Chair's Column

Elizabeth Lincoln, Legislative Reference Library, Minnesota

This issue of Newsline features news from many legislative libraries. Thanks to Catherine Wusterhausen and Adrienne Sonder from Texas and Brooke Daly from Alaska for full library profiles. Thanks to the regional coordinators for tracking down news from the other states.

In Minnesota, staff at the Legislative Reference Library have been working hard to get as much of our information online as possible. Our most recent project has been to pull together all the statistics and typewritten lists of information about the Legislature that the Library has compiled into a database allowing researchers to consolidate data about each legislative session—information on legislators, bills, laws, vetoes, session dates and names of leadership.

Heather Morton, Shelley Day and I had the chance to meet recently in Denver as part of NCSL’s Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee meeting. Shelley and I also paid a visit to Molly Otto in the Colorado Joint Legislative Library.

Learning about the work going on in other legislative libraries is my favorite part of being associated with our staff section. Until we meet again, you can read all about your colleagues’ work here in Newsline!

Elizabeth
When the Texas Constitution was adopted in 1876, Texans considered lawmaking a part-time business and decreed that the Legislature meet biennially. One hundred and thirty-four years later, the Texas Legislature still meets in regular session for 140 days every other year, but the work of the Legislature continues year-round. The interim between legislative sessions is filled with committee hearings and constituent service.

Whether in session or out, the librarians and administrative staff of the Texas Legislative Reference Library are always ready to assist members of the Legislature, legislative staffers, and the public with research and legislative information.

Established as a separate agency in 1969, the main library is housed in the historic capitol building in downtown Austin. The space has been beautifully restored to preserve historic charm while providing all the modern conveniences, including wireless Web access. Our holdings include a tightly focused collection of political and social science titles, an extensive collection of state agency publications and a legal research collection. A second location houses the library’s clipping service, scanning operations and collection of original bill files for all legislative sessions since 1973.

While the library remains a popular destination for researchers and tourists alike, many services are provided electronically. We have several current awareness services, including a daily newspaper clipping service, a weekly current articles list and a quarterly list of new publications. The current editions of all three services are available to our legislative users through the Texas capitol Intranet, and back issues can be searched online by title and subject.

Since many Texas newspapers do not provide historical indexes, the clipping service archive is a favorite—and often crucial—tool for background research, allowing the legislative community to search by subject, headline or author for articles back to 1901. For the past several years, each article in the clips has also been linked to any bills or reports mentioned in the article. This valuable service makes it simple to locate a list of articles about a bill or to provide a copy of reports and studies referred to (often vaguely) in articles.

During the interim, many of our projects focus on recapturing the history of the Texas Legislature and making it available online. Not long ago, answering simple questions about a member’s term of service or committee membership required consulting a card file and stacks of books; more complicated questions might require days or weeks of intricate research. During the past several years, we have built databases to store detailed information on specialized topics such as vetoes and constitutional amendments. As part of the project, we collect and scan original documents. This work has been facilitated by the acquisition of high-speed scanners and a book scanner that has enabled us to work with fragile and tightly bound items.

(continued on page 3)
From Helen Hanby, Alabama:

Helen Hanby reports that the Alabama Legislature is out of session, having adjourned at the end of April. They’re trying to avoid the oil spill in the Gulf, and otherwise doing fine.

From Christine Heider, Arkansas:

Christine Heider reports that the Legislative Library will move into a larger space in October. The legislature adjourned in March, but this was the first year to meet every year (biennial sessions until this year). Welcome to the every-year club, Christine!

From Molly Otto, Colorado:

The 2010 Colorado Legislative Session adjourned sine die on May 12, 2010. It was an interesting and sometimes long session for both the library and Legislative Council staff.

Some of the legislative highlights are:

- Rocky Mountain High… (HB 1284 and SB 109) Medical marijuana legislation that regulates how doctors approve patients for medical marijuana and how it is dispensed.
- Teach our children well….. (SB 191) Teacher tenure that bases teachers’ performance and tenure on how well students score on assessment tests.
- Yeah…it’s the tax mannnnn…. (Numerous bills) Several bills repealed numerous tax exemptions that previously benefitted small businesses and consumers. Among some of the items that now will be taxed are soda (or pop), candy and bull semen (and that’s no bull!).
- Don’t let the Dome come down on me… (HB 1402 and SB 192) Approval to fund badly needed Capitol dome repairs, by combining state historical funds and funds from private donors to repair the rusting infrastructure of the dome.

Our biggest project is the Legislative Archive System, a major tool for researching legislative history and intent. The system provides access to copies of scanned bill files and, to date, contains files from 1950 through 1995. Once scanned, bill files are available in the system and searchable by bill number. Library staff then bookmark individual documents within the file and add searchable information such as the bill caption and the bill authors and actions.

