Chair's Column
by Susan Southworth, Connecticut
LRL Chair

How many people can boast of a job that continues to interest them even after more than thirty years in the field, as mine does? I think back to the 1950's classic "The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit" with its uninspiring representation of the 9-to-5 routine and am intensely grateful for the variety and depth of responsibilities and the daily mental stimulation, as well as an unflaggingly appreciative (well, almost!) clientele afforded to us as librarians. However, despite the praise enumerated above, every now and again we all need the professional corollary to a bottle of Surge or Jolt. Happily, NCSL has recently provided a triple dose.

It was our Professional Development Seminar, "Legislative Libraries in a Digital Age," held in Sacramento. Numerous speakers outlined opportunities for us to expand our services, creating systems to both assist and increase our client base. Hopefully the write-ups provided will give a sense of the meetings to those of you unable to attend. A heartfelt thank you to all who contributed.

Second were the luncheon comments of NCSL Staff Chair John Phelps at Sacramento. John has such an honest and abiding love of history and of legislative purpose that if you are lucky enough to hear him weave those passions together, you can’t help but be infected by his enthusiasm and drive. So many of us asked John to repeat his thoughts that he graciously provided the staff section with a copy for this issue.

Third is the provocative work done by LSCC’s Task Force on Legislatures of the Future (including our own Clare Cholik) under the capable guidance of Max Arinder. The task force created four scenarios of the legislature of the 21st century for the purposes of discussion—and what terrific vehicles they are for lively debate. No single scenario is likely to accurately reflect any specific state legislature in the next century, but taken as a group they present a host of issues for our branch of government to address, debate and respond to. Go to the NCSL Web page at www.ncsl.org/legis/lscf/ft-a2025.htm for a full presentation of the four scenarios, and try applying them to your home state.

The California Research Bureau staff put together a particularly informative and thought provoking package of articles; one that I highly commend to all of you is from Forbes Magazine (10/4/99) entitled "The lost land of serendip." While accepting the promise and potential of electronic information, it bemoans the loss of the "serendipity factor"—that knowledge we glean as we browse and wend our way toward our research goal. More than what we learn sometimes is how we learn it. Unfortunately, this enjoyment of stumbling upon a new arena, this creation of a fascinating potpourri of otherwise undiscovered interests is falling prey to the shortened attention span and demand for instant gratification so prevalent in our users today. Part of our professional responsibility should be to keep the Serendipity Dodo alive and well, even if only in ourselves. That’s my New Year’s resolution.

A healthy and happy 2000 to all; for those curmudgeons like me, we can celebrate the millennium next December 31st!

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LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH LIBRARIANS STAFF SECTION
National Conference of State Legislatures
1560 Broadway, Suite 700, Denver, CO 80202 303/830-2200
Chair: Susan Southworth, Legislative Library, Connecticut
NCSL Staff: Rita Thaemert
Notes on the Tour of the California State Capitol
by Robbie LaFleur, Minnesota
Thursday, October 14

Bill Behnk, a long-time California Legislature staffer who only recently defected to the Executive branch, enthusiastically shared his knowledge of the Capitol building and the Legislature on a tour of the chambers and offices. In the Assembly chambers tall windows flank one wall. Natural light fills the room and palm trees sway outside. The color schemes of the chambers follow those of the British Parliament; the green of the Assembly is the same as the House of Commons, the red of the Senate follows the House of Lords.

Assembly members have been voting electronically since 1935(!). In contrast, the Senate still calls out for a roll call vote (which the desk staff log electronically). Senators have laptops on their desks that do not leave the chambers. They follow legislative business on the laptops, but do not have access to the Internet or e-mail. Their rules also forbid phones on the floor.

We also visited the (cramped!) Capitol offices of the California Reference Bureau librarians, a legislator’s office, and the larger committee rooms. On this interesting tour I was struck by how state legislatures and the issues they face can be so similar. However, I overheard a comment in the hallway that put me firmly in California, far from Minnesota. Two handsome men in suits stood earnestly in conversation, one turning to the other and saying, "And then the Hollywood folks met with the Disney people...."

