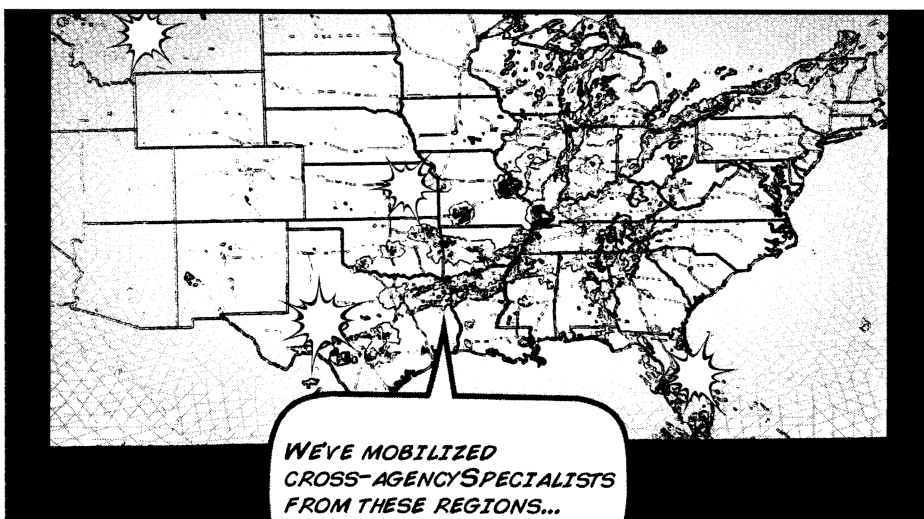
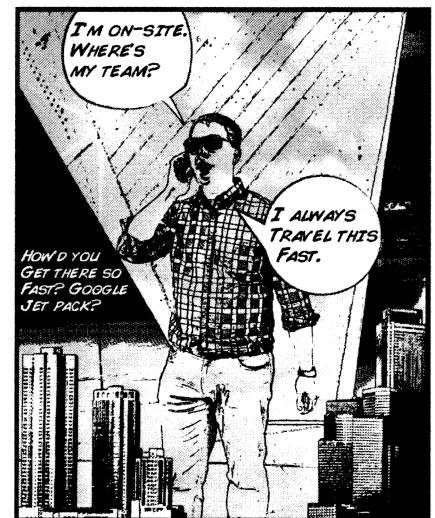
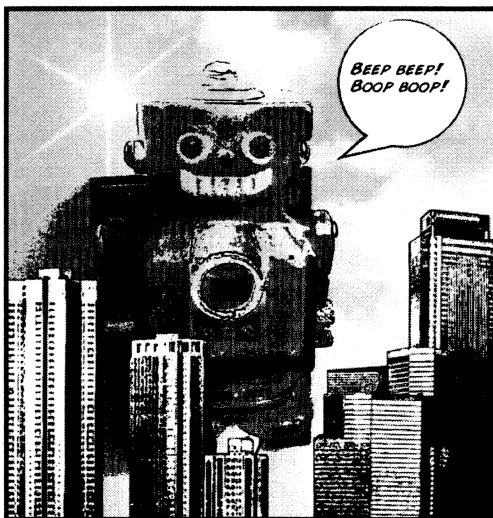
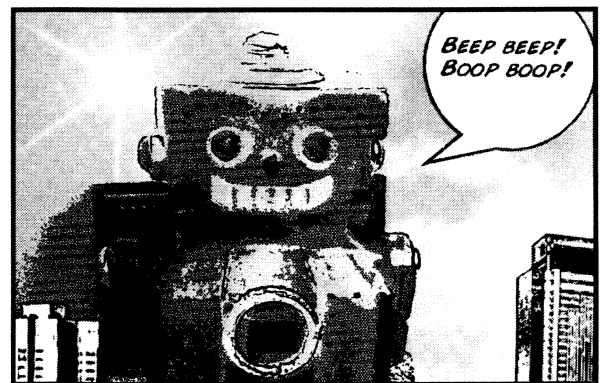
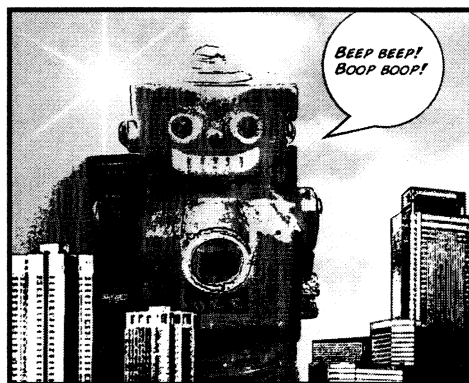
