

Preserving State Government Digital Information Kansas Partners Meeting



Minnesota Historical Society

Friday, March 28, 2008
Revisor of Statutes Conference Room, Kansas Statehouse
Topeka, Kansas

Bob Horton and Christopher Welter, of the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), met with the Kansas partners of the NDIIPP-sponsored project, Preserving State Government Digital Information. The participants included Dave Larson (director), Terri Clark (database manager) and Sandy Sadowski (Web specialist) of Kansas Legislative Computer Services, Scott Leonard and Matt Veatch (State Archivist) of the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS), Don Heiman (Legislative Chief Information Technology Officer), and Alan Weis (project manager for integrated applications) of the Kansas Legislative Information System Strategic Plan (KLISS Plan).

Steve Lang, Sean McGrath, and Sasha Wilson also represented Propylon, a legislative software vendor who has contracted with Kansas.

Bob Horton began the meeting by summarizing the project's background via a Powerpoint presentation and by highlighting recent updates, including the project Web site.¹ It was also noted that Mary Galligan (Kansas Legislative Research Department) and Sasha Wilson (Propylon) will be at the annual National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) spring forum April 24-26.

The following account is paraphrased.

Don Heiman: Gave a recap of the Kansas Legislative Information Systems Strategy (K-LISS). MHS personnel reviewed an October 2004 copy prior to the meeting. K-LISS was precipitated by the Kansas Statehouse Renovation Project, which was contracted out in 1999.² The \$285 million, multi-phase renovation (2000-2011) includes restoration of the first through fifth floors and rehabilitation/expansion of the basement.

Geographically speaking, Kansas is a widespread state. However, like most of the state's ~2 million citizens [2.764 million in 2006], the Statehouse is situated far to the east, in Topeka (Wichita is one of the few population centers not located on the extreme eastern edge). Access to Statehouse and government information is thereby uneven, too.

¹ <http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/legislativerecords>

² <http://www.treanorarchitects.com/Statehouse/index.html>

Addressing the Statehouse's information technology (IT) infrastructure emerged out of the historic preservation plan. Updating IT was seen as an opportunity to circumvent the Statehouse's physical limitations by extending its reach virtually.

Kansas Legislative Information Systems and Services is charged with implementing the strategic plan. Conceptually, Kansas was looking for a system that had full reconstruction process to show how laws came into being, which required a comprehensive analysis and understanding of existing processes. House and Senate lawmaking processes are very similar and also manual (therefore visible) in Kansas.

So documentation of processes was a function of the planning. XMaLpha Technologies was hired as a consultant to produce a Requirements document (~1700 pages with about 930 functional requirements). The strategic plan is dynamic and continually updated: the initiatives currently being implemented in Kansas include 28 IT infrastructure initiatives and 20 application initiatives.

Of the 28 infrastructure initiatives, 10 are implemented, 5 are in a pilot status, and 11 are either under development or in a planning status. All infrastructure initiatives are scheduled to be implemented by December 2011 when the renovated statehouse project is completed

Of the 20 application initiatives, 5 have been implemented and 15 initiatives are in a design specification stage. This stage completes in September and coding will begin thereafter.

Infrastructure Initiatives:

- Legislators' PC/Tablets being refreshed every 3 years
- Availability of network printing
- Introduction of a Microsoft platform

Telecommunications Initiatives:

- Rewiring of building to increase bandwidth (1GB at the desktop)
- Wireless access, both secured and unsecured, where user authentication can affect the application itself (wireless access is an underlying theme of K-LISS, with informal discussions of international access)
- Closed-circuit television, which extends the Statehouse's footprint throughout the state—including a video production center at Wichita State University. The center is for disaster recovery once the KLISS applications are in production. After the systems go into production we will move our development center to Wichita and use the development computer as a hot site machine if we loose our production data center in Topeka. Our video will be archived in Topeka and backed up on a SAN in Wichita (K-LISS needs standards for archiving and disaster recovery of such A/V material).
- Installation of electronic message boards and kiosks in Statehouse public gathering spaces

Public Access Initiatives:

- Launch of K-SPAN, which will take encoded video from hearing rooms to Cox Cable, who will store it and push it out as video on demand (VOD) via Channel 1 Kansas Now

- Teleconferencing—including remote testimony—will take place from Statehouse hearing rooms (Kan-ed,³ an existing, funded telecommunications network, is already in place and includes public libraries and school districts)

There's a microwave link that's full duplex in the Statehouse rotunda, and KTWU Public Television (Topeka), KPTS Public Television (Wichita), Smoky Hills Public Television (Bunker Hill), and Kansas State University's Educational Communication Center⁴ can pull from it. Also, via Kansas State's satellite link, any TV station can pick up live feeds.

