Chair’s Column
by Nan Bowers, Nevada
LRL Chair

Welcome to the winter 2002 edition of Newsline. As this is the third column of the four that I write as current LRL chair, I should be getting into the swing of it. In the first column I introduced myself and my library, the second column covered the 2001 seminar in Richmond, and this time the subject is entirely of my choosing. Although there are most likely only a dozen or so people who actually read the chair’s column, I would like to write something that will interest you, but there are no guarantees.

I live in a county just south of Carson City. It is over 5,000 square miles in size, with about 41,000 people scattered in a half dozen towns. The biweekly county newspaper has many columnists because news is scarce and paid reporters even scarcer. There are columnists covering various locales—Fish Springs, Johnson Lane, Indian Hills, Antelope Valley—who write about the horse trails, grasshopper infestations, speeders or country roads, that sort of thing. I figure if those writers can spin out a weekly column, surely I can talk about legislative libraries in a quarterly newsletter column. I must admit I have the luxury of being in a non-session year, therefore my work priorities are different than you who are engrossed in session madness.

I thought of writing about our library’s legislative history gathering process. Of how the more we look into a bill’s history, the more we discover there are side issues or shadow bills or delicate connections to reports dating back several sessions. Crafting bills truly is like making sausage. We all can identify with trying to track down ‘intent’ for a piece of legislation.

Another potential subject is tapping into our colleagues’ networks. The Internet is wonderful, but contacting a colleague can lead to insider information or fabulous contacts. I recently emailed Marian in Wisconsin about a vague notion of a Wisconsin law on nonslip surfaces required in hotel bathtubs. I received a great response.

Perhaps a third possibility for a column is dealing with journals that stop printing and go wholly to electronic format. How do we adjust our library routines of check in, routing, database entries for articles, material availability a few years down the road? Three or four titles in the last six months discontinued paper issues.

Another item in the forefront is updating the records retention schedules. For my organization, I’m considered the ‘custodian’ of legislative records and called on to coordinate the record retention schedules for the various bureau divisions. Our schedules need some major revisions and to move to the descriptive schedules used by the executive branch agencies.

Actually, the column has turned out ok. Writing of issues that are currently on my plate may help generate ideas for future sessions at annual meetings or our professional development seminars. And perhaps if any of the dozen or so readers are still with me and would like me to expand on any of my four topics, I could get started on my next, and last, column. I’m at bowers@lcb.state.nv.us.

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Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee
February 1 and 2
Santa Fe, New Mexico

by Nan Bowers

The NCSL Executive Committee met twice during the two day meeting and discussed some issues of interest to the LRL group.

- State coordinators for the America’s Legislators Back to School Week program are being encouraged to take part in a civic education network. Tentative plans include participants to receive a paid trip to Washington the end of June to explain the expanded program and the Trust for Representative Democracy. Details at http://www.ncsl.org/public/civiced.htm

- There is a new Homeland Security Task Force that will consider public safety and public health issues. The group will produce a checklist of what states need to consider when preparing and responding to homeland security emergencies.

- Very briefly mentioned was that NCSL may move to electronic format for some publications. Also noted, the State Budget and Tax Action Series is discontinued.

- During both meetings, the Executive Committee reviewed and discussed the NCSL strategic plan. See the task force report, below, for details.

- The Executive Committee received reports from the task force on welfare reform, the task force on state and local taxation of communications and electronic commerce, the AFI/ASI subcommittee, and the women’s legislative network.

Technology Task Force

The focus of the task force is the Bill Text and Status Project. The project lets a searcher on the NCSL website perform multi state searches on current session bills by topic. The program allows for tracking bills, saving and rerunning searches, and forming shared search groups. Five states – California, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nevada, Virginia – already participate in the project.

Letters are going out to legislative leaders, clerks & secretaries, and legislative agency directors telling them about the project and soliciting their support. Information requested for the project includes:

- bill id
- full text
- originating chamber
- status
- session
- history
- primary sponsor
- date of last action
- title
- URL to bill
- summary
- fiscal notes URL

You may want to express your support of the project to your IT staff, as the program will be extremely useful for librarians. A prototype will be available in early April, and I will post the link on the LRL listserv for those interested in trying the new service.

The technology task force also contributes to the review and recommendations for the NCSL web site. NCSL is moving forward on substantive changes in web oversight and modifications. Among the changes is the creation of a web advisory group, elimination of the log in page, and implementing a revised search function on the site. LRL members involved in previous NCSL web studies may be interested in the web workgroup report that was presented to attendees at the Santa Fe meeting.

