

Appendix B: Background of the Trustworthy Information Systems Project

The Trustworthy Information Systems (TIS) project grew out of a grant to the Minnesota State Archives from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission to establish an electronic records program. The funding was used, in part, to hire an additional staff person, and work got underway in March 1998.

Support was solicited from state government organizations, and partnerships were formed with two key groups: the Information Policy Council (IPC) and the Data Issues Group for Information Technology (DIG-IT). Organized by statute, the IPC is charged with encouraging “cooperation and collaboration among state and local governments in developing intergovernmental communication and information systems” in Minnesota (Chapter 202, Article 3, Section 7, Subdivision 3, 1997). Its membership consists of commissioner-level staff and Chief Information Officers of state agencies and constitutional offices. A subcommittee of the IPC, DIG-IT is open to any state employee with an interest in such topics as database administration, data modeling, and data administration. The group’s activities center around promoting the importance of data as a vital state asset and facilitating data sharing, data security, and data access within the state.

The first two phases of the project involved developing the criteria set and testing it for practicality against actual government information systems (refer to Appendix F). State Archives staff promoted the TIS project and sought collaborators by giving talks to government entities and by offering an informational brochure. By October 1999, the State Archives had worked with the following agencies: the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency; the Minnesota Department of Finance; the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning; the Minnesota Department of Transportation; and the City of Minneapolis.

Phases three and four of the project are implementation and education. Implementation centers around web-enabled delivery of TIS products. Early on, a general discussion of trustworthy information systems, the criteria set, and the bibliography were made available on the State Archives’ World Wide Web site. With sponsorship from the IPC and in consultation with Signorelli & Associates, Inc., a Saint Paul-based technical writing firm, these items were enhanced and re-worked into the present handbook for wide distribution to government agencies.

Given the rapid rate of technological change and the consequences for both archival preservation and routine government operation, education has been, and will continue to be, a major component of the project. This educational effort will be two-fold. State Archives staff will seek to stay abreast of pertinent topics and methods through such means as taking classes, remaining active participants in groups like DIG-IT, and collaborating with consultants and the academic community. One result will be periodic updates to this handbook to maintain its currency. As well, the staff will help inform others by giving presentations at conferences, speaking to interested organizations, and meeting with representatives from government agencies. Other means of education will include hosting workshops and focus groups on specific topics, issues, and technologies (e.g., data warehousing and metadata), and posting informational pieces on the State Archives web site (e.g., lists of online resources).