1 Current Status and Issues and Plans of E-Government

1.1 Last Ten Years

Since 1992, under the overall planning and guidance of the China central government and efforts of many regional governments and departments for several years, China has made great progresses in the development of business informationalization for the government systems:

(1) A network that connects the business resources of different regional and departmental government systems has been constructed, centered around the central government and supported by the information technology, and the digital exchange of the documents and information for the government systems has been fulfilled. Therefore, the documents and information circulation has become much more efficient.

(2) The office work is becoming more and more automated and the management is becoming more and more informationalized, with the wide establishment of the inner business networks in the government agencies of different levels.

(3) The information resources has been developed into a large scale for the first time, in order to support the governmental businesses and do help to the policy making.

(4) Most of the government employees are capable of modern office techniques.

(5) Expert teams familiar with both the information technology and the governmental businesses have been well organized.

On the other hand, for many kinds of reasons, the requirements of the economic and social development and the informationalization of the administrative management in China has not been fully satisfied by the current business informationalization of the government systems. Problems as follow still exist:

(1) A unified computer network and application platform throughout the central government and different regions and departments has not been established.

(2) The unified data repository standard and mechanism to share information have not been developed.

(3) The developments in different regions of the nation are not balanced.

(4) The security and confidentiality systems need to be completed and perfected.

(5) The legal and standard environment for the e-government has not been fully developed.

These issues are seriously affecting the development of the e-government systems in China.

1.2 Next Five Years

With the further development and using of the information technology and the network communication, the e-government development in China encounters opportunities and challenges. The e-government in China has played a very important role in the practice of adjusting the role of the government in management, changing the working method, improving the working style, and upgrading the
working quality and efficiency, to achieve high efficiency, well coordination and regulated activities in the administrative management systems. Therefore, it is very urgent to enhance the development of the e-government in China by use of the network and digital technology. As a result, the China central government issued The Outline Planning for the 2001-2005 National Construction of the Business Informationalization for the Government Systems, to provide guidance to the national construction of the business informationalization for the government systems. It is estimated, in the coming five years, under the principles of "Oriented by the requirement, urged by the application, with a unified planning, coordinated development, shared resources, and security and confidentiality", the e-government construction will enter a totally new stage.

(1) With respect to the organization, from the central government to the local areas, the management system of e-government will be further developed and perfected, in order to strengthen the leadership, coordination, and guidance to the e-government development in China.

(2) View from the content of the development, the following points will be centered around:

-- The local area network and the inner applications based on it in the government agencies. These applications include the systems for the document circulation, approval and processing, the systems for the management of the business object including business plans, projects, investments, personnel, etc. the systems for the management of daily businesses including the schedules, meetings, and other office tasks, and the systems to make statistics and analysis, focused on different levels of management.

-- The wide area network that makes the connections between the central government and the regions, the regions and the departments, and the different regions and departments and the applications based on it. These applications include the systems of the document circulation and approval through the central government to the different levels of governments, The systems for the document circulation and information exchange among the governments on the same level, and the multimedia information application platforms for the information exchange between the central government and regional governments, such as the video conference and multimedia data exchange.

-- The different levels of government web sites on the Internet, opening to the public. The applications on the web sites include the information publication and searching, the systems open to the public for the collection and statistics of the various kinds of mails, suggestions, comments, and other data, the systems open to the public for the reporting of projects, the systems for the publication and searching of documents and laws, and the systems for the information publication and implementation of public services, including the aspect of industrial and commercial management, taxation and social welfare.

-- A nation wide non-paper information transmission system for the documents, supported by the CA certification, digital signature, and electronic stamp and other technologies.

(3) On the environment construction, the following efforts will be made:

-- The research and development of standards and specifications; 
-- The research and development of rules and laws related to e-government; 
-- The perfection of the security management systems; 
-- The training and organization of a professional team.

2 Requirements and Future for Documentation Standardization of E-Government in China
2.1 Key Uniqueness of Documentation

Like many other countries, the administrative document is one of the many importance tools necessary for the nation's administrative management and supervision, and is a basic way to convey the information both from upper to lower levels and from lower to upper levels. In the information age, although the e-document will have the same effect as the paper document, it has been considered necessary that the paper document will exist for a long time in China. Due to the historical, ethnic and cultural variations, there are some differences about the document types, format and processing in different countries. In China, according to the rules stipulated in the Document Processing Method for the State Administrative Agencies, which was published in August, 2000 by the central government, the Administrative agency document in China has the following characteristics.