(More on the Bill Status Project on page 9)

Task Force on Strategic Planning

The task force charged with the NCSL organizational planning for 2002-2005, submitted a draft report for a plan to ensure NCSL continues to serve state legislatures effectively and creatively. The report is based on several facilitated work sessions over the last year with legislators, legislative staff, and NCSL staff. The task force outlined six objectives for review by the Executive Committee. One NCSL priority, of particular interest to LRL members, is to improve delivery of information to legislators and legislative staff. NCSL will strive for increased visibility and more direct contact with the legislators and legislative staff. It is important that LRL members work with their state’s NCSL contact so the libraries remain in the information loop. To see who is your state’s contact, go to http://www.ncsl.org/legis/menus/stateassign.htm.
Professional Development Task Force
by Robbie LeFleur, Minnesota

The task force tackled three main topics. We reviewed a chart showing attendance at staff section professional development seminars over the years. There was a noticeable dropoff in attendance during the early 1990s recessionary years, and the concern is keeping attendance up during this current time of budget cuts and pcst-9/11 insecurity.

Linda Worrell, from NCSL’s Meetings and Seminars Department, gave a fascinating presentation on the logistics and economics of effective meeting planning and urged staff sections to use NCSL services when planning conferences.

Second, a task force was appointed to brainstorm on ideas for an orientation for staff section vice-chairs. Too often staff section officers only become really familiar with NCSL as an organization when they are nearly done serving as chair. This orientation might include an NCSL web site page with tips for section officers or a teleconference for new officers.

Finally, another task force was appointed to discuss enhancing the staff welcome booth at Annual Meeting.

Legislative Staff Management Task Force

The task force is working on a model staff handbook; it should be completed by the May LSCC meeting. They are also preparing to conduct a staff salary survey during 2002, similar to the 1996 NCSL surveys. Additional categories will include information technology positions, public information officers, leadership staff, human resources, and administrative functions.

Coordinator Marian Rogers, Wisconsin

from Marian
As an agency, we belong to the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA). Some of our library staff have individual memberships in WLA, as well as the American Library Association. We also are active participants in the State Agency Librarians’ Council, a loosely organized group that has monthly brown bag meetings held at various library sites. The South Central Library System is another affiliation for us, and we routinely attend their continuing education workshops and other events.

The state documents librarian is active in the Wisconsin chapter of GODORT (Government Documents Round Table of ALA) through the Wisconsin Library Association. She finds it useful for maintaining contact with librarians at other state document depository libraries. It is also sometimes worthwhile for staying current with what is happening with the Federal Depository Library Program.

Our library budget is folded into the budget of the entire bureau. Our recent budget cuts have been met by not filling vacant positions, restricting travel, cutting training budgets, and generally keeping a close watch on our spending.

Debbie Tavenner, Ohio

Connie and I are not members of a national professional organization. We belong to the Columbus Bar Association Legal Research Committee, the members of which are primarily law librarians. It meets monthly, offers informative programs and provides a very useful networking group. Its listserv basically functions as a scheduling tool.

I monitor the law-lib@ucdavis.edu and find this a very useful listserv. Through law-lib I also receive Law Library Resource Xchange, the web journal for legal professionals. The web address is www.llrx.com

Ohio just went through budget cutting session. Prior to the enactment of the bill, some library resources, thankfully not people, were on hold for a while. During that time, I collected as much information as I could from users about their use of the products. I intended to utilize that information in deciding which materials could be cancelled. For the most part library resources (again not the people) represent minimal elective purchases. LSC managers had been

Coordinators' Corner

Questions for this issue:

What professional organization, of which you are a member, do you find most useful in your job as a legislative librarian?

How do you propose to defend your library services with the budget cutbacks now in progress in many states?
zeroing in on eliminating one of the major legal online services, because on the surface it looks to be duplication and their cost is significant. My plan was to plead to keep both online services in exchange for giving up CD ROM subscriptions. My arguments were that the CD services were not as up to date as the online services, present technical difficulties when running anything beyond a certain version of Windows, and contain no information that could not be located in a print or online source. I am not sure I would have prevailed, however. Most of the users I talked to did not want to give up the CD ROMs, or anything else for that matter. I did cancel a couple of things without anyone complaining and reduced the number of copies of a few other publications. I would have also presented information on the amount of cutting that I had already done if it, had come to that point. It pays to review each invoice/renewal with a critical eye.

In another case, however, based on responses about one service (a newsletter with an Internet database subscription), I scaled back the subscription to the newsletter by itself. There was a little bit of a backlash from one of the users when it was “needed for her job.” She said she did not remember responding to my question about using the service, and when I read her the question and her response she said it could be interpreted a couple of different ways. Yes, you guessed it, we now have the full subscription back. The publisher was very happy to accommodate us.

For now Ohio has stabilized; who knows what next year will bring. I think the key is to be prepared, knowing your sources and how the users are using them so you can have an intelligent plan to propose. That would hopefully put off any decision by a nonlibrary manager to just cut where they see a big pot of money.

