users with a detailed catalogue and metadata is essential to user confidence & adoption.
Stop thinking that open data is special, because it shouldn’t be

TWO: Stop thinking that open data is special, because it shouldn’t be

Treating our open data collection as something separate from all our other data allows it to be marginalized.

Making open data part of our everyday workflow helps ensure that it will get the attention and resources it needs.
THREE:

Open data and open source are natural allies, so make the most of them

Our new portal is being built on the open-source CKAN data management system used by dozens of governments and other organizations.

Open-source software allows us to leverage the contributions of existing users and share what we’ve built for the benefit of others as well.
FOUR:
Most users want to find answers, not CSVs, so it’s not just about the data

Thinking of open data as just a collection of datasets severely restricts our potential audience to people like us

Providing access to raw data is the bare minimum a portal can do, but a truly accessible site gives users a variety of ways to interact with data
FIVE:
Libraries and librarians are our secret weapon

A successful open data program should be a resource for the general public to find information and answer questions.

Libraries have existed for millennia to provide access to exactly these kinds of resources, and librarians can serve as front-line ambassadors for open data.
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For more information, see:
https://www.boston.gov/departments/innovation-and-technology
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