2.1.1 Document Types

There are 13 different kinds of administrative document as follow in China.

1. **Mandate**
   - To announce administrative rules and regulations according to related laws, to declare importance imperative administry actions, and to award agencies and persons.

2. **Resolution**
   - To make arrangements for important issues or actions, to award agencies and persons, and to change or cancel the improper decisions made by a subordinate agency.

3. **Announcement**
   - To declare importance issues and legal actions to the domestic and the foreign nations.

4. **Notification**
   - To notify the issues that all public institutions should comply with or pay attention to.

5. **Message**
   - To approve and transfer the document of a subordinate agency, to transfer a document of a superior agency or a agency in a different branch, to notify a issue that requires a subordinate agency to take action or needs the related units to know and carry out, and to notify the appointment or quittance of persons.

6. **Circular**
   - To award the advanced, to criticize faults, and to convey important ideas and information.

7. **Bill**
   - To allow governments of different levels to apply for hearing issues according to the legal processes to the people's congress on the same level, or the standing committee of the congress.

8. **Report**
   - To report work and issues to the superior agency and to answer the request of the superior agency.

9. **Asking for instruction**
   - To ask the superior agency for advice or approval.

10. **Answer**
    - To respond to the request from the subordinate agency.

11. **Suggestion**
    - To give opinion and dealing method about important issues.

12. **Letter**
    - To discuss issues, request and answer request, ask for approval and respond to such asking between agencies in different branches.

13. **Meeting minute**
To record and convey the issues in the meeting and resolutions.

**2.1.2 The Document Format**

Government document in China consists of confidentiality level, confidentiality period, identification of the issuing agency, urgency, document designation, issuing person, title, major receiving agency, content, attachment description, writing date, stamp, note, attachment, keyword, cc'ed agency, issuing agency, issuing date, etc. The relevant requirements include:

1. Confidentiality level and confidentiality period should be indicated in the document contains a state secrecy. The copy number should also be indicated in the extremely secret and secret documents.

2. "Very urgent" or "urgent" should be indicated in a urgent document according to its level of urgency. In a telegram, one of the four levels of urgency should be indicated.

3. The identification of the issuing agency should use its full name or standard shorted name. The identification of the major agency should be listed first in a co-issued document.

4. The document designation should include the issuing agency's designation and the year and sequence number. Only the major issuing agency's designation should be indicated in a co-issued document.

5. In a document from the subordinate to the superior, the name of the issuing person and co-issuing person should be indicated. In a "asking for instruction" document, the name and telephone of contact person should be included in the note.

6. The title should give a brief generalization of the main content of the document, and the type of the document should be also included, usually including the name issuing agency. Punctuations should usually not be used in the title, other than the title of a regulation or a rule, which should use a "book name mark".

7. The major receiving agency refers to the agency that mainly receives and deals with the document. Its full name and normalized name should be used.

8. If the document has a attached file, the sequence and names of the attached files should be noted.

9. Documents other than the meeting minute and the telegram should have the stamp. Co-issued document sending to the superior should have the stamp of the major issuing agency, while to the subordinate should have stamps of all the issuing agencies.

10. Issuing date is the date when the issuing person signed the document. If the document is co-issued, issuing date is the date when the latest issuing person signed the document. If the document is a telegram, the issuing date is the date when the telegram is sent out.

11. If the document has a note (other issues needed to be explained), the brackets should be used.

12. Keyword should be included in a document. The documents that go to a superior agency should meet its requirements.

13. Cc'ed agency refers to the agency that need to know or execute the document other than the major receiving agency. The full name or normalized shorted name should be used.

14. The characters should be written from left to right in a vertical arrangement. In an autonomous region, both the Chinese characters and the language of the minority group (according to its rules) can be used.

