

Minnesota House of Representatives Document Type Analysis

Summary

Bob Horton, Shawn Rounds, and Beth Lighthipe, Minnesota Historical Society, met with Robbie LaFleur, Legislative Reference Library, Mike Speiker, Brenda Van Dyck, Pat Murphy, Don Crosby, Al Mathiowetz, Barry LaGrave, House of Representatives, and Greg Hubinger, Legislative Coordinating Commission, on 3 November 2005. The meeting began by introducing house staff to the project and answering any questions. Discussion about legislative documents that the house staff creates and/or manages followed.

House Journal

The house journal is an important publication that is created daily. It records the actions of the legislature in session for that particular day and is considered in its final printed and bound form, the official, legal record of all floor action. [Before the final, published journals are created the Chief Clerk must approve any changes made to the journal. In the meantime, the first and second, etc. versions of the journal are posted online at the end of each day. Once the final version of the journal is approved it is posted online, replacing all other versions.]

The house journals are available online beginning with the 1994 Legislative session. These are created in Word and converted to HTML and PDF. The 1995-1996 and 1997-1998 Journal of the House are also available online in HTML and PDF. House journals from following sessions are offered online in HTML and PDF formats: 1999-2000, 2001-2002, 2001 and 2002 Special Sessions, 2003-2004, and 2005-2006. From 2003 to the present the journals were converted from Word to PDF. Journals prior to that were created in Word Perfect. It is important to note that the bill status system is tied to the journal.

Bill Summaries

Bill summaries are created by the House Research Department. Summaries are generally prepared for bills heard in public hearings. The bill summaries from 1998 are saved as PDFs. Summaries created since 1999 are posted online once they are converted from Microsoft Word to HTML. The house maintains each version of the house bill summaries and offers all versions on the web (right now these are kept online indefinitely). Bill summaries that become laws are never taken offline.

Bill Status System

The Bill Status system is an Oracle database that goes back to 1993-1994 as part of the RO system. It is also used by the Senate. The house replicates the current year for internal purposes.

Act Summaries

Act summaries are created by the House Research Department to give the public and legislators a basic overview of bills that became laws (chapters). Act summaries since the 1999 legislative session are available online in HTML.

Committee minutes/books

A secretary submits committee minutes two days after the meeting. These are in a SQL database in text format without agendas or attachments. Hardcopy committee notebooks with attachments are also created. They are very dynamically converted to HTML and posted online. Minutes for all house standing committees are available online from the 2005-2006 session, most of the materials created in committee are working documents and are not something the house wants to archive.

Fiscal notes, fiscal tracking documents, spreadsheets, publications

Fiscal notes, fiscal tracking documents, and spreadsheets are done by the Fiscal Analysis Department and are posted online as PDFs on the house website, however the house does not own these documents. The Fiscal Analysis Department also offers the publications entitled, *Money Matters* and *Issues Briefs*, which summarize fiscal issues and topics related to the Legislature.

House media coverage

Selected committee meetings and floor sessions are taped and offered on the web to the public. SQL data goes along with video (2003-). Digital video online content is offered as Windows media player files (56k quality or lower) back to 1999. Metadata added to the audio/video files that are converted to digital format. Currently a retention schedule is not in place.

Digital audio is available from 2000 in FTR, a windows media format (broken down wave format). The house started using mp3 in 2005. These audio files are available online.

New Laws

At the end of every session the house publishes *New Laws*. It summarizes legislative activity including new laws, vetoed bills, and other items of interest that session. The House Public Information Services department posts the issues online as PDF files, now database-driven. Issues from 1993 are available.

Session Weekly

Session Weekly is a newsletter that summarizes House committee and floor action for each week during session. Issues from 1995 are offered online as PDF files, 1994 issues of *Session Weekly* are available online as text files.

Session Daily

Session Daily issues are posted online daily as HTML files. Contain dynamic links to committee information, bills, video and audio files, legislators, and other specific related sites.

RSS Feeds

The house offers RSS feeds for the *Session Daily*, house standing committee audio, and bills. It requires an RSS Reader to access the feeds.