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Chapter VIII

E-Government in Latin American Cities: An Assessment of Selected City Web Sites

Marc Holzer,

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey at Newark, USA

Tony Carrizales, Marist College, USA

Richard Schwester, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, USA

Abstract

This chapter examines e-government practices in Latin American cities. Emphasis is placed on five areas: privacy and security, usability, content, services, and citizen participation. In Digital Governance in Municipalities Worldwide, Holzer and Kim (2004) evaluated e-government in the largest municipality in each of 100 countries. Included in this study were the largest cities in 15 Latin American countries. This chapter focuses on these 15 cities, highlighting those that received the highest overall index score. In addition, five cities with above-average scores in the five e-government component areas are assessed. Although this chapter does not take into consideration all e-government practices in Latin America, it does provide benchmark cases for cities in the Latin American region.

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Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine e-government practices in Latin American cities. In *Digital Governance in Municipalities Worldwide*, Holzer and Kim (2004) evaluated e-government in the largest municipality in each of 100 countries. That study was based on research conducted by the E-Governance Institute of the National Center for Public Productivity at Rutgers University-Newark and the Global e-Policy e-Government Institute at Sungkyunkwan University (South Korea). Cities were selected using statistics from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). From the ITU data, 98 United Nations member countries were identified based on an online population greater than 100,000. Of the 100 city Web sites assessed, 15 were from Latin American countries: Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico; Panama City, Panama; San Jose, Costa Rica; San Salvador, El Salvador; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santa Fe De Bogotá, Colombia; Montevideo, Uruguay; Santiago, Chile; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Caracas, Venezuela; Asuncion, Paraguay; La Paz, Bolivia; and Lima, Peru. The official city Web sites were not available for Havana, Cuba, and Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Guatemala City, Guatemala, could be evaluated by only one of the required two evaluators, and therefore was not included.

Literature Review

E-Government and Latin America

Chile is regarded as having one of the most advanced telecommunications infrastructures throughout Latin America. In terms of mobile-phone service, Chile has the highest level of integration. As of 2003, there were 48.8 mobile phone subscribers for every 100 individuals. This compares favorably to countries such as Mexico (28.3 subscribers per 100) and Brazil (26 subscribers per 100). Chile is a leader in Internet integration as well. Based on 2003 data, there were 20.3 individuals online for every 100. This compares to only 10.8 in Argentina, 9.5 in Brazil, and 6.2 in Mexico (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2005b).

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