

Preserving the Records of the E-Legislature 12-13 September 2005 Project Meeting Summary

In September 2005, the Minnesota Historical Society hosted the first project meeting of the NHPRC- sponsored project, *Preserving the Records of the E-Legislature*. Project partners from the Minnesota Historical Society, Revisor's Office, Legislative Reference Library, San Diego Supercomputer Center, and California Legislative Counsel, State Library, and State Archives came together to meet and discuss the project's goals and objectives.¹ This included discussion on the background of the project, work plan, products, and the partners involved.

During the meeting, each project partner gave a presentation describing their organization's background, responsibilities, workflow, and involvement with government records. For example, staff members from the Revisor's Office presented an overview of their XML bill drafting system and gave a demonstration of the software, XTEND, which they will be using beginning with the 2006 legislative session. There also was a tour of the Revisor's Office and the Legislative Reference Library. Richard Marciano, from the San Diego Supercomputer Center, explained the advantages of XML and the many ways to manage electronic records with the Storage Resource Broker.

Participants brought up many questions, including:

- Are we going to preserve documents that do not come out of the XML bill drafting system?
- Are we only going to preserve current electronic records?
- What formats are included and what is coming in the near future?
- What is the cost of converting government records into electronic format? (e.g., legislative tapes).
- What is the perceived growth of the project within the legislative environment?
- Who are the users of these legislative records?
- What government documents are people using and why? Which are the most popular and critical?
- What would make government documents more useful?

Throughout the meeting many issues were mentioned, including:

- Differences between the Minnesota and California counterparts.
- Determining rigorous appraisal methods.
- Task of converting documents to XML format.
- Challenge of cultural and institutional change (e.g., attorneys who work in the new XML bill drafting systems would prefer Word).
- Sustainability.
- Metadata standards.
- Best practices, including necessary skill sets, cultural changes, education, business case.
- Long-term investment in education, as well as implementation of policy and procedures.

¹ For a list of individuals present from each organization see appendix 1.

Immediate Actions:

- Update project web site with meeting summary and links to presentations given at the meeting.
- Schedule next project meeting in June 2006 in California.
- Create glossary that defines legislative terms used in California and Minnesota.
- Activate project list-serve.
- Create summary of Minnesota legislative materials similar to the one the Legislative Counsel produced.
- Begin analysis and documentation of Revisor's Office workflow and systems.
- Continue survey of legislative records in all formats at LRL, Revisor's Office, MHS, House and Senate offices.
- Continue installation and testing of grid brick in Revisor's Office.

Future Actions:

- Consider document appraisal and use value of legislative documents.
- Promote the project and publicize the project at conferences, and seminars, and in publications (e.g., Jim Greenwalt arranged for Bob Horton and Robbie LaFleur to present at the NCSL/NALIT conference in Rapid City in October 2005).
- Survey bill drafting systems and initiatives from other states.
- Rough draft of best practices for developing standards, procedures, policies, and guidelines by next project meeting.

Appendix 1

Meeting Participants

Minnesota Historical Society: Bob Horton, Shawn Rounds, Beth Lighthipe

Revisor's Office: Michele Timmons, Kyle Johnson, Cory Oman, Robyn Ender, Linda Jackson, Jerry Comma (XMaLpha Technologies)

Legislative Reference Library: Robbie LaFleur, Leif Eischen, Mike Schatz, Paul VanCura

Minnesota Senate Information Systems: Jim Greenwalt

San Diego Supercomputer Center: Richard Marciano

California Legislative Counsel: Diane Boyer, Linda Heatherly, Bill Behnk

California State Library: Kristine Ogilvie

California State Archives: Lucy Barber