

Minnesota Senate Document Type Summary

Summary

Bob Horton, Shawn Rounds, and Beth Lighthipe, Minnesota Historical Society, met with Robbie LaFleur, Legislative Reference Library; Peter Wattson, Senate Counsel, Research and Fiscal Analysis; Steve Senyk, Senate Media Services; and Jim Greenwalt, Linda Schmitt, and Charlie Fastner from Senate Information Systems, on 13 October 2005. Bob Horton began the meeting by introducing Senate staff to the project and answering any questions. Discussion about legislative documents that the Senate staff creates and/or manages followed.

There were a few concerns and questions raised by the senate staff members including:

- Most of the legislative data created by the Senate is not in XML.
 - Bob let them know this is not a problem as long as the data has standard formats.
- Will we identify best practices and develop standards? (Yes)
- Are we going to have estimates of the cost? Are we undertaking another financial commitment that we can't afford?
 - Bob explained it would likely be a cheaper alternative to long-term storage than the system they already have. Mainly because converting and migrating data is costly, which XML would help eliminate. Bob assured them that we will do cost and analysis to identify an effective baseline best practices.
- Will it be easy to access the archives once we send them to the SDSC?
 - Yes. Our motives are to create better access for the public and easy ways to manage the data, along with long-term preservation.
- How broad or in depth do we go as far as legislative records?
 - The appraisal process will be up to MHS. We will look at whole universe of legislative records and work with Office of the Revisor of Statutes (RO) and the Legislative Reference Library (LRL) to decide. We will give first consideration to high-level items that can be captured automatically in bulk.

Document Type Notes

Senate Journals

The Journal of the Senate is a record of Senate floor proceedings. Daily session journals are available on the web following adjournment each session day, on the same day of session adjournment or the following day. At the end of each calendar year, the contents of the daily session journals are compiled to create a published collection of books referred to as the permanent journal, the official, legal record of all floor action. Senate journals from 1996 to the present are available online in PDF. Prior to 1996, the Senate web site was not available, so there are no other journals available electronically. During the final editing process following each session, corrections may be made to the daily journals. Beginning in 2005, the edited daily journals are replaced online, and an index is attached to each day. From 1996-2004, the online daily journals may not completely match the final, official, edited permanent journal.

Amendments

Amendments considered in committee are created in the RO system electronically, but are not part of any public file. Some of the more important amendments are posted in HTML or PDF. The list of amendments is available in a section of the Senate site labeled "Select Committee Amendments," arranged by committee, or on the individual committees pages. However, this process is not uniform or comprehensive and needs a plan.

Floor amendments are also created in the Revisor's Office in XML, and are converted by Senate staff into HTML and posted on the Web. These are not archived because they become part of the published journal.

Bill Summaries

Senate Counsel and Research staff members create bill summaries when requested, usually for bills that are being heard in committee. Not all the bill summaries from each session are posted online. Only the latest version of the bill summary is published online. When the Senate receives a new version of the summary, the updated version replaces the old one on the Web. Bill summaries from 1997 are online in HTML.

Committee Minutes/Books

Paper copies of the committee minutes/books are transferred to the Legislative Reference Library. The Senate committee books or committee minutes are not published electronically. (In the House, committee minutes are published online, but not the entire committee books with attachments.) The Senate would eventually like to create electronic versions and set up some kind of system to archive these. They would archive the permanent version since committee books are often edited (e.g., agenda is usually rewritten).

Fiscal Notes, Fiscal Tracking Documents, Spreadsheets

Fiscal notes are maintained and created in the Department of Finance. They identify possible monetary impacts of a proposed law. Senate Fiscal Analysts create fiscal tracking documents in Excel for omnibus appropriations bills. These are kept in spreadsheets on the Senate Counsel, Research, and Fiscal Analysis web page and published in PDF.

Senate Media Coverage

The Senate records committee hearings, floor sessions, and other meetings held in Senate hearing rooms as audio MO3 files. Selected coverage in video is available as RealVideo files. Available online are select committees, floor sessions, press conferences, special events, Capitol Reports, and civic education beginning in 2001. A few additional civic education videos produced in the 1990s are also included. The digital files of committee hearings and floor sessions are kept one year (calendar year) on servers at Intertech, and are then transferred to the Legislative Reference Library for long-term retention and access. Formerly, when committee hearings and floor sessions were only available in audiotape, the Legislative Reference Library kept the files for 8 years and then sent them to the Minnesota Historical Society. The Minnesota Historical Society destroyed the tapes after an additional 8 years, per approved records retention schedule.

Senate Schedules

Weekly schedules since 2000 are available online in HTML.

Photographs

Senate takes candid photos and legislators portraits. They are digital JPEGs and go back to 2001.

Senate Briefly

Senate Briefly is a weekly newsletter that summarizes Senate committee and floor proceedings. Paper copies are stored at the LRL. The 1995-1996 issues of *Briefly* are posted online in text file format. The 1997-2002 issues are posted online as PDF files. The 2003 issues are available online as PDF and HTML. Issues of *Briefly* from 2004-2005 are available online as PDF and HTML and include JPEG images.

Rules

The 1994-2005 Permanent Rules of the Senate and the Joint Rules from 2005 are available online in HTML. Current rules are always available online.

Senate Executive Appointments

Senate confirmations of executive appointments are available online. Appointees from 1999 are in HTML.

Biographies of Senators and Staff Lists

Biographies of current senators are maintained on the senate web site in HTML. Current staff contact lists are maintained; entries are created or deleted as staff change.

Official Directory (Red Book)

The House Public Information Services Office produces a print legislative directory. Electronic versions are not available. The senate IT does not want to create the red book in PDF because of format issues.