By the beginning of the 82nd Legislature in January 2011, we hope to have a redesigned website that will pull together much of the information we have compiled and present it in an attractive and easy-to-use format.

When the next session begins, we will put aside our research projects and focus on session-related activities. To accommodate the work of the Legislature, the library extends its operating hours to 9:00 pm and remains open past this hour if either chamber is convened. We offer support in many capacities. Several of our staff members enter bill actions as they occur on the floor of the House and Senate into the capitol-wide legislative information system, which feeds information to the public Texas Legislature Online Web site.

The library also maintains a toll-free bill status hotline, which, although not as vital as in the years before Internet access, remains a popular tool for Texans who want up-to-the-minute information about pending legislation. The hotline also provides a bit of fresh air (and occasionally some very unusual and interesting queries) as we become a primary link for Texans all over the state to connect with the Legislature and ask questions.

During session, the volume and complexity of reference questions the library receives increases. When not researching questions, reference librarians maintain the Index to Sections Affected database, indexing every version of every measure for its proposed statutory effect. This heavily used system is an essential tool for legislative research. Librarians also assist with identification of companion bills as well as the subject indexing of bills, activities which require careful examination of every piece of legislation filed. With 7,419 bills introduced during the regular session of the 81st Legislature, we had our work cut out for us last year. We look forward to an equally energetic and challenging session in 2011.

State News

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Home Sweet Home/Condo/Townhouse… (HB 1278)

HB 1278 creates an information officer or ombudsman for residents of common interest communities.

Up a lazy river…. (HB 1188)

A failed attempt to ensure the right of river rafters to float on rivers that run through private property. Since the bill died, the issue (and its multitude of initiatives) may be placed on the ballot.

Finally, the Capitol now has WiFi access.

Library Happenings

Gay and I are working with the staff of Capitol Building Advisory Committee. We plan to help them organize the information on the art work and other displayed items in and around the Capitol.

In January, the library hosted Meilyn Weege, a local high school student, for a day. She visited the library as an internship for class in government. In April, the library hosted Kimberely Dickey, a Law Librarianship Fellow, as part of the University of Denver “Shadow a Special Librarian” program. We enjoy having students visit the library to find out what we do.

Finally, I was invited as a guest lecturer for a University of Denver Law Librarianship class. My presentation was on how to conduct Colorado legislative history.

From Carrie Rose, Connecticut:

Christine Graesser has been hired as head legislative librarian to replace Susan Southworth. Chris has nearly 30 years of legal research experience, including legislative research. Chris was the legal information specialist (aka librarian) at an area law firm, Brown Rudnick Berlack Israels. Before her job at Brown Rudnick, Chris was the library director at Shipman and Goodwin, another area law firm, where she supervised three people. Chris also has worked as a reference librarian at the University of Connecticut School of Law and the Connecticut State Library. Chris received her undergraduate degree from the University of Montana and her Master’s of Librarianship from the University of Washington. Her first day at the Connecticut Legislature was Friday, April 30.

From Pam Thompson, Florida:

Pam Thompson reports that their legislative session adjourned at the end of April. The good news was that they managed to avoid furloughs, reductions in pay and general layoffs; the bad news is the oil spill off their west coast.

From Frances Thomas, Louisiana:

Frances Thomas (congratulations on your promotion, Frances!) reports that Louisiana is dealing with the effects and containment of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Their Legislature is still in session, with a target adjournment date of June 21. Frances also reports that Suzie Johnson (Librarian Emeritus) is enjoying her retirement and gardening.

From Casey Pace, Mississippi:

Casey Pace reports that there’s no real news out of Mississippi. Their Legislature adjourned in early April, after passing both a main budget and a contingency budget dependant on federal actions. Furloughs remain a possibility for state employees.

From Mary Rasmussen, Nebraska:

Greetings from Lincoln, Nebraska, home to the Nebraska Legislature and the Nebraska Cornhusker football team.

The 101st Nebraska Legislature concluded its business on April 14, 2010. The legislative session was primarily devoted to the ongoing budget shortfall. The Appropriations Committee wrangled with the issue of “across-the-board cuts” proposed by the governor. Ultimately, the Legislature agreed to some of those cuts as a means of balancing the budget. However, because it had also implemented cuts during a special session in November 2009, the Legislature passed LR 542, which “provides the standing committees and Executive Board shall review programs within the agencies under their subject-matter jurisdiction to identify services, programs, and obligations that may be reduced or eliminated during the 2011 session.”

As a means of implementing its own budget cuts, the Legislature furloughed all legislative employees for one day, rolled back a scheduled pay increase and froze salaries.

In other news, Nebraska, like all state legislatures, is gearing up to create new district boundaries for the Legislature and the U.S. House of Representatives once the new census figures are released in 2011. The Legislative Research Office (LRO), which includes the library, is slated to provide the Legislature
with legal, technical and administrative support during the 2011 process. LRO is designated as the state’s contact for the Census Bureau and has hired a GIS mapping specialist. The GIS specialist has been working with local election officials and the Census Bureau to get the mapping data in order for the work that will need to be done once the 2010 census figures are released next year.