Coordinator Clare Cholik, South Dakota

Robbie LaFleur, Minnesota
The eight librarians at the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library belong to a variety of library organizations. Several belong to the Minnesota Library Association, and a couple belong to ALA. Randi Madisen is the current chair of the Minnesota Chapter of the Special Libraries Association; Betsy Haugen is the program chair.

Many of us participate in PALS, a statewide library group based on our online catalog system, METRONET, a regional multi-type library consortium, and CALCO, a consortium of state agency libraries. We have found that the variety of groups has served us well; our library receives good publicity and our staff gets the benefit of information from many groups.

The Minnesota Legislative Reference Library faces potential cutbacks in Fiscal Year 2002 and the next biennium. We hope that our integral contributions to the creation and maintenance of the Legislative Web site will give us some leverage. We have also been providing popular electronic access to our two metropolitan newspapers on all legislative computers. Another creative talking point is that with budget cutbacks many offices may be cutting back on individual subscriptions to magazines and newspapers, making the library's collection even more important.

Marilyn Johnson, North Dakota
As a member of the North Dakota Library Association since birth (at least it seems that way), I've participated in the organization's internal and external struggles to move the state's libraries and its professional organization into the future. Without NDLA there would be no state aid to public libraries in North Dakota, and no regional library cooperation legislation.

Those were heady days under state leadership of a Bismarck public librarian who set standards of professional involvement still worthy of emulation. Especially because of our number, every member of NDLA is offered opportunity to, indeed expected to, serve in setting direction, creating policy, and implementing goals. The networking among the 350 academic, public, special, and school librarians belonging to NDLA opens doors to not just cooperative projects, effective legislative lobbying, enhanced patron service, but also to life long friendships built on common commitment to the profession.

NDLA has given me personally the chance to leave a professional legacy, even if nobody but me knows it. Another librarian and I organized the Government Documents Roundtable within NDLA in 1982. After 20 years that group continues to actively address issues of organization, access, and promotion of state and federal records. Contacts from that base worked with me and still do on the biennial production of the North Dakota Blue Book.
It was out of the Academic Section, which I chaired, that the impetus came for creation of the North Dakota Periodicals Index. Volunteers representing all types of libraries did their part to produce first time ever indexes to North Dakota serial resources. NDLA permitted me to get down and dirty with operational details as chair of the Constitutional Revision Committee that rewrote the organization’s governing document. After NDLA members approved the work, NDLA was strengthened through uniform alignment of roundtables, sections, standing committees under an umbrella executive board. My previous tenure as NDLA secretary gave me invaluable insight into the kinks and curves of structural functions.

After decades of talk about hiring an executive secretary repeated ad nauseam by a nameless legislative librarian, NDLA’s executive board in 1997 asked if I would chair a committee to design responsibilities of the position and interview candidates. NDLA is now in its 4th year with a paid executive secretary. Under my watch as NDLA president in 2000 the membership passed the first dues increase in 20 years. When my term as immediate past president on the NDLA executive board expired, I couldn't quit! Now I'm chairing the Elections and Nominations Committee. And I'm on the committee to plan the celebration of NDLA's 100th birthday in 2006. I don't or can't go away!

I'm just one librarian out of the very many who have given back to NDLA for its nearly century old commitment to exercising professional leadership and promoting library services and librarianship. The return on my investment has been worth every hour of work, worry, and trial. NDLA extended its hand to me when I didn't know what a librarian was. It gave me focus, a professional home, and encircled me with friends who define the library profession by their participation in the shaping of its future. Without hesitation NDLA accepted me as a novice, modeled librarianship for me and enriched my life with an avenue for service in the company of librarians who believe in making a difference. I'm continually amazed that these people whom I really do like, let me be one of them!

North Dakota legislators are notoriously fiscally conservative. Is that a bad thing? The cushion is shrinking because of recession but the state’s January 2002 economic forecast showed the two year spending plan still remains on the black side of the ledger. However, as preparation for the next biennial budget cycle begins, the Governor will ask state agencies to "scour their budgets" for saving to increase the ending balance figures.

Peg Jones, Nebraska
Many needs of the Nebraska Legislative Reference Library are met by our membership in the statewide consortium of libraries called NEBASE. NEBASE is managed by the Nebraska Library Commission and our membership allows us access to OCLC interlibrary loan and copy cataloging programs and extensive electronic databases such as FirstSearch, Electric Library, Wilson Web, and local newspaper articles. In addition, we participate in ongoing training opportunities offered by the Library Commission.

Our library hasn't been faced with budget cuts that would affect services we provide to state senators.

Lisa Mecklenberg Jackson, Montana
Because my background is in law librarianship, most of the professional organizations I belong to are law-related. I am a member of the American Association of Libraries and serve on several AALL committees. I am also active in State, Court, and County Law Libraries (SCCLL), a special interest section of AALL. I serve as Chair of the SCCLL Publicity Committee, as well as Treasurer and Grants Committee Chair of WestPac (the Western Pacific Chapter of Law Libraries chapter). I am also involved with our Montana state library association (MLA), serving as Chair of the Academic and Special Libraries section last year, and as Chair of the Bylaws Committee this year.

