

# Revisor's Office Workflow and Document Type Analysis

## Summary

Shawn Rounds and Beth Lighthipe, Minnesota Historical Society, met with Michele Timmons and Tim Orr, Office of the Revisor of Statutes (ROS), on 27 September 2005. Discussion focused on the ROS's paper and electronic workflow and associated document types. Analysis of the XTEND system will take place in the first quarter of 2006.

In summary, Michele and Tim identified a number of document types that they would like to have archived at the SDSC through the SRB/gridbrick system:

- Final edited session laws
  - tables
  - index
- Final edited statutes
  - tables
  - index
- Administrative rules
  - tables

Michele and Tim expressed concern about the security of the SDSC system in light of the fact that many of the working documents within XTEND are confidential. Part of this project should be to examine this issue in greater detail and to make recommendations for these situations. In the meantime, the ROS will not be archiving any confidential documents at the SDSC. This will result in only a partial backup for disaster recovery purposes (the rest is captured in daily system backups stored locally).

## Workflow Notes

The ROS maintains a parallel system of paper and electronic files for bills moving through the legislative process. Quality control tasks are recorded on the paper folders, which are color-coded by document type.

The primary role of the ROS is that:

The Office of the Revisor of Statutes and staff from other legislative offices work with legislators in putting the idea for a new law into proper legal form. The Revisor's Office is responsible for assuring that the proposal's form complies with the rules of both bodies before the bill can be introduced into the Minnesota House of Representatives and the Minnesota Senate.<sup>1</sup>

## Bill Drafts

Bill drafts are created in the XTEND system and will be in XML format beginning with the 2006 session. Bill drafts are confidential. The ROS will store them in their own database and possibly consider archiving them at the SDSC at a later date. This is unlikely, however, since they are

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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Office. (2000, March 29). *Steps a Bill Goes Through to Become Law*. Retrieved December 19, 2005, from <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/howbill.asp>

non-public, confidential records. 2005 bill drafts are being converted from a proprietary file format into XML. The ROS keeps bills that die or fail in the system so that they can pull them up and reuse them if needed. The ROS has a retention schedule for paper bill files, which stipulates destruction after two biennium.

The ROS assigns an ID number for each draft in chronological order. This ID number is not the same as the House or Senate file numbers, which are assigned when the bill is introduced. The ROS ID number consists of a two-digit year code plus a four-digit number that is consecutively assigned (e.g., 05-0001, 05-0002).

House Research and Senate Counsel also drafts bills and will be using the XTEND system. The bills they draft go to the ROS at some point, where they are assigned an ROS identification number and proofed. Each bill draft goes through a triple check. First it goes to a drafting attorney, then to a non-attorney legal editor, and next to a drafting and editing assistant for data entry and proofing. After that it goes back to a legal editor for quality control checks, then to the drafting attorney, and finally to another attorney for peer review before the bill leaves the Revisor's Office. Quality control tasks include checking for repealed language, spelling, correct citations and cross-references, correct title, consistent internal references, and statutes.

Each bill draft is recorded in the "Bill Track" database. This is an Oracle database used exclusively by ROS staff. The database contains confidential information. There are no near-term plans to archive this database at the SDSC.

Once the final bill draft is done, the bill is "jacketed." Both houses receive identical copies with the same ROS identification number in color-coded jackets (yellow for Senate, green for House). The ROS delivers the bill to the legislators who are sponsoring it ("authors"), and the authors introduce the bill in their house. Both the House and Senate assign their own ID numbers to the bill, using different schemes than the ROS. Once the bill is introduced, it is considered a public record.

### Committee Reports

After the bill is introduced and has received its first reading, it goes to a legislative committee. The committee will review the bill and return it to the house with a recommendation for action in the form of a committee report. A committee report recommends whether or not the bill should pass, and if so, gives suggestions on how to amend the bill. The ROS completes the official committee report out of the XTEND system. Committee report numbers are based on the house or senate file ones.

