DIGITAL GOVERNMENT: A PRIMER

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ABSTRACT

Digital government is the use of ICT to enable government agencies to carry out their civic duties. It enables citizens to interact with the government and improves the services that governments offer their citizens. It is already making a positive impact on the government, citizens, business, and society. This paper provides a brief introduction to digital government.

Key words: Digital government, Electronic government.

1. INTRODUCTION

Government transcends all sectors in a given society. It provides the legal, political, and economic infrastructures to support other sectors of the society. An informed government is one that uses the Internet to provide information to the citizens. The pervasive information technologies provide governments opportunities to go digital.

Digital government, also known as e-government, is a global phenomenon whereby public servants leverage information and communication technology (ICT) to better serve their constituents. ICT applications to government services can be divided into three broad categories: providing access to information, transaction services, and citizen participation [1]. The ICT includes the Internet (and associated technologies such as email, the WWW, and social networking) and communication technologies such as mobile computing, cell phones, and global positioning systems [2]. The DG is an important domain for the governments of every nation. It seeks to enable people to access government information and services anywhere, anytime, on any device. It is hoped that government agencies would provide services in a manner comparable with the private sector.

2. APPLICATIONS

Digital government has created a lot of interest among researchers. It is interdisciplinary or interdisciplinary and complex in nature. It is relatively new as an area of research and development. Basic and applied research on digital government is being conducted in political science, public administration, social sciences, information science, computer science, and technology. The field draws research funding from the National Science Foundation and other agencies. A well-established annual DG conference (such as the National Conference on Digital Government Research) brings together university researches and government agencies [3].

Digital governance is relevant to local, national, and international government bodies. Different areas of applications that are affected by digital government include [2]: social services, law enforcement and the courts, digital democracy, electronic commerce, taxation and revenue, education, and administration.

3. CHALLENGES

The implementation of DG in developed and developing nations has brought the re-inventing of public administration by making government more citizen oriented, transparent, and effective. However, the results achieved from the implementation of DG in developing countries are not commensurate with the financial investment. Studies show that the implementation of DG in developing countries encounters more challenges than in developed countries [4]. This may be due to lack of technology, lack of financial resources, lack of support from government officials, and lagging behind in human capital development.

The progression to DG has raised new concerns about privacy, security, stewardship, and freedom of information. Security is the major concern for executive and legislative leaders. Computer security goals include confidentiality, integrity, availability, and accountability. Privacy is regarded as an essential component of electronic transactions. With the increase in government-to-citizen, government-to-business interactions comes the responsibility of preventing data misuse. When data is to be published, such as census information, care must be taken to ensure that it does not leak [5].

Developing an effective DG depends on sound technology infrastructure and electronic readiness of the citizens. Digital divide can limit the success of DG. This may be due to lack of Internet literacy and limited Internet access [6].

DG project failure has been a major concern. This ranges from partial failures to complete abandonment and results in extensive financial loss. Research shows that more than half of DG projects result in total or partial failures and fail to meet end users' expectations [7]. Part of the problem may be financing DG projects and services.

The emerging field of DG is not recognized in the academia because it lacks refereed journals, research centers, or recognized body of researchers. Today's complex problems (such as global climate changes and poverty) will require solutions that cut across disciplinary boundaries [8].

4. CONCLUSION

The Internet is making significant changes in all levels of government—federal, state, and local. Digital government (or networked-government) refers to the use of information technologies such as the Internet and mobile computing to support government operations and provide government services. It is an enabling of public administration transformation. It has improved the access of citizens to services. It has made government to be more effective, accessible, and transparent.

Research on DG has increased, both in the volume of published articles and research reports. More information can be obtained from Government Information Quarterly, which is the leading journal providing the latest information about DG.

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