I find the law library listserv, Law-Lib, to be extremely useful. Many of the questions posed there are ones we legislative librarians struggle with constantly, be it bill tracking or compiling legislative histories. I also find the official publication of AALL, Spectrum, to be filled with useful articles. I find the duties of a law librarian and a legislative librarian are not terribly different. A legislative librarian must address a wider scope, but many of the questions I receive seem to be law-related. Strangely enough, my membership in the Montana State Bar has also come in handy in my job as a legislative librarian. I have found many useful contacts through the state bar. And I must say that I have discovered some very helpful information through the legislative librarians' listserv. What's so cool about that is that everything is on point! Almost every question asked relates to something I should know about in Montana--very useful to someone who doesn't know much!
Thankfully, I have not heard anything about budget cuts in the Montana Legislative Reference Center. We are the depository for all the materials produced by the Montana Legislature and Legislative Branch. If people (be it staff, legislators or the public) want to find a legislative document, they know to come to us. We do quite a large amount of research for the branch, especially electronically, and we do all the ordering of materials. If they want new materials, they know they have to give us some money to order them. Let's hope the powers-that-be keep that in mind!

Coordinator Cathy Martin, North Carolina

(Editor's apology that these responses to the questions about security post-Sept. 11 were not included in the fall issue of Newsline)

from Cathy

Library security per se has not changed except in keeping with an overall updating of General Assembly security, which had begun prior to the attacks. And everyone is subject to new mail handling security procedures outlined by the Legislative Services Office. Access to the entire physical grounds is somewhat more restricted than before. As Susan notes for Pennsylvania, we here in North Carolina have always been quite open and it has been difficult to let that go.

With respect to disaster recovery, these events have increased our resolve to expedite document microfilming pursuant to our Records Retention Schedule. We do have unique and irreplaceable items and this provides even greater incentive to have them filmed rapidly and stored off site.

Cheryl Jackson, Virginia

Security within our library has not changed. However, security within the building that houses our library (the General Assembly Building) has increased dramatically. Visitors to the library must go through a security check with the capitol police and be announced to the library; they don't just walk in anymore. Also, if we are expecting a delivery or a visitor, we advise the capitol police of the appointment. Basically, it is business as usual, but with a lot tighter security net.

Our only disaster recovery plan is: grab your purse and go! As long as we all come back safely and soundly, then we can put back together anything else. "Stuff" can always be re-created; people can't.

Susan Zavacky, Pennsylvania

This library currently has no security procedures of its own, partly because we are an internal unit of the LRB. Whatever security procedures the LRB would establish are what the library would follow. Given where we are physically located (very top floor of the Main Capitol Building), the Bureau sees very few "walk in" visitors from the public sector.

The Capitol, in general, is finding its way right now when it comes to security. There has always been great hesitancy to close "the people's building," but some security tightening has taken place in the past couple of weeks. For instance, all Capitol staff now wear ID at all times. Those who park in the underground garage are now asked to stop and produce ID. These steps are probably "old hat" to many other states, but up until now, we have operated rather loosely in this department.

This library does not have a disaster recovery plan. But, ironically, I will be attending a one day seminar in two weeks on just this issue. Then, I'll be pitching ideas to my administration. We do have quite a few materials that could never be replaced!

Linda Davis, Maryland

The Maryland legislature in concert with the executive branch increased the level of security in the legislative complex following the terrorist attack on America. The legislature had increased security in the past couple of years and planned security enhancements as new buildings and renovations to existing buildings are completed in the next two years. The library has not changed existing procedures.

Coordinator Cathy Martin

(responses to questions for THIS issue of Newsline)

from Cathy

Here in North Carolina, I find my memberships on AALL and RALLA (the local area LL association) most helpful for staying current on law library trends and for contacts. Our technical librarian, Brian Peck, also finds his membership in the American Society of Indexers useful in his indexing of the session laws. We also stay up on some general library trends through ALA, but it's clear to me that no other organization holds a candle to LRL for learning and for sharing experiences.

Here in North Carolina, we're awaiting word on how bad the budget is (and it's really bad). Fortunately, we're at full staff right now, with no evidence cuts are coming, and we have not had to reduce services.
But we aren't in the position of asking for anything we didn't have the foresight to get last year. Unfortunately, there's no defending against the statewide travel and training budget freezes, so we have little hope of attending NCSL Annual Meeting or the PDS.

**Carolyn Schade, West Virginia**

Reports that her memberships in ALA and SLA have not been very helpful so far in her new role as legislative librarian.

Carolyn feels she is too new to have any input into the budget at this point.

**Lynda Davis, Maryland**

I belong to ALA, SLA, and Maryland Library Association. Over the years, I've been active in these organizations at different times. More recently, I find the publications and emphasis of SLA most helpful in my work.