Digital Age in State Capitols
Bill Behnk, Legislative Affairs Coordinator
California Department of Information Technology
Thursday, October 14
by Jonetta Douglas, Iowa

We were very excited to have Bill Behnk as our luncheon speaker. He has been a long time supporter of the LRL Staff Section. Bill moved from the California Legislature after serving as the Coordinator of Legislative Information Systems for the past 13 years. He previously spent 17 years with the Office of the Legislative Analyst. He now works with the State of California on information technology issues including Y2K, legislation, budget issues and major information technology issues in each of the state’s agencies.

Bill spoke about changes in the way information is gathered. He told us that there is no verbatim record made of the legislative process in California, as is the case in several other states.

Bill said that in his view the Legislature has two main functions. One is to make laws. This process has been helped along greatly by automation. Bill said they have been through about three generations of technology. Their Data Center is, as you might guess, extremely large. The Data Center serves about 3,000 personal computers as well as other electronic components. Voting in California has been done electronically since 1935 and other automation has steadily progressed.

Automation provided by the Assembly is closely monitored. The systems for each of chamber are currently separate, but the ultimate goal is to have a single database or data warehouse where all of the information will be stored. Continuing to move in the current direction, all of the information will finally be on the Internet. Most of us seem to be moving toward paper obsolescence (although it will probably never happen totally) and electronic government is the wave of the future. Bill made the point that although the technology does exist right now to draft and move a bill through the legislative process without touch by human hands, the comfort zone provided by the use of paper outweighs the urge for technology.

The other function of the legislature that Bill referred to is the function of getting elected. And although the use of technology has moved into that arena also, we did not spend much time in this area.

Tour of the California Data Center
Thursday, October 14
by Robbie LaFleur, Minnesota

Visitors to the California Legislative Data Center can find much to envy, whether it’s the ample help desk staff, well-appointed training rooms, robust servers,
or sheer amount of cutting edge equipment. The Data Center supports the computer needs of Capitol area legislative offices, as well as legislative district offices spanning the state. Staff support 1600 Assembly PC’s, 1200 for the Senate, 300 for the Legislative Council Bureau, and 300 at the Legislative Data Center, as well as increasing numbers of laptops and PDA’s. They maintain a fiber optic cable network and 200 servers in the Capitol area. Eight hundred additional servers support legislative work across the state.

Data Center staff provide and support a standard suite of software and have made "great strides in getting the two houses software-similar." They provide users with training in groups and on-one-on sessions. Term limits have increased training needs in the past few years, with more legislator and staff turnover.

Staff at the loading dock recently logged in a shipment of 3000 computers, an upgrade for the Assembly Y2K project. Center staff then thoroughly checked them in their staging area, added a standard software configuration, and delivered them to the users, who should be able to use them with no problems. And of course that doesn’t count the 300 laptops and the countless peripherals—hubs, routers, and the like. Our tour guides, Carol Scarrone and Lynn Keys, said they try to plan these projects for the short windows of slow time at the Legislature. "It always looks good on paper," they added.

As the tour continued through the building, we were amazed at the scale of the Data Center operations. The "Command Center" is an impressive console, staffed around the clock. Day shift staff monitor systems and troubleshoot; night staff are responsible for the back-ups. The Data Center temperature controlled equipment room houses an impressive array of hardware, including a 2.7 terabyte Automated Tape Library System.

The Y2K lab looks like a simple office housing a number of computers; staff have worked hard to get all mission-critical applications ready for the millennium. In the "Resource Center," staff use scanners, digital cameras, Photoshop and Front Page to create graphics for legislative publications.

Legislative Reference: Our History, Our Dream, Our Challenge
Thursday, October 14
by Marilyn Gutstromson, South Dakota

Dr. Kevin Starr, State Librarian of California, in his conversation with legislative research librarians, recalled the early days of civilization when libraries were more than just storehouses of information. They served to also design and implement programs. In time, as libraries became primarily attached to universities, they grew passive. They gathered and organized information, then offered to retrieve it as requested. Dr. Starr calls for a return to the library's original proactive function.