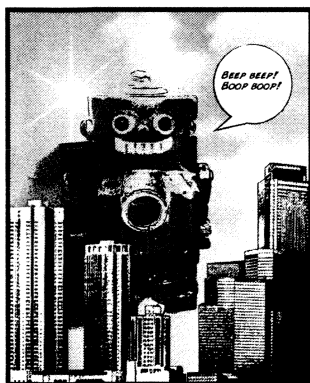
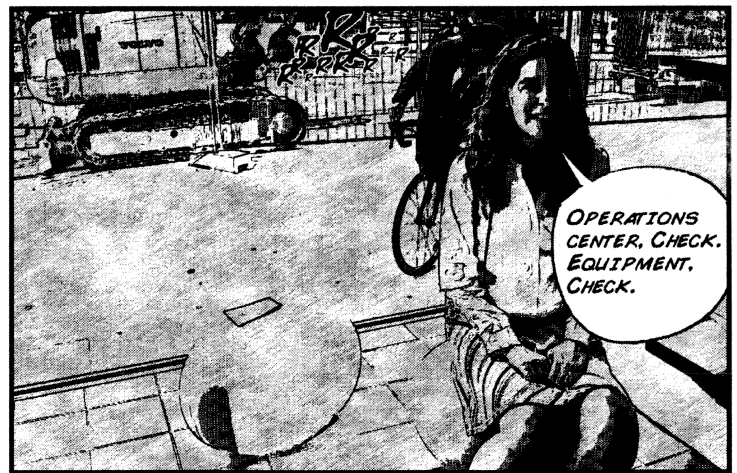
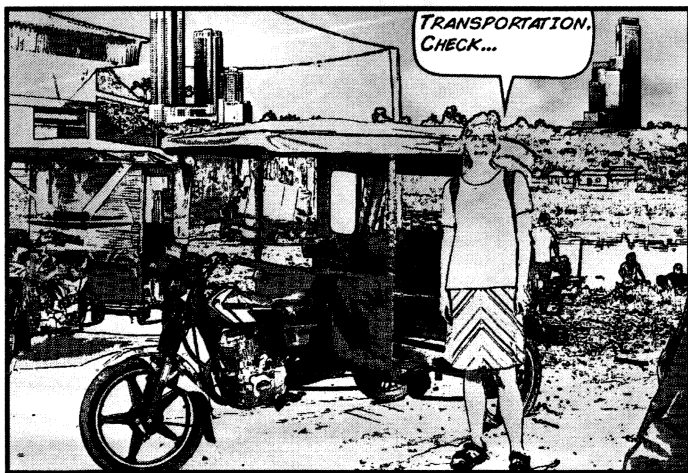
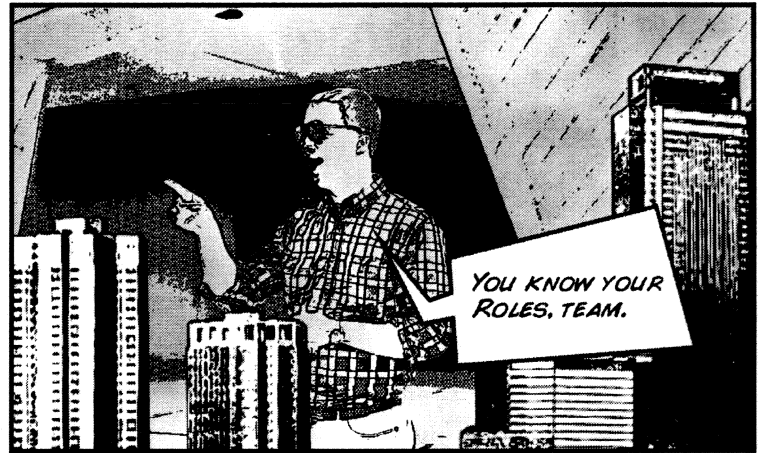
