E-Parliament or ICT in Parliament

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Introduction

- Searching Google for “e-Parliament”, about 2.86 million results were found as shown in Fig 1.
Introduction (Cont.)

Fig. 1. Searching Google for e-Parliament
In the year 1986, the US Government invited Prof. Srisakdi Charmonman in his capacity as the highest ranking computer professional in Thai Government to visit the Library of Congress in the US for about one month.
Introduction (Cont.)

- In Thai government at that time, the highest rank was C-11 which was at the same level as the Permanent Secretary of a Ministry, and the same level as the Supreme Commander.
The Director General in a Ministry and the Chief of the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Forces, Police) as well as the Provincial Governors were at C-10. The Director of the National Computer Office was at C-9.
At the Library of Congress,

Prof. Srisakdi learned about e-Parliament

and later published several articles in Thai language

in Thailand [1-6].
Introduction (Cont.)

- The articles are:


(In Thai Language). Matubhumi Newspaper.
25-31 August 1986.

4) Charmonman, S. “Special Computer Services for Parliament.”
(In Thai Language). Matubhumi Newspaper.
1-7 September 1986.

In the Report of the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 [7], the followings were mentioned:

1) Parliaments all over the world have or are in the process of using ICT in:
   1.1) Making laws
   1.2) Operations in Parliament
   1.3) Communicating with citizens
In the year 2009, Nancy Pelosi, who was the Speaker of the US. House of Representatives [8] said at the World e-Parliament Conference 2009 in Washington D.C. that ICT help promote the key characteristics of a democratic parliament.
The 5 key characteristics of a democratic parliament are:

1) Representative: Ensuring equal opportunities and protections of all members

2) Transparent: Open to the nation thru different media, and transparent in the conduct of its business
Introduction (Cont.)

3) Accessible: Involving the public, including the associative and movement of civil society, in the work of parliament.

4) Accountable: Members of Parliament must be accountable to the electorate for their performance in office and integrity of conduct.
5) Effective: Effective organization of business and the performance of parliament’s legislative and oversight functions to serve the needs of all citizen.
Today, ICT tools like:

- Internet
- Social Networks
- Internet of Things

can help in the 5 key characteristics of a democratic parliament.
Introduction (Cont.)

- ICT is now used in both the front office and the back office of parliament.
E-parliament can be defined as a legislative that is empowered by ICT to be:

1) More transparent
2) More accessible
3) More accountable
In a sense, key limitation of existing business process solution in most parliaments have to be solved by the use of ICT.
Parliament Needs include General Needs and e-Participation needs.

1. General Needs
   1.1 Increase democratic of the society
   1.2 Enable Efficient, Flexible, Available and Transparent services to citizens
   1.3 Transparency in the legislative operations
1.4 Redefining and optimizing existing processes

1.5 Measuring and monitoring of Parliament performance

1.6 Increase efficiency in operations

1.7 Decrease of the costs of operations

1.8 Establishing starting point for building Legislative knowledge

1.9 Using the potential of the existing investment in IT

1.10 Maximum value for the tax payers money
2. e-Participation needs

2.1 Citizens Participation in the legislative procedure
2.2 Hearings and audiences
2.3 Petitions
2.4 Correspondence sent to Committees
2.5 Public Debate on Initiatives

2.6 Legislative Initiatives of citizens

2.7 Parliament TV on public web portal
Searching Google for “Parliamentary Informatics”, 346,000 results were found as shown in Fig. 2.
Introduction (Cont.)

Fig. 2. Searching Google for Parliamentary Informatics
From the document “Parliamentary Informatics”, Parliamentary Informatics is the application of IT to the documentation of legislative activity as well as information and statistics about:

- individual legislator
- particular legislative proposals
- votes
- text of legislation
This paper presents examples from the US. Congress:

- Members of Parliament
- Voting Records in Parliament
- Committees in Parliament
- Money Needed to Run for Parliament
- Audio and Video Media in Parliament
2. Members of Parliament

- From the document “Congress/Members” [9], the users may find

  2.1 Map of Congressional Districts
  2.2 List of Members of Congress
  2.3 Former Members of Congress
2.1 Map of Congressional Districts.

Persons interested in map of congressional districts can find it easily as shown in Fig. 3.
Members of Parliament (Cont.)

Fig. 3. Map of US. Congressional Districts
In the US, the boundaries shift with redistricting from time to time.

As an example, in the year 2010, the US. had 435 current and over 200 obsolete districts.

As another example, Nebraska used to have as many as 6 districts and reduced to 3 later.
2.2 List of Members of Congress.

Persons interested in current members of US. Congress can find it easily.
2.3 Former Members of Congress.