In dealing with document storage and retrieval, libraries are already intrinsically linked to the entities they serve. From that natural position they are poised to move into program design and development. The Pasadena Public Library, which places support staff in the city’s municipal research offices, offers an example of that linkage in action. The California Research Bureau also illustrates Dr. Starr’s point. As legislative staff faced personnel cuts in the early 1990s, the California Research Bureau met the information crisis; the agency is now part of the California culture.

Currently, the California Research Bureau is working with the state’s health and welfare staffs to assess information needs prior to designing computer programs.

Though technology now makes seemingly infinite information instantly available, librarians play an integral part in shaping modern society, the interrelationship between information and programming demands their unbiased attention. Dr. Starr urges libraries to re-create themselves with imaginative personnel who understand patterns of programming. By seizing design and programmatic opportunities, libraries can impact the future by returning to their proactive mode.

Legislative Reference in a Digital Age
Friday, October 15
by Jackie Curro, Maryland

Anne Lipow, CEO of Library Solutions (www.library-solutions.com); Donna Scheeder, Deputy Director, Information Research Division, CRS; and Christi Henningfeld, Current Awareness Librarian, California Research Bureau, discussed interesting developments in digital library reference
and gave examples of some pro-active efforts to provide information to patrons.

Ms. Lipow, whose focus is public and academic libraries, described new cooperative efforts to provide “after hours” reference services to patrons, also mentioning LC’s 24 x 7 project (see: www.loc.gov/rr/digiref). She discussed a project using CU-SeeMe technology that allows the librarian and patron to see each other on their monitors, lets the librarian direct both computers to a Web site, and allows the librarian to walk the patron through the resource.

Ms. Scheeder explained that the jobs of CRS librarians and state legislative reference libraries share the feature of dealing with a high volume of requests and short deadlines, while being non-partisan and confidential in nature. She explained how the CRS staff anticipate issues, develop the “Electronic Briefing Book” (which replaces the printed INFO PAC), and try to bring resources as close as possible to the users, using the CRS page on the Congressional Intranet. According to Ms. Scheeder, CRS librarians are pleased with these developments, because they are doing interesting work on the Internet and answering more challenging reference questions.

She suggested seeing Gary Price’s Web site (gwis2.circ.gwu.edu/~gprice/crs.htm) for CRS reports or call members of Congress to request a specific report.

Ms. Henningfeld described the “Studies in the News,” a weekly, annotated bibliography of reports or studies that have been mentioned in the press during the week and is sent to the members and staff. It soon will be on their Web page with a search system that will allow for searching the “Studies” from 1992. The California Research Bureau is also developing an after hours information Web service.

In all, the presentations left us thinking of how we might implement similar information services in our own libraries.

Resources Beyond Our Walls
Friday, October 16
by Susan Southworth

Mark Parker of the California State Library preceded his presentation on the Library of California (LoC) by outlining several technology-driven changes in libraries:

- improved access at the local level
- access shifting from collection to online
- changes in the type of services provided
- libraries involved in their own electronic publishing
- enhanced linkage of libraries to educational process in the minds of public policymakers
- development of regional and statewide resources, e.g. Library of California

The Library of California is not a unique concept; rather it follows the lead of other academic universities serving as portals, such as the Virtual Library of Virginia. While the enabling legislation allocated $5 million for telecommunications, licensing, loan reimbursement and regional network development, this sum had to be stretched over 8000 potential sites.

The Z39.50 standard of access is required to search the database using local client software across interfaces; to search multiple databases at one pass; to provide item level information upon full implementation; and for the extension to image and digital files. Implementation plans beyond Z39.50 include regional server clusters (statewide telecommunications isn’t feasible), backbone development, and regional gateway authentication schemes.

The LoC of the future looks toward user completed electronic holds and ILLs, electronic document retrieval; mediated access to collections, regionally licensed databases at reduced cost, and an interlibrary loan reimbursement plan to offset costs to the lending libraries.