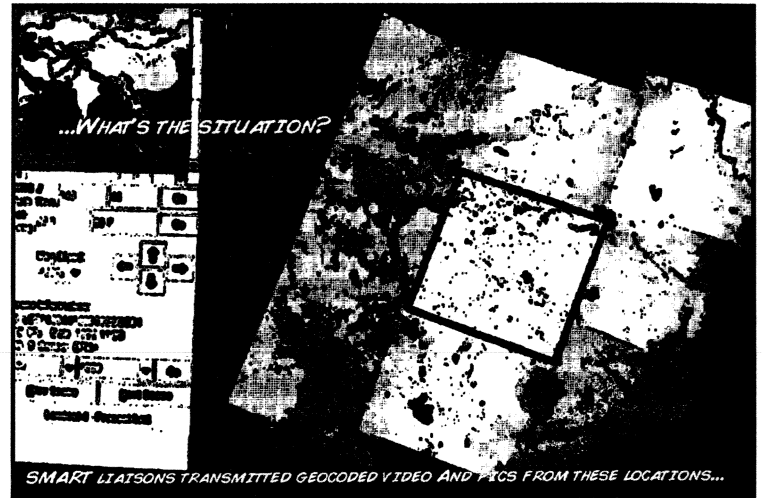
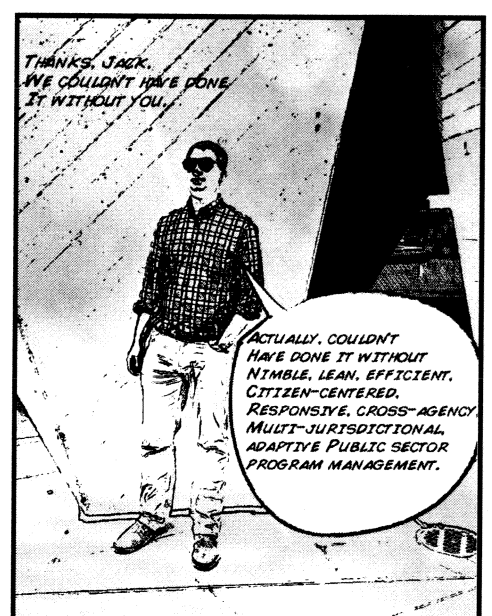
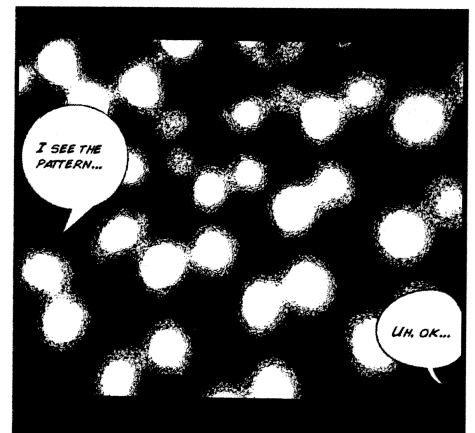
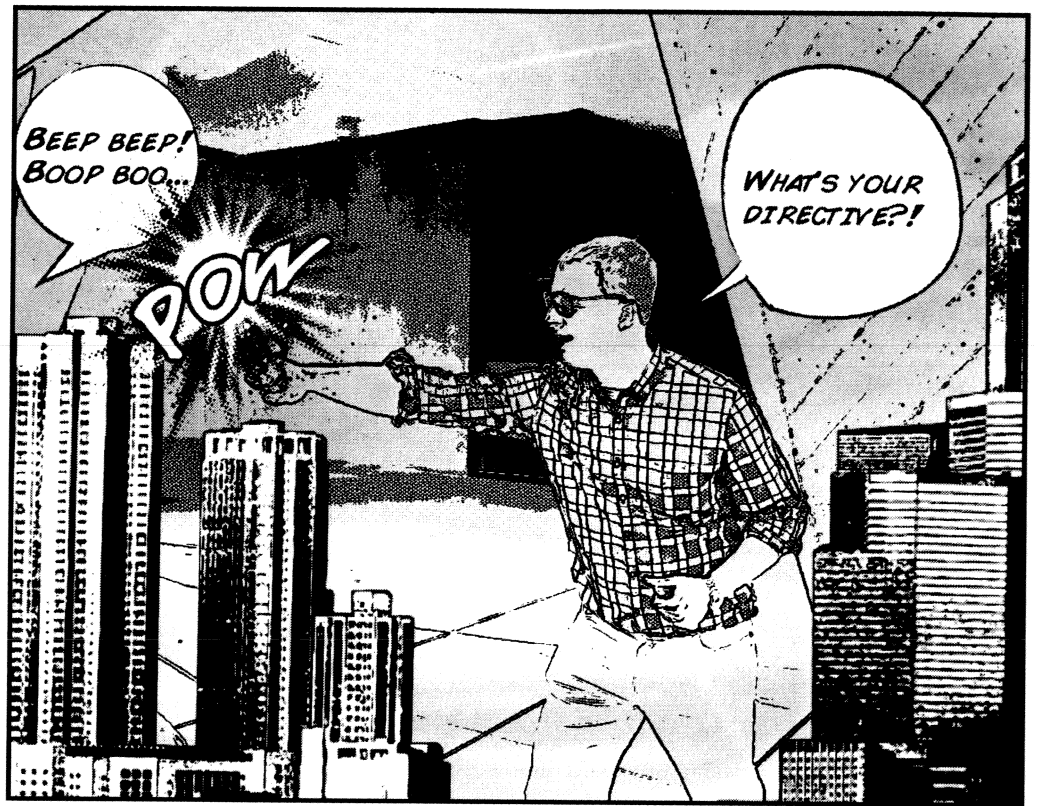
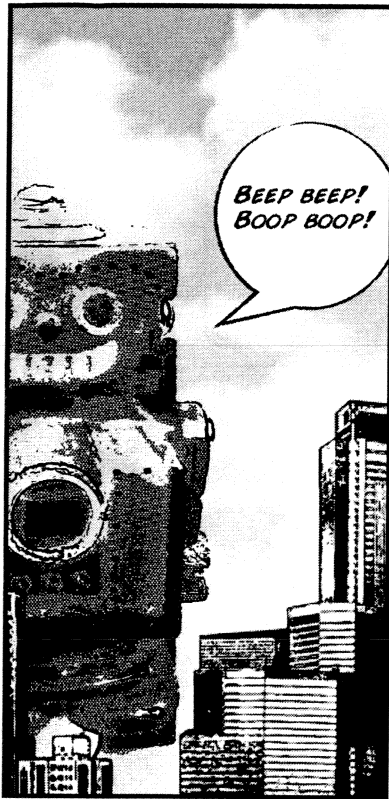


