



Legislative Research Librarians NEWSLINE

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Fall 2003

Chair's Column

*by Arthur McEnany, Law Librarian/Analyst
Louisiana Senate Law Library*

Memo to the President of the Senate:

"In accordance with your instructions, I have canceled two federal case law publications and the accompanying Shepard's citators. This will result in a cost savings of approximately \$5,500.00 to \$6,000.00 annually. If there is anything else I can do to help cut the library budget, please don't hesitate to ask."

What!!! Did I really send this memo? Am I dreaming? Why would I cut my own budget so drastically? It's a librarian's nightmare, but one that is becoming truer every day.

Fortunately, in my particular case, both the publications that I really did cancel are available online on both Westlaw and LexisNexis. Since they were considered "little used," they became expendable. Plus they took up an extraordinary amount of shelf space. But not all legislative librarians, or legislative libraries, are so fortunate. In these tough economic times, budgets are being slashed left and right, and it's difficult to pick and choose just what needs to be cut, and what does not need to go. And these are just books we are talking about. Factoring people into budget cuts is much more difficult.

I think its easier to cancel publications in a law library since so much, if not all, case law is readily available online. Years ago, we canceled some of our subscriptions to various state statutes we had. The impact of such cuts was negligible since they were available online. Additionally, the rise of the Internet has made the various state statutes and other similiar materials readily available as well.

But I realize that the Internet is not the sole arbitrator of truth, justice and the American way. There are just as many untruths on the Internet as there are truths, so one cannot be wholly dependent on getting all the facts from that source. So we do need books. But which ones? We can't have them all, and librarians need to be fastidious in the ones that they want, need and can afford.

As time marches on, I believe that more and more reading material will be of an electronic format. For some materials, i.e., case law, this is probably the best place for it. But not all reading material should be in electronic format, and as budgets get tighter, librarians are going to have to get pickier and pickier in what to keep and what not to keep.

* * * *

I want to thank everyone who was fortunate enough to be able to attend the PDS in Portland last month for being there. David Harrell put on a really good show and we owe him a lot of gratitude. I know its still months away, but everyone needs to start thinking "Utah" for next summer.

Legislative Research Librarians Staff Section

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Chair: Arthur McEnany, Louisiana

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2003 Professional Development Seminar

October 15-18
Portland, Oregon



Left to right: Steve Bibbs (HI), Shelley Day (UT), Cathy Martin (NC) and Tracey Kimball (NM)



Our fearless host,
Dave Harrell (OR)

Photographs courtesy of
Arthur McEnany (LA)
and Cathy Martin (NC)



Eddie Weeks (TN) workin' hard....



Librarians gone wild!

Scenes from the 2003 PDS

More pics can be found at the LRL web site at
<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/lis/LRL/pds03pics.htm>

Vote by Mail The Numbers Say It All

by Shelley Day, Utah

After touring Oregon's state capitol in Salem Thursday morning, we gathered in a small room at the capitol for our first session. Vote by Mail (VBM) was presented by Fred Neal, the articulate and mesmerizing Elections Division campaign finance manager. His opening statement, "We're very proud of unique political experiments," refers to Oregon's initiative and referendum, land use planning, and of course, Vote by Mail. Fred declared, "Oregon has the most thorough and complete voters' pamphlet in the United States . . . mailed to every residential address." David Harrell didn't waste any time in adding, "It is one of the most used items in my library."

What is VBM? VBM is a method of distributing ballots for an election. A ballot is mailed to each registered voter, then voted and returned to the county election office to be counted. Used as the sole method in Oregon since 1998, it does not favor either of the major political parties and negates fears of undue influence. A study found that less than 1/10th of 1 percent felt pressured to vote a certain way. Oregon has prosecuted only a few cases of fraud since VBM's inception. Election officials are trained by state police on signature matches and learn how to recognize a forged signature. If a match is questioned, the voter is contacted and must go the county election office to verify his signature. In place of traditional polling places, privacy booths are provided by every county for voters needing a private, secure place to mark ballots.