Several allied technology funding programs are of interest to libraries: the California Teleconnect Fund, which can be stacked on top of the federal E-rate program; the Gates Library Initiative money, targeted to reduce the digital divide; and Library Services and Technology Act funding. LCSA funds provide opportunities for regional automation, for partnering urban to rural library service, for digitization projects (such as the CA Digital Library of Japanese-American relocation and the CA heritage resources project), retrospective conversion of specialized areas significant to CA’s history, culture and society, and a 24/7 reference call center in which librarians log in to a central server creating a reference pool with blackboard and keyboard interaction with patrons.
Following the potential of the Library of California (the promise of the California Digital Library DL), presented by Patricia Cruse. The CDL opened its digital doors in January 1997, with its core mission to support the research of the University of California. The electronic medium is an ideal vehicle for resource sharing, complementing print holdings.

The CDL is considered a co-library to the other nine University of California libraries, while also part of a larger system of digital libraries including OhioLink, TexShare, Digital Library Federation. Since its inception, progress can be seen in the provision of expensive databases at reduced costs, online availability of primary archival materials, the creation of Melvyl and California periodicals databases and the provision of electronic journals, abstracting and indexing. One innovative venture is a Government Information Initiative to provide better access to government as it shifts from print to electronic environment, by creating its own mechanism for preserving materials as well as its own content, thereby reducing university reliance on commercial (priced) databases to retrieve government information.

Two aspects of this project were covered in detail. The first is the capture of California electronic data from a pilot group of state agencies (Legislative Analysts, Secretary of State elections data, Education Department). Second, the establishment of a Web-based California Data Warehouse to integrate data resources in a variety of formats, allowing comparative studies over geographic regions with guaranteed long-term access. Third step is the creation of a Web-based interface for CD-ROMs. Next will come a catalog of California electronic information, encouraging resource sharing among all the individual campuses, and including bibliographic access to previously uncatalogued items. Finally, the creation of a University of California Government Information Web page for simple and direct access to government resources, to eliminate duplication, and to act as a mechanism for further cooperation.

Present were attendees of the LRL conference and guests.

Chair's Report
Susan expressed thanks and appreciation to the California librarians for the excellent programs the past two days.

LSCC Reports

John Phelps, chair of the Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee, LSCC, spoke about the ongoing work of the committee. He reported on the Legislatures of the Future Task Force, stating that one agreement of the task force members is the importance of attracting and retaining good legislative staff. Another LSCC topic is the design of legislative chambers. NCSL is planning to publish a book featuring architectural design in each of the states' chambers. LSCC also has an advisory group to study the NCSL Web site and suggest improvements.

Mr. Phelps spoke about the Agency for International Development, AID, which is assisting the newly formed legislative council for the emerging country of Palestine. Donna Merrill is collecting materials useful to the council. You may e-mail her at dmerrill@palnet.com if you have books or reports you think might be appropriate to donate. Provide a brief description, and she will check with the council to see if the material is needed. AID will pay shipping costs.

Tom Tedcastle, immediate past Staff Chair, spoke on Project Citizen, a civics education program designed to highlight the legislative branch of government. A coordinator in each state will work with teachers and students to promote interest in legislative processes and service. Contact Karl Kurtz at NCSL if you or others in your bureau are interested in serving as a state coordinator for the project.

Clare Cholik, South Dakota, is a member of the Legislatures of the Future Task Force and reported on the activities. Based upon the futures research they did last year, task force members compiled four possible scenarios that illustrate what state legislatures might face in the year 2025. At the fall meeting of the NCSL Executive Committee and the LSCC, the legislators and staff in attendance reviewed the scenarios and discussed the implications of each, the likelihood of each, and how legislatures might best prepare for the future.
The task force will now concentrate on compiling a case study of the work it has completed and also on compiling a "how to" guide to assist state legislatures that may want to perform futures research on their own legislature or on policy issues. For further information about the scenarios, go to www.ncsl.org/legis/lscf/ft-a2025.htm. The studies are scheduled for presentation at the NCSL Annual Meeting in 2000.

Annual Meeting Overview
There was a brief discussion about the meetings. Several LRL members reported they liked the panel format at meetings because of interactive features.

Future PDS Sites
Rita Thaevert, NCSL staff, reported that South Carolina cannot host the 2000 PDS meetings. Suzi Hughes, Louisiana, invited the group to Baton Rouge for next year's meeting. The 2001 PDS is scheduled to be held in Richmond, Virginia, and 2002 in North Dakota. Informal discussion and ideas for the 2000 meeting followed.