ALA, SLA, Maryland Library Association, Law Librarians of Maryland, and Washington D.C. Area Indexers Association all have members of our library staff. Participation in these organizations help us keep up with new services and products and share experiences with fellow information professionals. Of course we add names and addresses of other members to our resource list.

The Maryland legislature is still in the early stages of deciding where the state budget will be trimmed. Going into the legislative session, their services have not been reduced.

**Sabah Eltareb, California**

I belong to ALA, SLA, and CLA (California Library Association). I find them all beneficial in my legislative staff role. The articles from the journals I receive from my memberships are always sources of inspiration. I frequently share with my colleagues and try to implement ideas in some fashion. The news and tips help to shape my current awareness of the field and expand the areas of what I would like to do. Sharing, growing, expanding, pushing the horizons are all part of what I have reaped from my professional memberships.

**Irene Stone, California**

What Sabah says is true for most of our librarians: ALA, CLA and SLA. However, one of our librarians also belongs to AALL. He finds the publications useful. One of our librarians is very active in ALA, because he is interested in the larger library world. In general, we find that SLA is most useful, because we have a local chapter. We find the networking with special librarians in the area useful. The topics discussed at the meetings are generally pertinent to our information needs.

The California news is not good! We have had a 3.9% cut this fiscal year and anticipate a 15% cut in operations and personnel next fiscal year. Our serials budget has been cut drastically. We are planning visits to committees to inform them of our services and later to the chiefs of staff in the members' offices.

**Kristin Ford, Idaho**

I'm a member of the American Assn. of Law Libraries, including the subgroups "State, Court & County Law Libraries" and "Westpae." I receive newsletters and electronic listserve messages from all of those. I belong to the Idaho State Bar Assn., and write for and receive their bar journal and electronic listserve. I'm also on the listserv for the Idaho Library Association, the Canadian Association of Law Libraries, and the Law Librarians of Puget Sound. Of course, there's also NCSL's LRL group, who are wonderful. I definitely value all of the communications from my fellow librarians, law librarians and legislative librarians out there, they are wonderful at sharing opportunities and developments, and they make my life and job better! THANKS, YOU GUYS!
Budget cuts in Idaho will undoubtedly be felt in the acquisitions area. I don't expect to face any staff loss; my 3/4 time assistant and I are stretched pretty far as it is. Our research and reference assistance to the legislators and legislative analysts has been greatly valued, and I don't think they would seriously contemplate eliminating our services. We are very lucky to get lots of good feedback and expressions of appreciation and don't think I don't save them in a file, just in case...!

Coordinator Penelope Dukes-Williams, Texas

from Penelope Librarians belong to a variety of professional organizations including American Law Librarians Association, Texas Library Association, Austin Law Librarians, State Agency Librarians of Texas, Southwestern Association of Law Librarians, and Special Library Association.

We hired two full time and two part time professional librarians late last year, bringing our staff of professional librarians to a total seventeen (this includes our director Dale Propp).

Tracey Kimball, New Mexico

Doing some in-house indexing for journal articles, the most useful organization recently has been the A to Zia Indexers, the state chapter of the American Society of Indexers. This chapter conducts one or two all-day workshops a year, usually presented by a flourishing professional indexer. These meetings are valuable both for content and contacts. Like to stay in touch with professional colleagues through the state library association, but haven't had the time to check out the special groups.

The acquisitions budget was “trimmed” slightly this year, so a more selective acquisition process will be used for new titles. The library was able to maintain status quo in the other areas.

Shelley Day, Utah

Not being a librarian, do not belong to any of the professional associations. As an Information Consultant, however, I find NCSL staff contacts and the LRLs to be most helpful in obtaining information about the state’s legislative activities or policy issues. Because of the plethora of resources available on the Internet and elsewhere, knowing the resources and how to use them is most beneficial.

Utah has increased the Information Center staff to THREE from the traditional staff of two. State law mandates that they maintain a legislative research library, and staff is looking to expand the services we currently provide. The center maintains the Utah State Legislature website and a comprehensive office resource database; trains new employees in our office, and provides research services for staff and legislators; trains and assists the 70+ legislative interns each year, and have recently added the America’s Legislators Back to School Week program to our area. The director is a strong advocate of information services. Consequently, the staff feels very fortunate to see their area thrive during this perilous time in our nation.

Molly Otto, Colorado

Is a member of the Colorado Library Association and the American Association of Law Libraries and finds their publications and listservs to be very helpful and educational. The NCSL-LRL listserv has been very helpful since she is relatively new to her current position (Dec. 2000). Since most LRLs have small staffs or manage the library “solo,” the LRL listserv helps alleviate the feeling of isolation.

The library’s budget has not suffered too badly, despite some possible budget reductions that the state may be facing. The legislature and council staff currently support the library and its services. Although the library is not guaranteed any large increases in their budget, do not foresee any reductions.