Persons interested in former members of US. Congress can search by name of person or name of districts and time.
From the document “US.Congress Votes” [10], the users may browse roll call votes in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.
Also interested person can search the database for voting record in the web http://progressivepunch.org [11]

The search can be done by

3.1) Search by Member of Congress

3.2) Search by issue
3.1) Search by Member of Congress

- The user selects the name of the member of Congress
- The user selects either the House or the Senate
- The user enter the zip code of the user.
3.2) Search by Issue

For the US. Congress, there are
160 different issue categories.
Sample categories are

- Aid to Less Advantaged People, at Home & Abroad
  (17 subcategories)
- Corporate Subsidies
  (15 subcategories)
- Education, Humanities, & the Arts
  (3 subcategories)
Voting Records in Parliament (Cont.)

- Environment
  (16 subcategories)

- Fair Taxation
  (6 subcategories)

- Family Planning
  (2 subcategories)

- Government Checks on Corporate Power
  (35 subcategories)
Voting Records in Parliament (Cont.)

- Health Care
  (17 subcategories)
- Housing
  (2 subcategories)
- Human Rights & Civil Liberties
  (11 subcategories)
- Justice for All: Civil and Criminal
  (7 subcategories)
Voting Records in Parliament (Cont.)

- Labor Rights
  (8 subcategories)

- Making Government Work for Everyone,
  Not Just the Rich or Powerful (25 subcategories)

- War & Peace
  (24 subcategories)
4. Committees in Parliament

.From the document

“Committees in Parliament” [12],
the Committees in US. Congress are as follows:

1. Agriculture

1.1 Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

1.2 Commodity Exchanges, Energy, and Credit
1.3 Conservation and Forestry
1.4 General Farm Commodities and Risk Management
1.5 Livestock and Foreign Agriculture
1.6 Nutrition
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

2. Appropriations

2.1 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

2.2 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

2.3 Defense

2.4 Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies

2.5 Financial Services and General Government
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

2.6 Homeland Security

2.7 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

2.8 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

2.9 Legislative Branch
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

2.10 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

2.11 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs

2.22 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

3. Armed Services

3.1 Emerging Threats and Capabilities
3.2 Military Personnel
3.3 Oversight and Investigations
3.4 Readiness
3.5 Seapower and Projection Forces
3.6 Strategic Forces
3.7 Tactical Air and Land Forces
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

4. Education and the Workforce

4.1 Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education
4.2 Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions
4.3 Higher Education and Workforce Training
4.4 Workforce Protections
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

5. Energy and Commerce

5.1 Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade
5.2 Communications and Technology
5.3 Energy and Power
5.4 Environment and the Economy
5.5 Health
5.6 Oversight and Investigations
5.7 Investigative Panel on Planned Parenthood (Select)
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

6. Ethics

6.1 Investigative Panel on Corrine Brown (Select)

7. Financial Services

7.1 Capital Markets and Government-Sponsored Enterprises

7.2 Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit

7.3 Housing and Insurance

7.4 Monetary Policy and Trade

7.5 Oversight and Investigations
8. Foreign Affairs

8.1 Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations

8.2 Asia and the Pacific

8.3 Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats

8.4 Middle East and North Africa

8.5 Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

8.6 Western Hemisphere
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

9. Homeland Security

9.1 Border and Maritime Security

9.2 Counterterrorism and Intelligence

9.3 Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies

9.4 Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications

9.5 Oversight and Management Efficiency

9.6 Transportation Security
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

10. Judiciary

10.1 The Constitution and Civil Justice

10.2 Courts, Intellectual Property and the Internet

10.3 Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and Investigations

10.4 Immigration Policy and Border Security

10.5 Regulatory Reform, Commercial and Antitrust Law
11. Natural Resources

11.1 Energy and Mineral Resources
11.2 Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs
11.3 Indian and Alaska Native Affairs
11.4 Public Lands and Environmental Regulation
11.5 Water and Power
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

12. Oversight and Government Reform
   12.1 Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and the Census
   12.2 Government Operations
   12.3 Energy Policy, Health Care and Entitlements
   12.4 National Security
   12.5 Economic Growth, Job Creation and Regulatory Affairs
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

13. Rules

13.1 Legislative and Budget Process

13.2 Rules and the Organization of the House
14. Science, Space and Technology

14.1 Energy

14.2 Environment

14.3 Oversight

14.4 Research and Technology

14.5 Space
15. Small Business

15.1 Agriculture, Energy and Trade
15.2 Health and Technology
15.3 Economic Growth, Tax and Capital Access
15.4 Contracting and Workforce
15.5 Investigations, Oversight and Regulations
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

16. Transportation and Infrastructure

16.1 Aviation

16.2 Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation


16.4 Highways and Transit

16.5 Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials

16.6 Water Resources and Environment
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

17. Veterans' Affairs

   17.1 Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs
   17.2 Economic Opportunity
   17.3 Health
   17.4 Oversight and Investigations
Committees in Parliament (Cont.)

18. Ways and Means

18.1 Trade
18.2 Social Security
18.3 Oversight
18.4 Health
18.5 Human Resources
18.6 Tax Policy
5. Money Needed to Run for a Seat in Parliament

- From the document “MapLight U.S. Congress: Research Guide” [13],
if you want to run for a seat in the US Congress, you need a lot of money.
Money Needed to Run for a Seat in Parliament (Cont.)