Core Collection Update
Jonetta Douglas, Iowa, handed out the updated document titled Core Reference Collection for Legislative Libraries. She recognized the committee members for their work in the updating project - Beth Furbush, Montana; Marilyn Johnson, North Dakota; Dale Steele, Arizona; and David Harrell, Oregon. The list is available from the LRL Web site and will be updated electronically. Notify Rita about updates. There was a motion to adopt the list, with meeting corrections. Motion seconded and passed.

Legislative History Project
Attendees discussed the problems and needs in updating entries for the LRL legislative history project: states differ in their interpretation of what constitutes a legislative history, changing availability of the materials, and old entries outdated as a result of tracking legislation through Internet sources. Susan suggested the information be placed in the public area of the NCSL Web site and linked to the states' legislative Web pages. Each state entry needs to include the revision date. A difficulty lies in finding someone in each state to be responsible for updating the information.

Misc
Rita reported that the NCSL sections' Web pages will be changed to a standard format. Linkage between the pages will thus be more uniform.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Remarks by John Phelps
Friday, October 15, 1999

I am John Phelps, Clerk of the Florida House, and serving this year as Staff Chair of NCSL.

Over the past six weeks it has been my pleasure to travel to meetings of the staff sections of NCSL. These visits have given me some fresh insights into our business. Meeting attendance is at an all time high and programs are becoming increasingly valuable. I believe something is building for legislative staff, something important. But before getting into that let me place it in context.

NCSL was created in 1975, a time when state legislatures were minor players in the fabric of American government. Over the past 30 years there has been a dramatic change. Our legislatures today are increasingly influential at home and in Washington; and our government has begun to return to the state/federal balance intended by its founders.

I believe NCSL is due considerable credit for this transformation. It worked hard to bring together the resources state legislatures needed to reassert their proper constitutional authority. We are now beginning to see the fruits of that labor. At the very beginning NCSL recognized that effective legislative staff would be a key to state legislatures realizing their potential. It was then that legislative staff work began taking on the properties of a profession.

What are some of these properties?
- A defined mission
- A set of core values
- A code of ethics
- Self-developed and enforced standards of performance, and
- Continuing education

Let me give you an example of how this works in practice.

Those of us in term-limited states have heard for years that staff and lobbyists will soon be running our legislatures. That is nonsense and everyone in this room knows it. Staff today know where the line is drawn for us. We honor it because doing so conveys respect for the legislature itself and our proper role within it. That doesn't mean we are passive, it just means we know when and under what
circumstances to be assertive. It is one of our key fessional values. We don't even think about it, we do it.

Some veteran colleague cared enough to pass along this insight to us. That is what professions do, they pass along their skills and values to the next generation. If we believe our jobs are important enough to do well, then we should be similarly concerned that our successors do them well. If we care about the future of the legislature we have to care about future legislative staff.

Many of the "old legislative foot soldiers" like me who got in on the early ramping-up of legislative staff are approaching retirement age. It is time for us to acknowledge that much of this work isn't learned at the university. It is learned in the trenches, under fire.

We need to begin devising programs in each of our states so the young people joining our ranks are given the benefit of our experience and do not become discouraged or overwhelmed. We need to look out for them during those early skirmishes that we know are bound to come.

The first step in this process is to identify their frame of reference. Namely that new staff know about the legislature what they have been taught by the media. This can be dangerous for them and for us. Dangerous for them because it can threaten their employment and dangerous for us because when any staff person fails, the credibility of all staff is diminished.

New staff need a more factual perspective. They need to understand a few imperatives.

1. They need to know that legislatures are made up of many fine and decent people, members, staff and lobbyists alike who often look upon what they do with a kind of reverence, as much a commitment as a career.

This attitude is formed when lawmaking is experienced as a player, in a first-hand, personal way. People so engaged come to realize that for all its complexities and frustrations, there is certain majesty in the democratic process. They come to appreciate that something larger than their narrow interest is at stake. They come to accept the process 'as a thing to be cherished and preserved. Would be naïve to say that everyone in the business holds this view, but that so many have over the years is remarkable. More than constitutions, they have been the foundation on which the legislative institution has been built.