When did VBM begin? In 1981, the Oregon legislature approved a test of

VBM for local elections. In 1987, it was made permanent and the majority of counties used it for local elections. The first special statewide election by mail resulted in a 39 percent turnout and by 1996 the turnout for the fourth special statewide election had climbed to 74 percent. In May 1998, Oregon became the first state to have more ballots cast by mail (55%) than at the polls (22%) during the polling place election. Oregon voters voted to expand VBM to primary and general elections in November 1998 with a total of 69 percent "yes" votes and a clear majority in each of Oregon's 36 counties. Of those, 58 percent were cast as absentees with only 42 percent of the ballots cast at the polls.

Why VBM? The greatest concern prior to VBM was a low voter turnout (as low as 18%) for special elections, bond issues, etc. As such, printing costs of ballots, staffing polls, renting poll places, and a myriad of training issues literally forced election officials to take the initiative (no pun intended) and present their concerns to the legislature to resolve. VBM increases voter participation, removes barriers that keep people from getting to the polls, allows more time for people to study issues and candidates before marking the ballot, saves taxpayer dollars, and has built-in safeguards that increase the integrity of the elections process. The cost estimate in Oregon's 2000 November general election represented a savings of over 40 percent.

Vote by Mail in Oregon has evolved into what it is today as a result of tremendous efforts by supporters for over more than a 20-year period. The numbers say it all. Voter turnout has increased and taxpayer dollars are being saved. VBM is a viable solution for that state. Soon, other states may follow in Oregon's footsteps.

Current Awareness Service and Document Delivery in the Internet Age Roundtable

by Marilyn Johnson, North Dakota

Each of the librarians participating in the discussion employed some electronic means of making legislators and staff aware of new, hot topic, or personal interest information. Intranet. Internet. Some LRLers communicate on the Intranet. Others let it all hang out. Shelley Day (Utah) regularly relays material on current issues to legislators via e-mail. Shelley is also developing Intranet access for legislators to school district data in their districts. This librarian has way more ideas than are healthy. From OR, host Dave Harrell scans newspaper clips everyday into TIFF files for legislators and staff over Intranet. (Hope everybody's OR Riesling wines courtesy of Dave's innumerable and generous contacts made the trip home. Northwest initially refused to take my luggage because of its weight. However, the airline relented, accepting both me and my wine carrying bag packed with pottery purchased at Portland's Saturday market.) In ID, Kristin Ford calls attention (on an informal basis) to information that might be of interest to staff and legislators. The Legislative Services Office newsletter notes what's new in the library. On an *ad hoc* basis, Cathy Martin (NC) forwards materials; speciality news clips include articles on ethics and redistricting. Irene Stone in CA's gubernatorial land lets legislators know what reports are being covered by the press. From the URL provided, members can obtain reports themselves or they can call Irene, which no doubt they frequently do because she's delightful.

Over in AZ, Susan Blixt serves the legislative body through the State Library. The House and Senate are on

the State Library network that provides access to Ariel, a digitized electronic document delivery system. "Death to Electronic Documents" Eddie Weeks in TN deals primarily with legislative staff. Clipping service furnishes access to obituaries of legislators. In OH, Connie Yankus reports the legislative library keeps legislators abreast of documents received as required by statute. Doing their own clipping, staff files news stories by topic. Then there's Steve Bibbs and Hawaii, which outshines us all (no pun intended). From the library web page anyone can find mandated agency reports. Daily headlines from local, national and world news reach legislative members as well as being available to any other Internet user. News stories are accessible for a week, then archived with retrieval on a subscription basis through the online new services. Legislative Reference Bureau's Library site also lists selected new articles available for circulation. Arthur McEnany reports LA is developing Intranet division by division.

Talk turned to acquisition lists as NM'S Tracey Kimblall wondered if they're worth the effort to prepare and distribute. Hostman Dave Harrell does a quarterly listing. Since I was covering this session, I tended not to talk. Sorry you all missed me.

* * * *

Answerland: Oregon Virtual Reference Service Project

by Susan L. Blixt, Arizona

Caleb Tucker-Raymond, Oregon's Statewide Digital Reference Project Coordinator, Multnomah County Library, delivered a presentation on Answerland, a virtual reference Web site that offers real-time, online reference to library patrons from any internet connection. This project officially opened for live chat service on

April 16, 2003 linking 21 academic, public and school libraries across the state of Oregon. The final goal is to deliver information services that are real-time, collaborated and available 24/7.

