

# Identity Crisis

For several millennia, governments have been identifying and registering their citizens. Economic and military requirements placed on governments made it necessary to identify populations able to pay taxes or be summoned for military service. Records indicate that systematic registrations of populations took place in Egypt around 2800-2500 BC, in China in 2238 BC, and in many other ancient states that thrived during that period. The first census took place in Syria under the governorship of Quirinius, an event that caused Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem on an epoch-making journey.

The purpose of identifying citizens has evolved since those ancient population counts and birth registries, and the business needs have become a lot more complex. Today, identification cards with embedded chips are becoming the norm and biometric technologies featuring facial, fingerprint or retinal recognition are finding increased use. The rapidly emerging market in identity management is being driven by two intersecting business drivers – a complex set of business and security needs and the availability of reliable technology. Specifically, demand is increasing as a consequence of both a heightened need to balance security with privacy and an intent to fundamentally alter service delivery mechanisms. In each case, the objective is to ensure that the right government services reach the right citizens at the right time. At the same time, the supply side is being transformed. Underlying technology is becoming more mature; price points are falling dramatically, thus making solutions more affordable; and new business models are emerging that address the full lifecycle of identity management. We believe that the adoption debate has reached a tipping point and we will witness rapidly accelerating implementation

of identity management across government. We also see a large-scale crossover of identity management across government and commercial sectors.



Because of the topic's timeliness and its particular relevance to the public sector, the second issue of the *Government Journal* is dedicated to identity management. The articles contained in this journal represent a range of potential applications that are pertinent to any government in the world. The exact business and social context may vary, but the challenges, technical frameworks, functions and, most importantly, benefits are directly applicable. The articles cover a variety of topics, including federal identity credentials, state driver's licenses, health and human services eligibility and justice administration. We hope that governments worldwide may benefit from the ideas and suggestions contained in these articles.

Finally, the articles in this journal provide a point of view and perspective from which we seek to engage in a wider debate and discussion. We look forward to hearing your comments, learning about your experiences and listening to your points of view. We welcome all views, whether they agree with or run counter to the views expressed in these articles. We welcome them because they can only enrich the debate.

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