# 2039: Program Management...and ROBOTS!

by Mary Didier, Christopher Rupar, and  
Andrea Sparks-Ibanga









Literally, no, Jack -- of you-know-what fame -- will not save grandma's cat from attack by sentient robots in 2039. The comic strip provides a glimpse into the future of public sector program management, with robots as a metaphor for any routine governance problem/situation. Government will confront a number of complex issues (e.g., aging infrastructure, severe weather, and public health emergencies) over the next 25 years. The nature of these problems may cause government program management to develop along the lines we attempted to portray --i.e., responsive, agile, interactive, resourceful, intergenerational. We feel a key feature of effective public sector program management is enhanced citizen-to-government engagement.

We expect all these types of future challenges to cause government to get better at working across agencies, jurisdictions, generations, and with the need to maximize resources (people, dollars, equipment, environmental). The comic is designed to illustrate the following ideas that we see as the future of effective program management:

- **Retirees:** Formal networks can make these citizens crucial in managing challenges. The US Census projects almost 80 million people over the age of 64 in 2040 (including Jack), a 67 percent increase from today. These citizens will have needed skills that the government should use on a volunteer or short-term basis to help solve specific problems.
- **Citizen involvement:** Government can take advantage of the rise of "crowdsourcing" to allow citizens to monitor and track situations through technology, giving the government specific and detailed information about both emergencies, such as sentient robots, and routine matters, such as waiting times (as illustrated via the role of the "SMART" liaison in the comic).
- **Data analysis:** Data collected will be quickly monitored, sorted, and signal separated from the noise, allowing centrally located program managers to anticipate and respond quickly to problems as they develop.
- **Rapid response teams:** Government, using data and experience, will be able to send in highly trained, cross-agency rapid response teams that will work in conjunction with field staff and volunteers to solve problems.

In today's public sector environment, activities are performed, decisions are made, policies are enacted -- all to carry out any number of programs created to address a variety of issues and serve diverse constituencies-- and managed under the auspices of relatively rigid organizational structures, and regulations/laws rooted in their eras of origin. These parameters will not be entirely archaic in 25 years, but will--out of necessity--evolve. After all, having a framework in which to manage is useful; such structures help ensure fairness and good stewardship of public resources, gauge what success might look like, provide data points to assess whether an approach is working, allow one to determine the skills needed, and that necessary tasks are performed. If applied and adapted responsibly, program managers of the future will have the tools to improve governance through enhanced citizen-to-government engagement.

(Created on iPad using Comic Book Camera and Strip Designer apps. All photos used were taken by the authors.)