❖ To win an election for a seat in the US. House of Representatives, you need a lot of money.
❖ Then, as a member of the US House of Representatives, you need to spend on average, US$2,315 per day, every day, for an entire two-year term, including weekends and holidays.
❖ That’s US$1.7 million per House member, on average.
Money Needed to Run for a Seat in Parliament (Cont.)

- To win an election for a seat in the US Senate, you also need a lot of money.
- Then, as a Senator, you need US$10.5 million, averaging US$14,351 per day.
The main source of this money is from “the Interest Groups” that want something from government.

Once elected, politicians often pay back their campaign contributors with special access and favorable laws.
This common practice is contrary to the public interest.

MapLight's research tools help shine a light on the connection between money and votes, to help citizens hold legislators accountable.
Money and Votes MapLight connects money and votes.

We bring together, in one website, the money given to politicians with each politician's votes.

We provide data, research services, and online tools that work together to make patterns of money and influence more transparent.
Connections between campaign contributions, interest groups and votes that would have required days or weeks of manual research are now available at the click of a mouse.
As an example, the 2016 race in the US started early with a large field of potential candidates.

The candidates have to make appearances in early primary states, vying for commitments from big donors and assembling teams that could quickly pivot and become campaign staff.
Meanwhile, constellations of groups working on behalf of each of the most serious White House hopefuls.

The money involved may be called “Dark Money”.

Dark Money Groups spend millions influencing elections without reporting where the money came from.
What is Dark Money?

Dark Money refers to political spending meant to influence the decision of a voter, where the donor is not disclosed and the source of the money is unknown [14].

Depending upon the circumstances, Dark Money can refer to funds spent by a political nonprofit organization.
Political nonprofits are under no legal obligation to disclose their donors.

When they choose not to, they are considered Dark Money groups.
Dark Money groups account for staggering gaps in understanding exactly how each funding dollar is being spent during political elections.

These gaps are becoming wider with every election cycle.
Political organizations working to influence the 2016 elections outside party or official campaign structures spent more than US$15 million in 2015, and only reported about US$5 million of that to the Federal Election Commission (FEC).
For comparison, that US$5 million alone is more than ten times more than what had been reported at this point in 2011, before the last presidential election cycle.
From the document “Metavid Archive” [15].

Metavid is a free-software wiki-based community archive project for audio video media.

The site hosts public domain US legislative footage.
It was started as a Digital Arts/New Media MFA thesis project of Michael Dale and Abram Stern under the advisement of Professor Warren Sack in late 2005 at the University of California, Santa Cruz.
Its continued development is supported by a grant from the Sunlight Foundation.

It works by using a "simple Linux box to record everything that C-SPAN shoots", which can then be used to provide "brief searchable clips using closed-captioning text".
C-SPAN is an acronym for Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network, which is an American cable and satellite television network that was created in 1979 by the cable television industry as a public service.
Audio and Video Media in Parliament (Cont.)

- C-Span was a resource for House and Senate:
  - floor proceedings
  - the legislative schedules,
  - a directory of committees and members, bills, votes and statistics about each session of Congress.
As an example, Fig. 4. shows the 13 January 2017 Session in which the US House of Representatives debated the Senate-passed budget resolution for fiscal year 2017, which includes instructions to committees to draft Affordable Care Act Repeal legislation.
Audio and Video Media in Parliament (Cont.)

Fig. 4. Video of US House of Representatives Session on 13 January 2017
Metavid had been archiving since early 2006 and hosted over a thousand of hours of US House and Senate floor footage. Originally metavid hosted house and senate committees but they were taken down in response to legal threats by C-SPAN.
As of late 2007, C-SPAN had adopted a more liberal copyright policy.

The Metavid archive hosted the largest free & reusable archive of House and Senate legislative footage.

Through a partnership with archive.org the original mpeg2s were made accessible through the metavid site.
The US House launched its own video site and repository in 2010 and the Senate followed in 2011.

As these content sources became available, Metavid stopped archiving these chambers due to the labor-intensive process of separating proprietary C-SPAN content from public domain floor proceedings.
7. Concluding Remarks

- Parliaments all over the world have or are in the process of using ICT in making laws, operations in Parliament, and communicating with citizens.
- The US Congress is one of the parliaments in the world that have been using ICT extensively.
Concluding Remarks (Cont.)

Therefore, applications of ICT in the US Congress have been presented in this paper as examples of e-Parliament: Members of Parliament, Voting Records in Parliament, Committees in Parliament, Money Needed to Run for Parliament, and Audio and Video Media in Parliament.
Concluding Remarks (Cont.)

- However, there are new development of ICT very often.

- Therefore, all parties concerned should search Google for new information to consider to use for the benefits of themselves, their parliaments, their countries, and the world.
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