Library use and reference services seem to be increasing in our library. I am always amazed how people discover them. Library use statistics are kept that could be used in a cost/analysis benefit study of the library and its services, if we ever needed to justify their existence.

Annual Meeting

The 2002 NCSL Annual Meeting is scheduled for July 23 through 27 in Denver, Colorado. On LRL’s preliminary agenda is a computer lab session about the Census especially for librarians, at least one joint session with other staff sections, a tour of Denver Public Library, a tour of the Colorado capitol and a great social event at Red Rocks mountain amphitheater overlooking the city. Summer in Denver is warm (it’s a dry heat) and wonderful. We hope to see many LRLers there!
Counting Down to PDS
by Marilyn Johnson, North Dakota

Have you penciled in LRL’s professional development seminar on your desk calendar? The dates have been set, the hotel secured, the program is in rough draft. In pen you can now mark October 9-12, 2002 for PDS in Bismarck, North Dakota. That’s right: Bismarck in the fall. Live on the edge a little!

You’ll not want to miss terrific programs designed specifically to address issues relevant to legislative librarians. Do not forgo this annual opportunity to network with your counterparts in intimate settings. Plan to attend “Countdown to Service,” LRL’s 2002 Professional Development Seminar.

Program highlights

- Count on Users: Acquiring, storing, labeling, and accessing audio records of the legislative process
- You Can Count on Me: Creating and maintaining legislative library Web sites
- Count Us In: Presentation on Native American legislative issues
- Count Your Blessings: Electronic legislative records
- Let Me Count the Ways: Record keeping and staff evaluations in legislative libraries

Primarily programs will be at the North Dakota Capitol, the skyscraper of the prairie. However, librarians will spend one afternoon meeting in the commissary at reconstructed Fort Lincoln, followed by a tour of the Custer House. From this place Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer left with the Seventh Calvary for the Battle of the Little Big Horn. As North Dakotans like to say “Custer was healthy when he left here.”

LRL members will also dine at the Pumpkin Patch across the Missouri River into the countryside. Bring your cameras for you won’t believe what you’ll see. To end the week on Saturday, a bus takes you to the Lewis and Clark Visitor’s Center in Washburn on the way to the Hostfest in Minot. There you’ll experience Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and Finnish food, art, crafts, music, plus a whole lot of other unexpected stuff on the state fair grounds where the Hostfest, the world’s largest Scandinavian festival, is held. Uffda!

Now for a teaser this agenda ain’t bad is it? Watch your mail and the summer issue of Newsline for additional details on PDS in Bismarck, ND.

See you there!

New NCSL Committee Oversees Multistate Project and National Bill Text and Status Project

(from the January 2002 issue of the NALIT Newsletter)

NCSL’s Multistate Legislative Document Management project is continuing its work to help states cooperate to share the costs of developing and maintaining the tools that we all use. The project is now under the auspices of the NCSL Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee’s (LSCC) Special Committee on Information Management, chaired by Jim Greenwalt, Director of Senate Information Systems in Minnesota.

The Special Committee on Information Management will continue the work of the document management project, but will expand to focus immediately on a project to gather bill status data and bill text from all 50 states. The plan is to make this combined information available to the NCSL community through NCSL’s website.

The NCSL National Bill Text and Status Project will provide state legislatures a powerful tool for one-stop access to track legislation and obtain bill status and text for all 50 states. The system, which will be free to all state legislatures, will be designed specifically for state legislatures and provide key information, including bill numbers, sponsors, title and/or summary, current status and history. Information on the site will be updated daily. The system will be designed to complement paid bill-tracking subscription services and, unlike paid services, will be available to all legislators and staff at no cost.

Already, five states have participated in a pilot system -- California, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nevada and Virginia. The pilot system has been discussed and demonstrated at recent NALIT meetings. Based on the experiences of the pilot states, NCSL has determined that the system will require only a modest investment of time by state legislatures. In addition, NCSL will provide support for legislative information technology staff who provide data for this project.
In order for the project to be successful, each state will need to participate. NCSL and members of the Special Committee will be contacting information technology staff, legislative leaders and other legislative staff in every state to encourage support for this project.

A system prototype and further information about this project are available through the NCSL website at http://www.ncsl.org/programs/lis/multistate.htm. If you have questions about the project, please contact Jim Greenwalt, Chair of the Special Committee at 651-296-8136 or jim.greenwalt@senate.leg.state.mn.us or Doug Sacarto, NCSL Director of Online Services at 303-830-2200 ext. 195 or doug.sacarto@ncsl.org

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News

from Debbie Tavenner, Ohio
Some of the members know Bob Shapiro, the Ohio LSC director. He retired on January 31, 2002; he served this agency for 33 plus years. The new director, Jim Burley, has also worked many years in the LSC. Bob was active with NCSL for almost all of his career at LSC. His term on the Executive Committee had ended with the last Annual Meeting. If anyone wants to send greetings to Bob, I will forward them to him.