2. New staff need to know the legislative process is fairer than they have been led to believe, but not perfect; that conflict over deeply held beliefs always gets personal. Lawmaking is not an Oxford-style debate; it has real consequences for real people. It is disorderly and there will be an occasional fistfight. But when the dust settles, the "process" will right itself as it has done for over 200 years.

3. They need to know legislatures do a much better job than the media would admit and that, for most issues, very responsible policies are developed. Legislatures were never expected to produce perfect laws; they were only expected to achieve the possible within the context of their time.

4. They need to believe in the power of ideas. Obviously, influence matters in politics, but so does solid factual analysis. If it didn't a lot of staff would be out of work. We all know that legislatures make their worst decisions when they act with inadequate information. Our job is to see that never happens. They need to know a good idea is a good idea, even if it comes from a scoundrel. There is, of course, the corollary that a bad idea is still a bad idea even if it comes from a statesman.

5. They need to know lawmaking is not about winning or losing. It is about best guesses. It involves taking the facts at hand and making a decision, in the full knowledge that history will likely judge you wrong. That is how our government was intended to work. It was not founded upon fixed ideas; it was based instead on the common sense notion that policies will change when experience requires them to. There is no such thing as the "final word" in lawmaking.

6. New staff need to respect a person's right to hold his or her own views. Lobbyists represent people asserting their constitutional right to petition their government. Neither their motives nor anyone else's should be questioned. Staff should be willing to trust that the merits of every proposal will be fairly judged through the twin cauldrons of analysis and debate.

7. They need to know they don't have to be experts in politics. For most of us, that is not what we were hired to do. That doesn't mean they should ignore politics. It just means the politics of our work should not become an obsession.
8. They need to know there is a line past which staff do not carry an issue. It is the point at which they have to hand the ball to a member and let them carry it. It is necessary to know where that line is drawn and not to step over it. A veteran can help them understand where that line is.

9. They need to know not to personalize outcomes. Their ideas will not always prevail. That doesn’t mean they were wrong. It just means they need to go on to the next issue. They should be inspired by the knowledge that they will one day be able to point with pride to the statute books and say they had a hand in writing some of those laws.

10. They need to know the votes are not always as certain as one may think. It is now a truism that special interests control every action of the legislatures. I don’t believe it. I think everyone in this room has seen powerful interests faced down and defeated by the simple testimony of an ordinary citizen. That is how the system is supposed to work.

11. They need to respect the process. It is more important than any bill or any member. All of us are asked how to get around this or that rule or procedure. Usually, there is a way within the rules to address the problem, the questioner just isn’t aware of it. If it is plainly against procedure, just say so and let that be the end of it.

12. We should encourage new staff to take pride in what they do not just because it is right, but because one day a person affected by a law will be grateful someone took the time to do a good job crafting it, even though they may never know who that drafter was.

13. New staff need to be prepared for the fact that they will not be immediately trusted. They should not become discouraged when their advice or recommendations are not immediately accepted. They have not failed. It just takes time in this business to build relationships and establish a reputation for good work.

14. They need to be encouraged to speak up for the legislature, not to be silent when it is maligned. As “insiders” they have a special knowledge of how our system works. That knowledge carries with it a special responsibility to speak up for the legislative institution. They need to understand that what they say – good and bad – about the legislature has a real impact. They need to just tell the truth. Democracy can handle that.

Finally, I would like to close with a final observation. We talk a lot about the "Legislative Institution." But, what exactly do we mean? I do not believe it is bricks and mortar or some abstract, lofty idea. To me it is very real and surrounds us everyday like the grandeur of our legislative halls. It is you and the person sitting next to you. It is the honor we pay our rules and traditions. It is the courtesy and deference we pay members and one another. It is preserving our chambers and keeping them safe. It is our special ceremonies and traditions. It is a well-written bill or report. It is the record kept and verified with such care that it is beyond legal challenge. It is research so vital when the time comes to vote. It is NCSL and its extraordinary staff. It is these and many other things, but most of all, it is the love that each of us holds for our precious democracy and the understanding that our work and our conduct has real consequences for its future.