Answerland is available to everyone regardless of where they live and is especially convenient for those patrons that live in less populated areas without libraries. A question may come into one library but the answer may come from another library in the state. In this way, the patron receives a prompt response, although the first library does not have the resources to answer the question; the question is too technical; or the question requires expertise of a specialized library. This is a real advantage of collaboration among a variety of libraries whether public, academic, or school.

The explanations and instructions on how Answerland works is found on the Answerland Web site at URL: <http://www.answerland.org> Librarians will answer brief, factual questions in less than 10-20 minutes in live chat with the patron. If more research is required, the librarian will e-mail the patron within 48 hours.

Tucker-Raymond emphasized the direction for future growth: 1) provide more training to libraries around the state, 2) increase the number of libraries involved, 3) expand service hours, 4) implement new privacy and service policies, and 5) possibly offer a bilingual service.

* * * *

Everything is on the Web

Did you know that Noah took baby dinosaurs with him on the ark? Or that our planet is not even a thousand years

old? It's on the Web, so it must be true.

Our members love to repeat that everything is on the Web, and even suggest that perhaps libraries aren't needed because of it. But that's part of the problem. As Eddie Weeks of Tennessee pointed out, everything is on the Web. The problem is sorting and sifting out the relevant (and accurate) information. There's too much information, no accountability and misleading data that keeps growing. Soon, the truth gets out of hand or is politically spun. It becomes difficult to not only disprove something on the Internet, but also find out what is true.

So is there anything not on the web? Eddie mentioned that there is bias towards current events and no retrospection. For example, Irene Stone (CA) stated that many of California's information are not online. There may be partial information on what you need, but even that can be difficult to find. You can do a Google search, but too often the wrong search terms are used. And if you do find something, what's the quality of the research?

According to Steve Bibbs (HI), his office distributes a newsletter with tips for good searching and links to high-quality sites with good information. The newsletter is available to staff, members and the public. Arthur McEnany (LA) said his office does something similar. Louisiana publishes a newsletter every quarter with 3-4 informative web sites, and the sites are triple-checked to make sure the quality is high.

Shirley Dallas (WA) pointed out that many of the younger researchers don't even know what research is; they only know a computer and think all research starts and ends there. Arthur and Shirley brought up the fact that

old statutes are not on the Internet. People think statutes are absolute and official, but many times it is time consuming and expensive to keep them up to date. Many times there are wrong versions up on the Web, whereas most libraries have current changes in their collections.

Marilyn Johnson (ND) highlighted something her office does. They use Teleport, software that attaches itself to state agencies files, catches documents and converts them into PDF format. Now her library has a copy of everything and stores them in a state-wide database.

Cathy Martin (NC) mentioned that her office is looking into ways to preserve Web sites, and pointed out the Internet site the Way Back Machine, a service that allows people to visit archived versions of Web sites (<http://www.archive.org/>). Using the Way Back Machine, you can type in a URL of your favorite Web site and see how that page looked as many as ten years ago. The old data may not still be on the Web, but you can catch a glimpse of it—whether it is accurate or not.

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LRL Business Meeting October 18, 2003

Chair Arthur McEnany (LA) thanked West Group and LexisNexis for their sponsorship of the opening reception and Thursday dinner. For the reception, participants were treated to refreshing beverages and tasty hors d'oeuvres and had an opportunity to sit back and converse. The Thursday night dinner, at the elegant Portland Steak and Chop House, offered a relaxing environment to relax and rest from the busy seminar.

Arthur then thanked David Harrell for tirelessly planning and arranging the PDS. In gratitude, LRL presented him with a long-sleeved T-shirt that stated, "I Planned the 2003 LRL PDS and All I got Was this Lousy T-shirt."