Letter from West Virginia
by Carolyn Schade

I was welcomed warmly as the legislative librarian for West Virginia in December, 2001. My office, the Legislative Reference and Information Center, includes our director, a staff of writers, our webmaster, photographers, and an assistant. We are housed in the Capitol basement, away from House and Senate chambers.

My initial “archaeological dig” in the library proved to be a great learning experience. As some months had elapsed between the leaving of the previous librarian and my coming onto the scene, there was a backlog of materials waiting to be examined, cataloged, and shelved. During this process I discovered what a neat collection I had inherited: Journals from the House and Senate back to the 1860s, other historic (some autographed) books, annual reports from hundreds of agencies, periodicals, videotapes, and books. I set to work creating periodicals holdings lists, monthly acquisitions lists, and topical subject lists of materials received in the library. NCSL’s Core Reference Collection list for Legislative Libraries will serve as my guide for ordering additional reference materials.

One of my first tasks was to set up searchable databases for full text newspaper articles. This is a fun and ongoing project. The library had previously kept filing cabinets full of news clips arranged by subject. Keyword and phrase searchability will make my new databases much more user friendly. Already I have developed a clientele of staff members and legislators happy to have news clips readily provided to them.

I have been a reference librarian in public, law, and special libraries. (The most special library I have worked in was ABC television news in Washington D.C.). As a new legislative librarian, I am finding that this assignment combines aspects of all the previous types of libraries I have worked in. Public librarians are used to working with all types of customers. Here, I answer telephone calls from members of the public, as well as from legislators and staff. Since I worked in a one person law library, working in a one person legislative library has many parallels. I am the director, reference librarian, cataloging specialist, and administrative assistant all rolled into one. Special libraries are so named because they really are specialized cases. As you all know better than I do, we have special scenarios ranging from filing annual reports as dictated by statute to serving our many and varied masters as best we can.

As my e-mail address is on our website, I get daily questions from folks all around the country. I really enjoy using the incredible web of resources we have at our disposal to seek out answers. It is satisfying to know that among these resources are my colleagues at NCSL. Within the state of West Virginia, I made a point early on to introduce myself to other librarians in Charleston. I look forward to collaborating with them on major projects such as how news clips are dealt with from library to library. How can we join forces to reduce duplication of effort and to share information?

Session has just begun for us. We have added four interns to our staff to help cover committee meetings and to write columns and releases. I look forward to learning more each day, especially about the ways in which I, as legislative librarian, can help to inform public policy.

Stay tuned for part II of this article.
Japan 2001
by Rita Thaeemert, NCSL

NCSL's International Program works with the Japan Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), an organization that each year sponsors individuals on a trip to Japan.

The CLAIR-sponsored visit was November 1 – 13, 2001—four nights and three days in Tokyo, five nights and five days in Ishikawa Prefecture. CLAIR took us to a wonderful dinner at the New Otani Hotel in downtown Los Angeles the night of November 1. The ten courses likely constituted the most authentic Japanese dinner on the entire trip. The 11 hour flight to Tokyo from L.A. was tolerable with sunshine all the way. It was raining hard in Tokyo when we landed.

CLAIR provided a guided bus tour of Tokyo on Sunday November 4. It was a beautiful clear day and we saw Mt. Fuji and a sea of endless city from the 50th floor of a government office building. Tokyo is a marvel of more than 11 million people, commuting on bullet trains and providing order and safety with police kiosks every few blocks. Real estate in Tokyo today is $100,000 per square meter.

Monday and Tuesday, November 5 and 6, we attended the seminar "Developing Local Communities that Thrive in the Global Society of the New Century: Building a New Network of International Exchange and Cooperation" with 200 Japanese and 60 other CLAIR participants. Our North American group included representation from CSG: New Orleans; Portland, Oregon; and Toronto, Canada. Other countries in attendance were Australia, Cambodia, China, France, Indonesia, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand and the U.K. There were interpreters for English, French, Korean and Chinese. The Tokyo discussions addressed development of local government authority, devolution and decentralization. Also how to form sister-city relationships. One speaker was Jean Lloyd Jones, a former Iowa legislator who is now director of Iowa's sister city program. We learned a lot about fixed net fishing at the Tuesday workshop too.

One of the topics I proposed to consider on the Japan visit was libraries. We visited with a librarian, Noriko Toda, from the National Diet Library who had also attended Annual Meeting in San Antonio. She provided information about the Diet Library that was founded in 1948 and functions as both a parliamentary library and Japan's only national library. It serves the Diet members and provides library support to government and judicial offices and the general public. Each research staff person collects and maintains data to answer requests.

