Chapter I

Introducing Mobile Government

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Abstract

This chapter introduces the mobile government concept and creates a context for discussing various applications, services, and the relevant technologies. The context presented also includes the introduction of ideas on the characteristics of mobile government and some major issues that justify the necessity of the mobile government and identify the potential that it possesses. This chapter should serve as a foundation for the discussions on the further chapters.

Introduction

E-government efforts aim to benefit from the use of most innovative forms of information communication technologies, particularly Web-based Internet applications, in improving governments’ fundamental functions. These functions are now using mobile and wireless technologies and creating a direction for e-government: mobile government. Mobile government (m-government) may be defined as a strategy and its implementation involving the utilization of all kinds of wireless and mobile technology, services, applications, and devices for improving benefits to the parties
involved in e-government including citizens, businesses, and all government units (Kushchu & Kuscu, 2003).

Despite its early stage, m-government seems to have a substantial influence on the generation of set of complex strategies and tools for e-government efforts and on their roles and functions. M-government is inevitable. The number of people having access to mobile phones and mobile Internet connection is increasing rapidly. The mobile access—anywhere any time—is becoming a natural part of daily life, and the governments will have to transform their activities according to this demand of convenience and efficiency of interactions for all parties.

The coming age of m-government raises several interesting questions. Will m-government replace the e-government activities? Despite its significance, m-government cannot be seen as replacing e-government, and in many cases it will be complementary to e-government efforts. The conventional e-government efforts provide services through wired network with interactive and relatively intelligent Web applications. The value of m-government comes from the capabilities of applications supporting mobility of the citizens, businesses, and internal operations of the governments. For example, supporting law enforcement agents who are on patrol is a distinctive advantage of mobile government services over conventional e-government implementations. Wireless applications may enable greater mobilization of the government officials with the ability to handle real-time information concerning, for example, crimes, accidents, safety, and other public issues.

This chapter provides an introduction to m-government. In the following section, a number of m-government applications from various countries are briefly presented in order familiarize the readers with what is actually involved in m-government. Next, the distinctive characteristics that differentiate m-government from e-government are stated. Finally, a discussion of current issues in m-government is presented.

Some Mobile Government Applications and Services

The technology and the services landscape is slowly taking its place in various m-government implementations. Some of the early adopters of m-government services include law enforcements, fire fighting (Easton, 2002), emergency medical services, education, health, and transportation (Yu & Kushchu, 2004). The following tables provide examples from each group of applications on where the application is developed, and a brief description of each.
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