As stated in the *Steps a Bill Goes Through to Become Law*:

After the full House or Senate accepts the committee report, the bill has its second reading and is placed on the House agenda called the General Register or the Senate agenda called General Orders. (A committee can recommend that non-controversial bills bypass the General Register or General Orders and go onto the Consent Calendar, where bills usually pass without debate.) After this point, House and Senate procedures differ slightly.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

In the House, the General Register serves as a parking lot where bills await action by the full body. Bills chosen to appear on the Calendar for the Day or the Fiscal Calendar are drawn from the General Register. In the Senate, a different procedure is used. Bills are listed on the General Orders agenda. Senate members, acting as the "committee of the whole," have a chance to debate the issue and offer amendments on the bill. Afterwards, they vote to recommend: passage of the bill, progress (delay action), or further committee action. And sometimes they recommend that a bill not pass. From here, the bill is placed on the Calendar.<sup>3</sup>

### Amendments

As stated before, the second reading of the bills occurs after the body adopts the committee report. The house then discusses the bill and votes on any amendments coming from the report or from the floor. If there are amendments to the bill, the bill returns to the ROS. Amendments are created by the ROS in the XTEND system. From this point, the ROS will refer to the bill by its Senate or House file number, although it can still be pulled up in XTEND by its original ROS-assigned ID. Bill and amendment drafts are saved (even if the bill dies in the committee or house) and are confidential.

### Engrossed Bills

The ROS will engross the bill (add amendments) and return it to the house. It is considered an engrossed bill until it is passed in both houses. XTEND has an auto-engrossment feature.

### Conference Committee Reports

The third reading of the bill occurs after the ROS adds any amendments to the bill and the house has finished debating. If the bill passes, it goes to the second house where it must be passed in identical form. If both houses do not agree on the content, a conference committee may be appointed to resolve differences. Members of both houses discuss and suggest amendments to the bill. A conference committee report is returned to both houses, and the bill is voted on again. The ROS is responsible for creating the committee report, which is generated from the XTEND system.

### Bill Side-by-Sides and Comparison Reports

The ROS also produces side-by-sides or comparison reports if either house requests them so that both houses can compare bills, facilitating conference committee work. Comparison reports are also requested by the House or Senate desks to compare House and Senate companion bills. These documents are created in the XTEND system as working documents with no life beyond their session.

### Enrollments

Once a bill passes in both houses, it is assigned a chapter number in addition to its house or senate file number. The ROS is responsible for the final version of the bill. Once it passes, it

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

becomes a session law unless the governor vetoes it as a whole or does a line-item veto (in which case the ROS edits the bill).

### Session Laws

The final edited session laws (not the final enrolled laws) are the top priority the ROS wants to archive at the SDSC. The ROS has each year of session laws in electronic format (e.g., HTML and XML) beginning with 1994. Sessions laws are printed as well as put online. The ROS wants to explore cost-effective options for scanning old session laws and statute books (e.g., in-house vs. out-sourced).

### Minnesota Statutes

Minnesota Statutes are offered in both printed bound volumes and online XHTML documents. The bound volumes are printed in their entirety every even numbered year. The XHTML documents are updated annually. The ROS would like to archive these at the SDSC annually.

### Indices and Tables

The ROS would like to archive the indices to the statutes and session laws at the SDSC. The software application Cindex, from Indexing Research, is used to create the indexes in ASCII, which is converted to HTML. Various statute, session law, and administrative rule tables are created in XTEND.

### Administrative Rules

Administrative Rules are put online weekly and are frequently updated. The files are still in the ROS's legacy system, but will be moved in XTEND. The ROS would like to archive these at the SDSC.

### House and Senate Journals

Journals are the official, legal record of the history of the bill. Created by House and Senate desk staff, they record details of each day of the session, including data pulled out of the ROS's system. The House produces its journals in Microsoft Word, while the Senate creates its journals in XTEND. The ROS does not have administrative control of the journals.

## **Other Notes**

### Web Server

The ROS web site offers session laws (including older ones), final statutes (only current), and administrative rules (only current). These are considered unofficial versions; the official copies reside within the XTEND's content management system.

## Bill Status System

Each bill introduced in the house or senate is entered in the “Bill Status” database. Significant legislative actions on the bill are also recorded in the database. The database is an Oracle database and is available to the public on the legislature’s web site. The Bill Status database contains information from the 1995 legislative session to the present.

This database is a candidate for archiving at the SDSC in the future.

## Other Issues for Consideration

We will get the experience needed through this project to look at archiving more document types and systems in the future.

- Explore cost-effective options for scanning old session laws and statute books (e.g., in-house vs. out-sourced).
- Points of capture from XTEND system?
- Metadata for final versions sent to the SDSC.
  - What’s currently attached to the files?
  - How to add metadata?
  - Directory structures?
  - Naming schemes?
  - Other documentation?
- Role of XTEND’s content management system
- When do files get sent to the SDSC?
  - Daily? Weekly? Monthly? Annually?
  - What is the process?
  - Documentation of transactions?
  - Q/A process?
- Explore security controls for data resident in the SDSC
  - How are security controls implemented?
  - Test security controls using other grid-bricks.
- Explore archiving an Oracle database