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(SMSCs) WORLDWIDE

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Wireless Short Message Services (SMS)

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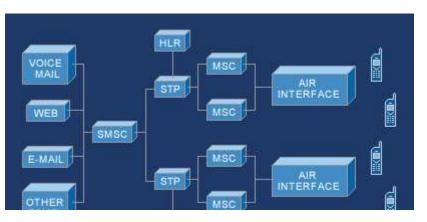Comment On This Tutorial

Introduction

SMS appeared on the wireless scene in 1991 in Europe. The European standard for digital wireless, now known as the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM), included short messaging services from the outset.

In North America, SMS was made available initially on digital wireless networks built by early pioneers such as BellSouth Mobility, PrimeCo, and Nextel, among others. These digital wireless networks are based on GSM, code division multiple access (CDMA), and time division multiple access (TDMA) standards.

Network consolidation from mergers and acquisitions has resulted in large wireless networks having nationwide or international coverage and sometimes supporting more than one wireless technology. This new class of service providers demands network-grade products that can easily provide a uniform solution, enable ease of operation and administration, and accommodate existing subscriber capacity, message throughput, future growth, and services reliably. Short messaging service center (SMSC) solutions based on an intelligent network (IN) approach are well suited to satisfy these requirements, while adding all the benefits of IN implementations.

Figure 1 represents the basic network architecture for an IS–41 SMSC deployment handling multiple input sources, including a voice-mail system (VMS), Web-based messaging, e-mail integration, and other external short message entities (ESMEs). Communication with the wireless network elements such as the home location register (HLR) and mobile switching center (MSC) is achieved through the signal transfer point (STP).

Picture 1. Basic Network Architecture for an SMS Deployment (IS-41)

SMS provides a mechanism for transmitting short messages to and from wireless devices. The service makes use of an SMSC, which acts as a store-and-forward system for short messages. The wireless network provides the mechanisms required to find the destination station(s) and transports short messages between the SMSCs and wireless stations. In contrast to other existing text-message transmission services such as alphanumeric paging, the service elements are designed to provide guaranteed delivery of text messages to the destination. Additionally, SMS supports several input mechanisms that allow interconnection with different message sources and destinations.

A distinguishing characteristic of the service is that an active mobile handset is able to receive or submit a short message at any time, independent of whether a voice or data call is in progress (in some implementations, this may depend on the MSC or SMSC capabilities). SMS also guarantees delivery of the short message by the network. Temporary failures due to unavailable receiving stations are identified, and the short message is stored in the SMSC until the destination device becomes available.

SMS is characterized by out-of-band packet delivery and low-bandwidth message transfer, which results in a highly efficient means for transmitting short bursts of data. Initial applications of SMS focused on eliminating alphanumeric pagers by permitting two-way general-purpose messaging and notification services, primarily for voice mail. As technology and networks evolved, a variety of services have been introduced, including e-mail, fax, and paging integration, interactive banking, information services such as stock quotes, and integration with Internet-based applications. Wireless data applications include downloading of subscriber identity module (SIM) cards for activation, debit, profile-editing purposes, wireless points of sale (POSs), and other field-service applications such as automatic meter reading, remote sensing, and location-based services. Additionally, integration with the Internet spurred the development of Web-based messaging and other interactive applications such as instant messaging, gaming, and chatting.

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