15. The rules of the identification of the parts of the document should comply with the national standard.

16. The paper type should be A4 according to the international standard, binding up on the left side. The size of a document that needs to be posted should be decided according to the actual need.
2.1.3 Formulating Rules

When formulating a document, such rules should be followed:

1. The document should be necessary considering its actual need.
2. The from-and-to relationship should be determined by the subject relationship and scope of responsibilities, and asking for instructions and reporting to an indirect superior are not allowed.
3. The government departments can issue documents to each other and the relevant government department in a lower level according to their responsibilities, and other than to discuss issues, request and answer a request, and to approve an application, the department should not issue a document to a lower level government.
4. Governments on the same level, departments of those governments, government and its subordinate government can co-issue a document. The government departments, the party organizations and the military agencies on the same level can co-issue a document. The government departments, the people's public organizations, and organizations that have administrative responsibilities can co-issue a document.
5. Issues subject to a department responsibility should be documented by the department or co-issued. The major issuing agency should be indicated in a co-issued document. The issues that need a government approval can be issued by a department after the approval of the government, and the approval should be indicated in the document.
6. The issues subject to a department's responsibility should be referred directly to that department.
7. If consensus is not reached between different departments, it is not allowed to issue relevant documents to their subordinate respectively. If the document is improperly issued, the superior agency should give order to correct or cancel the document.
8. Important documents issued to a subordinate in the same branch should be cc'd to the direct superior.
9. Asking for instruction should contain one issue in each document, usually with only one major receiving agency. If the document needs to be sent to other agencies, it should be cc'd, and the subordinate should not be cc'd to.
10. Other than the issues received directly from responsible person in the superior agency, "asking for instructions", "suggestion", and "report" should not be sent to the person in charge in the superior agency under the agency's name.
11. When a agency under dual leadership issues a document to one superior, the major receiving agency and cc'ed agency should be indicated. When the superior issues a document to such an agency, the document should be cc'd to the other superior.

2.2 Current Status of Documentation Standards

Considering the characteristics of the administrative documents in China, under the leadership of the State Council Public Affairs Department, and supported by the China State Bureau of Technical and Quality Supervision, China National Institute of Standardization completed the draft of the national standard GB/T 9704 1999 Document Format for National Administrative Agencies in late 1999. On January 1st, 2000, the standard went into effect.

In the scope of that standard, it is stipulated that "This standard specifies the requirements of paper type, printing and the type set and identification of the elements for a national administrative document. The standard applies to the documents issued by administrative agencies at all levels. It serves as a reference for the documents of other agencies. Parts of the standard apply to the documents that use language of minority groups." Here, the administrative documents include
mandate, resolution, announcement, notification, message, circular, bill, report, asking for instruction, answer, suggestion, letter, and meeting minute as stated above.

With respect to the implementation of the standard, the standard not only normalized and unified the administrative documents in China, and the quality of the document making is greatly improved and upgraded as a result, it also provide a basis for the automation of office work.

When drafting the GB/T 9704 standard, the following principles and directions are followed.

(1) General principles
   -- Base on the Processing Method of the National Administrative Document issued by the state council.
   -- Use the international standard A4 type of document paper, taking place of the original "16 kai" type of document paper.
   -- Considering the condition of China and to be practical.

(2) Directions
   -- The comments of a wide range of parties have been requested, ensuring that it has been fully considered that the design of the document format is practical, scientific, and having a good sight effect.
   -- The examples of charts are given for the stipulations in the standard.
   -- The requirements of the computer type set, printing, and bookbinding are met.

2.3 The Future of Documentation and Related Standardization of E-Government

GB/T 9074 has been widely used in China. However, with respect to the documents in e-government, this one draft of standard is far from enough. Other relevant standards need to be studied and developed. These standards include:

-- E-government Data Element Directory, containing the data elements in the document format, such as the identification of the issuing agency, designation of the document and the keyword;
-- E-government Code List, containing the code list of data element of the coded type, such as the confidentiality code and urgency code;
-- The series of other document format standard related to e-government, containing the format of the approval list document, which is used to enlist the signed approvals of a series of agencies and leaders, for the administrative agencies, for example.
-- E-government file format specification based on XML;
-- File exchanging format for the E-government.

The e-government development has been put into the The Tenth Five-year Plan for the National Economy and Social Development in China, therefore, During the tenth five-year period, the e-government development in China will be better than ever before. With respect to the e-government standards, other than the document format standards and other related standards stated above, China is now studying and developing many other standard, including:

-- Standard Framework for E-government
-- Common Technical Requirements for the E-Government Platforms
-- E-government Security System Specification
-- General Functional Requirements for the Information Management Systems in E-government
-- Functioning Management Specification for the Information Management Systems in E-government
-- Software Development Specification for E-government
-- Purchasing Specification for E-government
-- Network Development Specifications for E-government on Different levels.