Hearing rooms also allow for electronic town hall meetings (via KANWIN) in numerous city government centers and in public libraries and school districts. [*KANSas Wide area Information Network is a statewide multi-protocol data network used by state agencies and other local government entities.*]

Media row is a set of offices made available to the press. Also, two weekly shows [*Kansas Week* and *Ask Your Legislator?*] are produced in the Statehouse by KPTS (Wichita).

Electronic Town Hall: When the Statehouse's north wing is completed in 2011 there will be an auditorium and classroom available for public use. These two rooms will be connected to a video control room that has been built in another portion of the building. The control room will connect the auditorium and classroom to the KANWIN and Kan-ed networks for statewide access.

These public-access initiatives are driven by an e-democracy plan—including live online debates via TV, open to citizen participation.

Archiving Audio/Visual: Legislative hearings are webcast. The voice record is considered content and will be archived. We intend to use COBIT standards to guide our implementation of IT infrastructure and application development initiatives [Control OBJECTives for Information and related Technology “provides managers, auditors, and IT users with a set of generally accepted measures, indicators, processes and best practices to assist them in maximizing the benefits derived through the use of information technology and developing appropriate IT governance and control in a company” or enterprise⁵]. Also, there's a pilot project underway with Kansas State University to video document the Statehouse renovation and make the video archive available online.

Legislators also want to access raw audio and video content directly in the bill-drafting system in order to augment mediated content like session minutes, and to have embedded links across repositories.

ADA [American Disabilities Act] compliance is also a major theme in the K-LISS plan.

Not currently one of the K-LISS initiatives, there is a desire to digitize microfiche of legislative minutes (\$275,000 currently earmarked for this).

Of the 28 K-LISS initiatives, 10 are completed while 5 are in pilot stage (awaiting completion of Statehouse renovation).

³ <http://www.kan-ed.org/>

⁴ http://www.itac.ksu.edu/audio_video_conf.htm

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COBIT>

There are 15 functional areas in Applications, which range from lawmaking (bills, statutes) to chamber automation (calendars, journals, bill history) and legislative decision support—the “footprint of intent”—(supplemental notes, fiscal notes, conference committee report briefs, committee minutes/testimony—all content and media, not just typed transcripts—and committee reports). For a part-time legislature, cost/benefit hinges on speed of getting through legislative session as quickly as possible.

The design principle is “no wrong door,” meaning point and click to any other module from within the application. For example, if a bill draft references a statute, the user can click on the statute reference and see the statute. If a user is in a calendar or journal and sees a reference to a bill, the user can click on the reference and see the bill.

Propylon is designing an application based on this design principle, i.e., a self-referencing, reconstructible system that encodes the process of how the state operates—it witnesses the process above and beyond serving up the finished product. It also has to be COBIT compliant.

One other application: appropriations process of legislation (a workflow project).

The State requires a business partner that shares the state’s vision in order to fund the project (state can’t afford it all on its own). Propylon has agreed to be that partner. This integrated system will be based on open standards (XML, Open Office). Process re-engineering will emerge as the new wave. We also want citizens to access content without buying software. System has to be used by attorneys, corporations, etc. But people want to be alerted (push technology, Web 2.0).

Information Network Kansas (INK) was formed in 1991. INK contracted with Kansas Information Consortium (KIC Inc.), a start-up firm. KIC had a small team of employees to construct the state portal (first initiative was lobbyist-in-a-box). The founders of KIC then created NIC Inc. to extend their Kansas portal model to other states. NIC went public in the 1990s. I believe the IPO generated \$1.2 billion. This kind of initiative takes huge commitment from subject matter experts. A lot of human thought is going into this system.

XMALpha validated a fit analysis, and Propylon can provide 62% of the fit requirements with little or no modification. If you’re fully integrated and archiving is part of your process, the strategic plan takes one year and requirements take another year. The detailed design specification (~6,000 pages) takes about 18 months, and I am thinking the build is about 30 months for law making and related decision support and chamber modules. The design specification document is the ultimate report on how we do business and how we intend to do business.

Sasha: Many legislatures don’t have a sense of the bigger picture—i.e., “We do what we do this way for this reason.” Much of it is based on folk memory. Kansas is unique by doing all this upfront—creating a comprehensive picture and doing upfront analysis, fully documented, and validating the evaluation of processes.