Copies of the LRL Web Site survey results were distributed and discussed. Overall: Everyone is pretty content with the site, but everyone agreed that it could use a site overhaul. NCSL will

The Core Reference Collection was mentioned, and the last time it was updated was 1999, so it is sorely in need of an update. Arthur, Cathy Martin (NC) and Kristin Ford (ID) agreed to review the content and work on updating its material this coming year.

be unveiling a new format soon to address this issue. NCSL staff will work hard to keep material up-to-date, and it was mentioned that the site itself could use more constructive content. If anyone has any ideas about what can be added to the site, contact Janna Goodwin at NCSL, 303-364-7700 or janna.goodwin@ncsl.org

(NLPES), another NCSL staff section. The date of the conference has yet to be determined as it cannot overlap with the Florida State football season. Any ideas for possible sessions are welcome; submit them to Janna at NCSL.

There was no other business and Arthur adjourned the meeting.

News from the States

From Kristin Ford, Idaho:

Howdy from Boise! We are in the midst of an exciting mayoral race to replace our last mayor who was beloved until some financial scandals arose, after which he had to step down in time to avoid being recalled. So, even though it's not a legislative election year, we still have some election anticipation going on. In the Legislative Library, I am in the midst of hiring an assistant for the session starting in January, getting the House and Senate committee minutes ready to be sent off to a bindery, negotiating a new Westlaw contract, checking out the new chocolate shop that just opened up a couple of blocks away, whittling away at the ever-present pile of periodicals to be filed and books to be cataloged, and throwing wistful glances at the pile of books in the corner constituting my "to be weeded from the collection" pile, which has little chance of receiving further attention during the next six months.

Here come some more legislation drafts for me to index! Later I am meeting with the people that are designing our new computer drafting system. This is an exciting system which we are designing in-house and will have many more library applications for me than does the current system. I'm going to have my library catalog on it, as well as a system for tracking the research requests I receive from legislators, the subject index I create for our legislation and session laws, and the index we create for committee minutes.

You can definitely feel the gathering momentum towards the legislative session, my (how can it be?) fifth with the Idaho Legislature. All my best from Boise! Kristin

More Pictures from Portland



The gang's all here!



Touring the state capitol



Irene Stone (CA) enjoys a spin on the Riverfront Carousel

From Shirley Dallas, Washington:

The only news I know about the Legislature is that Governor Gary Locke is going to call a one-day special session of the Legislature for Dec. 5 to cancel next year's Washington presidential primary. Locke said the state shouldn't waste money on a primary that has no real meaning. What a concept!

Democrats are using precinct caucuses Feb. 7, among the earliest in the country, to allocate national convention delegates. President Bush has no serious challenger for the GOP nomination. Republicans will caucus March 9. The primary had been set for March 2.

Canceling the primary will save taxpayers more than \$7 million. This is a one-time cancellation option.

As to the library, this coming session will be the first time we are not supplying specialized services to the Legislature or state government except around the topics of Washington history and federal depository. We have added some digitized Washington history at

<http://www.secstate.wa.gov/history/publications.aspx>

* * * *

From Nan Bowers, Nevada:

My little library is pretty low key right now. News is hard to come by. There are two state issues that may be of interest, however. A parcel of Indian reservation land in a transportation corridor south of Reno has been leased to a Mercedes Benz dealer. Currently, the tribes do not pay any sales tax to the county or state from sales made on their lands. The question is whether all businesses on the Indian land are exempt from paying county

of state sales tax. The decision could have real tax ramifications, besides setting a precedent.

The second issue greatly concerns legislators. We have several public employees serving in the Nevada legislature who work in city and county government, school districts and universities. Two Clark County (Las Vegas) employees were fired when it was discovered they were participating in legislative session work during their scheduled county work hours, for which they received on-duty pay. Two Las Vegas city employees, also legislators, are being investigated for submitting improper work and sick leave credits. Most government-paid employees take leave of absence during the legislative session, but a few tried other arrangements that were not always ethical. Some are afraid there may now be a move towards prohibiting government employees from serving in the legislature. We are a citizen legislature that meets 120 days on odd numbered years. Removing government employees would eliminate many highly qualified individuals from the pool of current and potential legislators.

* * * *

From Arnold Weinfeld, Michigan:

As for news from Michigan the chart topper is our budget predicament. An early consensus revenue estimate conference was held last week between the House and Senate Fiscal Agencies and the Department of Treasury. The result: As we begin the 2004 fiscal year, Michigan is already looking at a \$897 million deficit. The governor is planning town hall meetings the first couple of weeks in November to let folks know what's going on and hear where the public's priorities lie. This worked very well for her earlier this year as we tackled the FY 03 deficit of \$1.7 billion.