Over the past thirty years you and your colleagues in other staff sections have built a profession. This profession has become a pillar upholding the legislative institution and allowing it to do its work in a modern republic. It is an obligation we bear with pride.

And if at the end of the day we have kept faith with that responsibility, we can take satisfaction in the knowledge that our legislatures, our states and our nation have been made stronger. Thank you.

LSCC Recruitment Survey

The Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee (LSCC) has asked the Staff Development Task Force to look at issues surrounding the recruitment and retention of legislative staff. The task force decided that it needs more knowledge of what motivates individuals of different generations to work in the legislative environment. This information will help to develop a document that will address the culture of legislative bodies, the importance of the legislature to our society, the role of staff in the legislative process, and the rewarding aspects of life as a legislative staffer. With this in mind, the task force has developed a survey on motivational factors and would like LSCC members to assist by encouraging the staff in their states to respond to the survey. It will be placed on the Internet and respondents will be
able to reply electronically. The State of Virginia agreed to host this survey that is linked from the .SL Web site. Please find the survey at http://tellncsl.state.va.us/ncsl/LSCCStaff.nsf

Annual Meeting Revisited

Tour of the Indiana State Library
Wednesday, July 28
by Dale Steele, Arizona

Robert Logsdon, Associate Director of the Indiana State Library, met the Legislative Research Librarians at the foot of the stairs to the library’s Great Hall. He welcomed us and led us to the Great Hall, giving us background on the library and its building. Indiana created its state library in 1825, he said. The library’s present building was built in 1934, using as much Indiana material as possible. Mr. Logsdon pointed out many of the building’s decorative details, noting that they reflect a 1930’s art deco style.

The library’s main circulation desk is in the Great Hall, as is its old card catalog. Mr. Logsdon noted that not all of their holdings are reflected in their current online catalog, and that to be thorough, researchers needed to still check the card catalog.

The Great Hall is flanked by the Reference and Government Documents Division on the south and the Indiana Division on the north. We first went to the Reference and Government Documents Division, where Ron Sharp, one of the reference librarians, told us about that division. The Reference and Government Documents Division’s primary clientele is state employees and other libraries. They also get a lot of use by the business community. The library is a regional depository in the Federal Depository Library Program, and the Reference and Government Documents Division processes and houses the material received through this program. The division also serves as the lead agency for the State Data Center Program in Indiana, working closely with the U.S. Census Bureau. The division use to have broad subject coverage in its collection development, but funding cuts in the 1970s and 1980s caused it to focus its acquisitions more on the core subjects of public affairs, management, and economics.

Mr. Sharp described the INdiana SPectrum of Information RESources (INSPIRE), which provides Indiansans with online access to many indexes and full-text databases, including Medline, Academic Search, ERIC and FirstSearch. The service is funded by legislative appropriations and an initial grant from the Lilly Endowment.

Mr. Sharp then described the library’s outreach activities to state government employees. They have a planning committee working on various ideas, including identifying hot topic bibliographies and listing the tables of contents from journals to send to selected state employees. They have sent information packets to legislators in the past, but this has not resulted in greater use of their services. They do conduct tours and training sessions on INSPIRE for legislative interns.

We next went to the Indiana Division, where Senior Subject Specialist Andrea Hough told us about its services. This division focuses on Indiana-related material. Many of its holdings are still listed only in the card catalog, not in the online catalog. The division creates and maintains two heavily used indexes, the Indianapolis Newspaper Index and the Indiana Biography Index. The division also houses the largest existing collection of newspapers published in Indiana.

The holdings date from the first newspaper published in 1804, prior to statehood, to the present. The Indianapolis Newspaper Index provides subject access to newspapers published in Indianapolis from 1898-1992. The division provides subject access after 1993 using software to search on CD-ROM the text of the Indianapolis Star/News.

The Indiana Biography Index lists citations to biographical information about Hoosiers from a variety of sources. It lapsed in 1990, but the Indiana Division librarians have restarted it in an online version.