The Research and Legislative Reference Bureau is a special information services department of the Diet Library. The staff of more than 150 are mostly recruited from new graduates through a competitive and open examination held once a year. They are trained as researchers through day-to-day research activities and through special sessions inside and outside the Bureau. The collection includes laws and parliamentary documents from all over the world, and the materials are available to the general public.

On Wednesday we traveled to Ishikawa Prefecture and visited the Ishikawa Foundation for International Exchange. Thursday morning we met with the Governor. He knew about Denver because he had visited Aspen, Colorado. He also knew something of Portland, Oregon and Canada. Then a tour of the newly rebuilt Kanazawa castle, made completely of local wood and has burned down twice. Friday was a bus trip to southern Ishikawa to visit a school superintendent, a garden and a glass factory/museum.

Saturday morning we met host families with whom we stayed for the weekend. We were treated to tours of local parks, temples, museums and our host's underground low-level radioactivity evaluation laboratory. Their hospitality was the best and their mastery of English was very commendable. On Monday morning, November 12, we met the North American group again at Kanazawa city government offices and heard two presentations, one about the importance of preserving and maintaining local cultural heritage sites and one about the city's attempts to employ more women.

Again and again on the trip we heard dignitaries tell us how very sorry they were about September 11. The outpouring of sympathy and genuine concern was tremendous and added to the feelings of solidarity with participants throughout Japan. CLAIR's objective, to foster mutual understanding and friendship through international cooperation at the community level, was certainly accomplished both in Tokyo and Ishikawa Prefecture. The highlight of the trip to Japan was the stay with a host family with whom we quickly developed mutual understanding and a lasting friendship. My sincere thanks to NCSL for the providing the opportunity to participate in the program and to CLAIR for their great generosity and supremely accomplished organization of this wonderful visit to Japan.
LRL 2002 Directory

Compilation is underway for updates of the new directory. Coordinators please gather any changes for states in your region and fax them to Rita at 303-863-8003. Also by e-mail--rita.thaemert@ncsl.org--please indicate "no changes." Thanks.

New NCSL Publications

All NCSL publications listed here are available from the Marketing Department at 303/830-2200.

Books

Improving Children's Lives: A Results Toolkit for State Legislators
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Managing Medicaid Costs: A Legislator's Tool Box

State Legislative Reports

Returning Home from Foster Care: What Policymakers Need to Know, Vol.26, No.12
Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence: Is It Child Abuse? Vol.27, No.1

Legisbriefs

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2001 State Election Reform, Vol.10, No.3
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Privacy Task Forces and Commissions in the States, Vol.10, No.7
Brownfields Redevelopment, Vol.10, No.8
Culturally Appropriate Early Childhood Education, Vol.10, No.9
Is the State House Safe? Vol.10, No.10
Aviation Security, Vol.10, No.11
Alternative Routes to Teaching, Vol.10, No.12

Thanks to all of the staff section members and others who submitted columns and information for this issue. We welcome your ideas and submissions. Newsline is published four times annually by NCSL's Legislative Research Librarians Staff Section and is edited and formatted by Rita Thaemert.
TO: Legislative Research Librarians
FROM: LRL Notable Document Awards Committee
RE: Notable Document Awards

The NCSL’s Legislative Research Librarians Section Notable Document Award will be presented at the NCSL Annual Meeting in Denver. The purpose of the award is to:

- Formally recognize excellence in documents that explore topics of contemporary interest to legislators and staff by presenting substantive material in an outstanding format.
- Advertise the extensive range of information available to legislators and staff.
- Increase participation by legislative research librarians in the States Information Network.
- Encourage deposit of documents with NCSL and the Council of State Governments (CSG) by subject-appropriate publishing organizations.

The winning documents will be highlighted at the NCSL annual meeting and will be announced in the LRL Newsl ine, State Government Research Checklist, State Legislatures, and State Government News.

Legislative research librarians should submit titles for consideration based on the following criteria, using the attached nomination form.

The document:

- Clearly and prominently displays title, author, publisher, and date.
- Contains a title that reflects actual content.
- Appears relevant to identifiable readership.
- Significantly contributes to knowledge of concern to legislators.
- Is innovative in presentation of material.
- Contains strong bibliographic/footnote entries.
- Presents information accurately and clearly in an organized fashion.
- Offers graphics that are readily grasped.
- Was published within the last two years.
- Compares state activities in an arena of contemporary legislative interest in a comprehensible manner.
- Expands understanding of government processes, functions, or relationships.
- Attempts to provide balance and perspective from various sides in the political spectrum.

There is no limit to the number of titles you can nominate; a copy of each document should be submitted with a nomination form.

Please be aware that documents produced by or under the auspices of NCSL’s Legislative Research Librarian Section are not eligible for the award.

A “document” for purposes of this award is defined as one produced by a federal, state, or local government agency, by a foundation, consulting firm, or quasi-public or private sector non-profit organization. Format includes print, microfilm, CD-ROM, periodical/serial, or URL.
NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES
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