Text messaging, or texting, is the act of composing and sending electronic messages, typically consisting of alphabetic and numeric characters, between two or more users of mobile devices, desktops/laptops, or another type of compatible computer. Text messages may be sent over a cellular network, or may also be sent via satellite or Internet connection.

The term originally referred to messages sent using the Short Message Service (SMS). It has grown beyond alphanumeric text to include multimedia messages using the Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) containing digital images, videos, and sound content, as well as ideograms known as emoji (happy faces, sad faces, and other icons), and instant messenger applications (usually the term is used when on mobile devices).

Text messages are used for personal, family, business and social purposes. Governmental and non-governmental organizations use text messaging for communication between colleagues. In the 2010s, the sending of short informal messages became an accepted part of many cultures, as happened earlier with emailing.[1] This makes texting a quick and easy way to communicate with friends, family and colleagues, including in contexts where a call would be impolite or inappropriate (e.g., calling very late at night or when one knows the other person is busy with family or work activities). Like e-mail and voicemail and unlike calls (in which the caller hopes to speak directly with the recipient), texting does not require the caller and recipient to both be free at the same moment; this permits communication even between busy individuals. Text messages can also be used to interact with automated systems, for example, to order products or services from e-commerce websites, or to participate in online contests. Advertisers and service providers use direct text marketing to send messages to mobile users about promotions, payment due dates, and other notifications instead of using postal mail, email, or voicemail.

Terminology

The service is referred to by different colloquialisms depending on the region. It may simply be referred to as a "text" in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines, an "SMS" in most of mainland Europe, or an "MMS" or "SMS" in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. The sender of a text message is commonly referred to as a "texter".

History

The electrical telegraph systems, developed in the early 19th century, used electrical signals to send text messages. In the late 19th century, the wireless telegraphy was developed using radio waves.

In 1933, the German Reichspost (Reich postal service) introduced the first "telex" service.[2][3]

The University of Hawaii began using radio to send digital information as early as 1971, using ALOHAnet.[citation needed] Friedhelm Hillebrand conceptualised SMS in 1984 while working for Deutsche Telekom. Sitting at a typewriter at home, Hillebrand typed out random sentences and counted every letter, number, punctuation, and space. Almost every time, the messages contained fewer than 160 characters, thus giving the basis for the limit one could type via text messaging.[4] With Bernard Ghillebaert of France Télécom, he developed a proposal for the GSM (Groupe Spécial Mobile) meeting in February 1985 in Oslo.[5] The first technical solution evolved in a GSM subgroup under the leadership of Finn Trosby. It was further developed under the leadership of Kevin Holley and Ian Harris (see Short Message Service).[6] SMS forms an integral part of Signalling System No. 7 (SS7).[7] Under SS7, it is a "state" with a 160 character data, coded in the ITU-T "T.56" text format, that has a "sequence lead in" to determine different language codes and may have special character codes that permit, for example, sending simple graphs as text. This was part of ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) and since GSM is based on this, it made its way to the mobile phone. Messages could be sent and received on ISDN phones, and these can send SMS to any GSM phone. The possibility of doing something is one thing, implementing it another, but systems existed from 1988 that sent SMS messages to mobile phones[citation needed] (compare ND-NOTIS).

SMS messaging was used for the first time on 3 December 1992,[8] at the Three Tuns Public House in Reading, Berkshire[9] when Neil Papworth, a 22-year-old test engineer for Sema Group in the UK[10] (now Airwide Solutions),[11] used a personal computer to send the text message "Merry Christmas" via the Vodafone network to the phone of Richard Jarvis,[12][13] who was at a party in Newbury, Berkshire, which had been organized to celebrate the event. Modern SMS text messaging is usually messaging from one mobile phone to another. Finnish Radiolinja became the first network to offer a commercial person-to-person SMS text messaging service in 1994. When Radiolinja's domestic competitor, Telecom Finland (now part of TeliaSonera) also launched SMS text messaging in 1995 and the two networks offered cross-network SMS functionality, Finland became the first nation where SMS text messaging was offered on a competitive as well as on a commercial basis. GSM was allowed[by whom?] in the United States and the radio frequencies were blocked and awarded to US "Carriers" to use US technology. Hence there is no "development" in the US in mobile messaging service. The GSM in the US had to use a frequency allocated for private communication services (PCS) – what the ITU frequency régime had blocked for DECT – Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications – 1000-feet range picocell, but survived. American Personal Communications (APC), the first GSM carrier in America, provided the first text-messaging service in the United States. Sprint Telecommunications Venture, a partnership of Sprint Corp. and three large cable-TV companies, owned 49 percent of APC. The Sprint venture was the largest single buyer at a government-run spectrum auction that raised $7.7 billion in 2005 for PCS licenses. APC operated under the brand name of Sprint Spectrum and launched its service on 15 November 1995, in Washington, D.C. and in Baltimore, Maryland. Vice President Al Gore in Washington, D.C. made the initial phone-call to launch the network, calling Mayor Kurt Schmoke in Baltimore