The Indiana Division is responsible for the Indiana state documents program. It collects multiple copies of publications issued by state agencies and distributes them to selected libraries in the state. Ms. Hough estimated they automatically receive about 30 percent of the items published. The rest they have to obtain by contacting the agencies. She also said they keep a file of introduced bills, and the journals and acts of the legislature, but they do not index them.

The group appreciated the time and effort put into preparing for this tour. It was informative and enjoyable, and we thank Mr. Logsdon and his staff for their courtesy.
What’s New?

Multi-State Legislative Document Management Project

A new NCSL steering committee was recently created to consider the possibility of a multistate effort to develop a replacement for TextDBMS software. TextDBMS is used in about a dozen states for bill drafting or other legislative applications. Document Sciences Corp., which recently purchased TextDBMS, will no longer carry the product or support new users.

A discussion on the NALIT listserv prompted interest from a number of states looking to upgrade existing bill drafting or document management systems. This discussion continued at the NCSL Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee (LSCC) meeting in Asheville, North Carolina in April 1999. Members of the LSCC decided to create an NCSL steering committee to explore the idea further.

A steering committee was selected, made up of representatives from several NCSL staff sections. Mark Allred, Research and Systems Analyst with the Office of Legislative Research & General Counsel of Utah, serves as co-chair of the steering committee, along with Don Schneider, Chief Clerk of the Wisconsin Senate.

The Steering Committee held its first national meeting in Chicago in June 1999. At the Chicago meeting, the group discussed the idea at length and was very positive about the desirability of continuing the project. The group came to the following conclusion about goals and immediate next steps for this project:

Goals

1. Develop a document and information model for legislative documents.
2. Determine whether a multi-state text processing standard is feasible and desirable.

Methodology

The consensus of the Chicago meeting was that legislative documents should be based on Generalized Markup Language (GML) and the GML should conform to a standard. A working group has been established to re-search legislative documents in the fifty states to determine whether a common markup language or standard format can be developed. Jeffrey Blanchard of the Florida Legislature will head the project. At the end of six months, the group hopes to have a document model and markup for the states. If possible, a proof of concept for a multi-state application will be developed. (A proof of concept is a sample application used for testing and evaluation.)

An initial project report was presented at the group’s second meeting in Indianapolis in July 1999. A proposed document model was presented and discussed at the Fall meeting of the project. Steering committee members will meet again in December at the ASI/AFI meeting, to discuss the model and to determine next steps for the project.

These documents and additional information on the project are available on NCSL’s website at www.ncsl.org/programs/lis/multistate.htm.

LSCC to Publish State Capitols Book
by John Phelps

The Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee’s (LSCC) Promoting the Legislative Institution Task Force has embarked on an ambitious project to document state legislatures at the turn of century.

Plans are under way to research, write and publish a "coffee table" book about state legislative chambers to provide constituents with a clearer picture of how state legislatures operate. This historical document will allow future generations to see what their legislative chambers looked like at this moment in time. It will include background information about each state capitol and documentary interesting historical facts about the legislature.

Since this is destined to be a one-of-a-kind (and likely once-in-a-lifetime) publication, the task force wants to make sure the book captures important details about your legislative chambers. Photographers will be instructed to take photos of each capitol, legislative building and each legislative chamber. However, the task force also wants to include architectural details of other items of interest within the chambers that would have appeal to a national audience. If you know some historic details about items in your chamber, the task force wants to hear from you so that the photographer can include it on the items to photograph. Also, there may be points of interest about your Capitol or chamber that should be included in the book’s narrative.
The task force, chaired by Jennifer Noland of Kentucky, welcomes any comments or suggestions you have about this project and looks forward to seeing your state represented in this unique publication. If you have any questions or comments, please contact NCSL's Director of Public Affairs, Gene Rose, at (303) 830-2200, extension 136, gene.rose@ncsl.org.

Thanks to all of the staff section members and others who submitted columns and information for this issue. Your ideas and submissions are always welcome. Newsline is published four times annually by NCSL's Legislative Research Librarians Staff Section and is edited and formatted by Rita Thaevert.

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