

# Brainstorming the ideal state document system

Note: This handout has been edited with comments from the focus group session, shown in a different, indented font.

## What are the purposes of a state document system?

**Access.** Quick cataloging needed, Web access to the full text needed when available.

- Metatags are needed; the records should be on the Web. On the other hand, one attendee spoke up for the value of having records in a catalog, to limit the number of hits.

**Accountability.** Are mandated documents being produced? How is state money being spent? How are state programs being documented? How are citizens informed about the actions and programs of state government?

- Joyce asked whether “How is money being spent?” meant that LRL has a statutory responsibility to tally money in some way. We do not. However, in the LRL acquisition system, we have just added a field for the cost of a report. Agencies are required to report the cost of *required* reports (MS 3.197, at <http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/stats/3/197.html>). Since there was discussion during the 2001 session about the amounts of money spent on consultants and reports by agencies, we thought this would be a good additional field. We could then run reports and discover the total costs of all reports submitted by Human Services, for example. Keep in mind, however, that not all agencies are thorough in reporting costs on their reports.
- Could mandated reports be required to be published on the Web?
- Legislative Library staff have felt that the universe of mandated documents might be a good set to use for experimentation in setting up increased digital access. (About a 1/3 of the total number of state documents received are mandated by a statute or session law.)
- Does the public want easy Web access or print copies of reports? There was a feeling that many want print, want to check out the item and read it on paper. Web access *does* broaden access.
- It was suggested that Web access broadens access and means the item is available immediately to the Library, that libraries could print copies on demand and then check them out. This can be difficult, messy, and pushes the production costs on to the libraries. Checks and balances are needed to ensure that the needs of print users are protected. If statutory language was drafted to mandate some documents be published on the Web would still need to mention print requirements.
- The legislature might want to prohibit paper to save costs. Mandating paper *and* web publishing would be a hard sell.
- Bob Horton suggested a pilot project that would determine costs may be helpful in selling the idea of web publications.
- Expecting LRL to print all web only documents is unreasonable.

- Robbie LaFleur stated that not all mandated reports need to be on the web forever since some have little public interest.
- Currently agencies determine format.

**Current awareness for users.** What are the most recent materials being produced?

- GPO Access does not help build a paper collection.
- Can North Star be the access point to new documents?
- PALS is the access point for a lot of state documents now.
- An idea: A list of new resources/publications (CORC records) could be built off the main page of North Star. The documents would show up here before fully cataloged.
- Even a statement on North Star that PALS is the place to look for state documents would be helpful.
- Andrew from Planning has no faith in North Star. Should we do own database with metadata?
- The person who publishes the report could fill out a web form for metadata.
- Bob Horton agreed with general disappointment in North but felt it is very important for librarians to continue to lobby for improvements.
- Do we need a link to MN Resources on North Star?
- An idea: a query on PALS for a webpage of state documents. Canned queries of PALS could be set up on a Web page to lead to state documents.
- We need to learn more about the capabilities of Aleph, the new MNLINK catalog.
- Andrew from Planning: it needs to be easier for webmasters/publishers to add metadata. Librarians would do final checks
- Idea: current awareness service for state documents by subject. This is an area that LRL staff are investigating, with initial release to legislative staff and members. The LRL acquisitions database could be enhanced to send e-mail messages when new reports are obtained.

**Collection development.** Libraries want to acquire print documents.

**Archival storage.** The research use of documents over time.

It costs about \$22,000 annually to produce the microfiche through DocuComm.

Administrative costs are about \$3,000 of that total.

- Roll film is cheaper, **but don't go there!** The group was very much against moving from microfiche to roll microfilm with several documents. Roll film is "hell" to use. Many libraries do not have the correct film readers for roll microfilm. It would mean an investment in indexing items on a roll. It would mean teaching users about two formats to use.
- There are feelings of some members of the focus group that "archives" should not be part of the current discussion. That is the role of MHS

archive and it is assumed that it is being done. But note: the Archives does not have print copies of all the state documents, and don't try to acquire them all. MHS Archives keeps all of the fiche. Rather than archiving we need to focus on Julie Wallace's astute phrase "**assuring long term access for the public.**"

- Currently DocuComm system results in the state billing itself.
- Robbie LaFleur – LRL would be willing to investigate the possibility of lobbying the legislature for central funding for microfiche.
- We need the fiche for now because it is our only long term access.
- Randi Madisen – interest in a state document is usually about 10 years.
- During the microfilming process, an electronic file can be created. DocuComm can create a TIF version from the microfiche. LRL is testing 5 or so documents for TIF conversion. OCR will be part of the test.
- It would be nice if the Dept. of Administration would create a "document management system".
- LRL will poll the depository libraries and see if they really want the fiche deposits. According to Anne Whittemore at DocuComm, the costs of the extra sets of fiche are "not insignificant." We need to be sure all of the depository libraries want to continue with the program.

### **What are the elements of an ideal state documents system?**

- 1) **An effective acquisitions system to discover new documents.** The system should include tracking mandated reports and discovering agency-generated non-mandated reports.
- 2) **Current awareness tools**, so that library users, librarians, and citizens can discover the newest documents. Would/should this include electronic mailing lists, or a page similar to the GPO? For libraries that would like to add electronic titles of Minnesota state documents to their own collections, compile a list of "New Electronic Titles," similar to the federal list on GPO Access.  
[http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/locators/net/index.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/locators/net/index.html)
- 3) **Timely identification and notification** of newly-published documents, with ordering information, for library collection development purposes.
  - **Varied and effective access** to the bibliographic information, *and* the documents.
  - **Preservation of state documents.**