Don: What’s happening here is a conceptual framework, which is where we have an opportunity to benefit the project. It’s a very forward-looking framework.

Timing is crucial for the K-LISS initiatives because they’re tied in with the Statehouse renovation. Starting the build in January, 12-15 modules rolled out in the following 30 months:

lawmaking and decision support, with others to follow. K-LISS is timed to parallel the physical restoration.

Again, there's an opportunity locally in digitizing microfiche. There's another with audio/video. And there's one with vision: We see this as more than paper content; we see the process as the preservation of presence.

Bob: I have heard this idea for full integration repeatedly, that this is what states want. This conceptual framework is like the pot at the end of the rainbow. They're also interested in the preservation of video, and the semantic nature of this integration.

We're trying to help other states with gap analysis. Many states can't or won't commit this level of time and/or resources as did Kansas, but its process perhaps can educate/orient them.

Don: I'm very much interested in video on demand.

Dave: I've been impressed with Don's vision for K-LISS for sometime. The question for me is: Who is this system for?

Don: The system is for legislators, staff, and professionals as well as the public. The key customers are legislators and staff.

Dave: Citizens need to know what's going on. This has large e-government implications.

Don: It's more about e-democracy, where citizens get involved by "testifying." K-LISS is promoting the use of the material for civic engagement—becoming part of the process, participating, eliminating geographic place from the equation. People become part of the testimony (and the history, hence the need for archiving and recording it). Ultimately, it connects to accountability.

Scott: Is there a role for NDIIPP to play in figuring out better access after records are created? Am I going to be able to find what I want to find 20 years from now?

Don: I would like to see us come up with video archive standards.

Bob: I see two things: 1) using e-government/e-democracy to make a business case; 2) given the amount of money K-LISS puts toward applications, this allows for analysis of the functional requirements for preservation.

Sasha: Kansas asked us to design an architecture that would allow for multiple purposes and applications (an extensible set of services). Perhaps archiving is another functional requirement for preservation (beyond disaster recovery).

Sean: Archiving would be a matter of capturing a series of digital snapshots.

Bob: You're talking about actual preservation at Wichita State, which means that KSHS becomes a consultant rather than the depository.

Don: People go through microfiche to reconstruct how law came to be. The KLISS applications and infrastructure will provide full context of the process, rather than just a capture of the finished project. The whole vision depends on the preservation of a wide array of context. By

encoding and capturing the entire process, it's possible to determine the legislative decision in terms of intent. The challenge here is how to solve the incorporation of content currently in microfiche into this process.

Bob: Defining the audience would be useful in addressing the microfiche. When you say reconstructing the moment, have you done actual focus groups?

Don: I've spoken with the microfiche support staff. They tell me users are people looking to understand a decision. I also understand the legislature like Wall Street, that it's understood by the participants but not fully understood by casual observers.

Essentially, the system will translate the dialect of the legislature into a language comprehensible to outsiders and posterity—so there is no particular constituency in the present, no focus group immediately in sight. Hence the concern with capturing so much content and adding significance to this in the form of context. K-LISS's vision depends on defining the entire architecture.

Reconstruction is a whole other level than authentication. It seeks to engage persons (e-democracy) and capture and document their involvement. There's no appraisal for content because the architecture's value is defined in terms of the interdependence of the content.

Bob: You're after significance. Not just what happened but how it happened.

Sean: References the Open House⁶ project as a possible means of developing lowest-common-denominator schema. Shawn O'Reilly's Web 2.0 concept of "architecture of participation" can also be leveraged in legislatures.

There's a fast-paced exchange here that touches on the following: standards and emphasis on XML; a very minimal schema (~7 entities); Web 2.0 can rely on persistent normative identifiers, thereby allowing everyone else to use the material; state can support that use over time, something consistent; support for the chain-of-custody argument; publishing these entities with the basic information, not just HTML pages.

Don: The legislature's cost/benefit is its increased throughput, more work is done. But the measure of achievement is not limited to only the passing of a bill; rather, it's the initiative, the democratic process that percolates through the system over time.

Dave: Or it simply speeds up the process. Waiting on conference committee reports holds up the session. Because of that lag time, deals made in committee come undone by the time an initiative is voted on in the main chamber.

At this point, the substantive discussion concluded. Bob thanked the participants for their time and attention, and summarized what next steps would be taken.

⁶ <http://www.theopenhouseproject.com/about/>