INTRODUCTION

The Internet is at once a new communications medium and a new locus for social organization on a global basis. A digital government will allow public access to government information and services, and group participation in discussions at any time and from anywhere on the globe. Digital government is regarded as the most recent development in the evolving application of electronic information technology to the performance of government. The development and migration of the technologies, as well as applications of information technology in support of government operations are other important aspects. New policies have been passed by legislative bodies to ensure the proper management and implementations of these technologies and the systems they serve, their protection from physical harm, and the security and privacy of their information. The growth of digital government has increased governments’ ability to collect, store, analyze, and disclose private personal and organizational information (Fountain, 2001). In the rapidly evolving environments of digital technology, it is impossible to anticipate the leading-edge ethical issues. However, there are solid ethical imperatives to use these principles ethical behavior for resolution of the issues (Anderson, 2004). This article will focus on privacy and confidentiality of individual private information in digital environment.

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT AND DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

Digital government and digital governance are used interchangeably. It is important to make the distinction between these two important concepts in here. Digital or e-government refers to primarily on providing information and online transaction kinds of services to citizens of government. On the other hand, e-governance focuses on public’s participation and their role as citizens (Abramson & Morin 2003). Electronic governance popularly referred to as e-government is broadly defined as an application of information technology to the functioning of the government to enhance the delivery of public services to the citizens and other individual and organizational consumers of the government services (O’looney, 2002). West (2000) defines digital government as “e-government refers to the delivery of information and services online through the Internet or other digital means.” For the past several years, a great deal of focus has shifted to this concept which has varying meaning and significance. Initially, the term was a little more than a general recognition of a convergence of information technology (IT) developments and application and use of these technologies by government entities. With the passage of time however, the term is being used as a reference to both current applications of IT to government operations and a goal of realizing more efficient and transparent performance of government functions. E-government involves access to government information and services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in a way that is focused on the needs of the citizens. E-government relies heavily on the effective use of Internet and other emerging technologies to receive and deliver information and services easily, quickly, efficiently, and inexpensively.

UNESCO identifies several factors affecting the e-government and e-governance movement internationally in its e-governance study (2002): the use of information and communication technologies by citizens and non-governmental organizations to influence policymakers, transferability of information in terms of e-government reforms including draft government legislation and online services, public sector reform, and the promise of information and telecommunication technologies to increase government efficiency and effectiveness, pressure for increased accountability and transparency. In this environment of digital government, citizens can go online any time, anywhere to get information, receive services, conduct business transactions, or talk to elected representatives. The natural transparency of the online environment creates digital government that is truly of, by, and for the people. The digital government vision that guides several governments around the globe to focus commitment to digital government and reach far beyond shifting the delivery of agency services to the Internet. This vision also represents a clear and purposeful innovation that changes government culture from within, as it unfolds and demystifies bureaucracy.
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