An executive order is expected after Thanksgiving.

* * * *

From Marian Rogers, Wisconsin:

The Summer 2003 issue of *Newline* told of the LRB's impending move to new quarters in October. To build team spirit, the library staff adopted the World War II Rosie the Riveter slogan: "We can do it!" and wore Rosie t-shirts during the move.

The move started on October 6 and ended October 20. Moving the nearly 80,000 items in the library was complicated by the need to reuse the shelving. This was a tough task since the materials had to be offloaded; shelving dismantled, moved, and reconstructed; then reloaded with library materials. This process was even more of a challenge because it could only be accomplished by starting at the end of the library and working backward to its beginning—sometimes that made us dizzy! Because the collection was weeded and downsized before the move, the library fits (snugly) in this new, smaller space.

"We did it!" thanks to good planning and an excellent moving crew which was experienced with relocating library collections. The bureau's staff and library are now housed at our new location on capitol square: One East Main Street, Suite 200. After only a short time at this location we already enjoy having the entire bureau on a single floor and are looking forward to being in close proximity to other legislative service agencies. Our phone and fax numbers, postal, and email addresses are unchanged.

* * * *

From Marilyn Johnson, North Dakota

Through a North Dakota Library Coordinating Council grant, the State Library began an electronic documents preservation project for state documents. Running monthly, the software, Teleport Pro, captures state documents from all state agency Web sites and stores them in the project computer's hard drive. Since February 2003, the State Library has examined 60,000 electronic state documents, retaining 2,300 that met State Document Depository Collection Development criteria. When electronic documents are no longer available from an agency's Web page because of updates, discontinued sites, or broken links, they will be available through the State Library's online catalog with full bibliographic record.

As part of the Electronic Documents Project, the State Library also seeks to locate and capture "fugitive" state documents. If an agency neglects to provide paper copies of its publications to the depository system, the State Library now has a method of finding and securing those published on the Web.

At the 2003 North Dakota Library Association convention banquet, the President's Award went to Marilyn Johnson for "her dedication and outstanding work in making current and historical legislative information accessible to the people of North Dakota." Was she surprised? You bet. Recognition by peers for years of pulling my hair out makes the effort sweet.



Editor's Note:
Congratulations, Marilyn!

From Lynda Davis, Maryland:

The Maryland Legislative librarians said goodbye to our peach walls and teal carpet this month. The new blue/gray/maroon carpet and the off-white walls brighten our underground digs. We look forward to new furniture next spring.

We expect the hot topics for the 2004 session will be slot machines, education funding, budget deficits, university tuition, workers compensation, and health insurance.

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NCSL Publications

Legisbriefs:

- Institutional Controls As Brownfields Cleanup Tools
Aug.Sept. 2003, Vol. 11, No. 34
- When Children Witness Domestic Violence
Aug.Sept. 2003, Vol. 11, No. 36
- Personal Assistance Services On The Job
Aug.Sept. 2003, Vol. 11, No. 32
- Honorariums
Aug.Sept. 2003, Vol. 11, No. 33
- Epilepsy Programs Across The States
Aug.Sept. 2003, Vol. 11, No. 35
- College Tuition And Undocumented Immigrants
Aug.Sept. 2003, Vol. 11, No. 31
- Ethics Training
October 2003, Vol. 11, No. 42
- Asthma
October 2003, Vol. 11, No. 38
- College Tuition And Undocumented Immigrants
October 2003, Vol. 11, No. 39
- Young People With Disabilities
October 2003, Vol. 11, No. 40
- States Bring Rural Issues Into Focus
October 2003, Vol. 11, No. 41
- Preventing Childhood Injuries
October 2003, Vol. 11, No. 37

State Legislative Reports:

- Improving Justice Technology Infrastructure
- Using Risk Assessments And Institutional Controls As Brownfield Cleanup Tools
- Indirect Support For Adoptive Families: Lower Cost Options For States

Books/Articles:

- Update To Government To Government
- Financing Early Care And Education: A Primer For Funding And Policy Choices In A Changing Fiscal Environment
- A Guide To The Dome Photos At NCSL



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