The Legislative Research Library has also undergone a transition—we migrated from a server-based automated catalog to a web-based system, through EOSI. We’re very excited about this conversion and, because this new system appears to be intuitive, we feel confident that we will have it mastered in no time.

From Tracey Kimball, New Mexico:
Paula Tackett, director of the New Mexico Legislative Council Service, retires this June after 22 years as head of our office and supporter of our library. She is only the third director since the LCS was established in 1951, and the first woman.

Paula has guided the Legislature through two capitol renovations, two public corruptions cases and technology upgrades from typewriters to computers and Web sites. About half the 100 legislative staff members she manages work for Building Services. "I introduce myself as 'head janitor of the Capitol,'” she said. She has met the day-to-day and session-to-session challenges of a bill-drafting, committee-staffing and research office with grace and style, according to a former House speaker.

She also helped establish the Capitol Arts Foundation, which provides New Mexico art for our Roundhouse and capitol annex.

Many LRLers have met and worked with her over the years in NCSL activities. With her backing, library staff have been able to participate in LRL activities and even host professional development seminars. She will be missed for more reasons than I can sum up here.

Zelda Abeita, our library assistant—who is also a jewelry-maker from Kewa Pueblo (formerly Santo Domingo)—created an extraordinary silver bracelet with capitol-related designs as a retirement gift from the LCS.

Our current assistant director for drafting services, Raul Burciaga, has been named to succeed Paula. Even after 10 years of LCS service, he describes the challenges to come as "daunting," but he’s already a committed NCSL participant and will attend the Louisville Legislative Summit. If you’re able to attend, please help welcome and introduce him to the LRL world.

From Marilyn Johnson, North Dakota:
This spring, the 2005, 2007 and 2009 standing committee records—including clerks’ notes from hearings as well as testimony turned in—appear on the legislative branch Web page under "library documents" at http://www.legis.nd.gov. Plans call for the 2001 and 2003 records to be online before this fall. Newspaper clips from 1981 through the 2009 session also are available for Legislative Council staff to keyword search online. The 2009 Legislative Assembly changed the name of the Legislative Council, which is the 17-member interim entity determining studies, to Legislative Management.

Attorneys, fiscal analysts, computer, support and library staff retain the name Legislative Council. The interim committee known as Legislative Management reverted to its former name, Legislative Procedure and Arrangements. Clear enough?

From Juan Carlos Ortega, Puerto Rico:
Juan Carlos Ortega reports that the legislature is in session until the end of June. There have been governmental layoffs and forced furloughs. Many people are upset by the situation.

From Eddie Weeks, Tennessee:
As for Tennessee, we’re still drying out from our recent floods. One state office building, the Andrew Johnson building, remains closed as of May 18 due to water damage to the building. The state records center is still drying out records, and will be for quite some time. We are still in session with a target adjournment of the first week of June. Y’all take care now, y’hear?

From Marian Rogers, Wisconsin:
Recently we joined LVIS (Libraries Very Interested in Sharing), a group of ILL libraries nationwide that agree to a reciprocal borrowing agreement. Basically, the agreement is “if you don’t charge us, we won’t charge you.” Since we are not in a consortium of
“Signs of Spring”

Black bears have been officially sighted around town, robins are singing in the treetops during periodic snow squalls, and the Alaska Legislature is barreling toward its final (90th) day on April 18, 2010. This is the end of the second session of the 26th Alaska Legislature, so we send out a memo to all committee aides reminding them that all committee bill files must be sent to the Legislative Reference Library (LRL). In the flurry of activity when a session adjourns, even the most experienced staff need a reminder to box their files and send them to the library.

As the state of Alaska turns 51, the LRL finds itself part of a well-developed system that makes the legislative process and information easily available to legislators, constituents and the general public.

State Profile: Alaska Legislative Reference Library

By Brooke Daly, Alaska

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Twenty-one Legislative Information Offices ensure that citizens in the far-flung corners of our huge state can participate in teleconferenced hearings or get answers to all kinds of questions from knowledgeable staff. In Juneau, we are located only a block from the Alaska State Library and State Historical Library. Three blocks further is the Alaska State Archives, the final repository for many of our legislative records.

The LRL has four main functions. First, we distribute legal materials to the Legislature, including Alaska statutes, Alaska administrative code and bound session laws. Second, we maintain a library collection that supports the work of the attorneys who draft bills and the research analysts who write research reports for the Legislature. This includes the statutes of all 50 states, federal statutes and regulations, and Alaska legislative records back to territorial days. Third, we collect, preserve and make available the records of the Alaska Legislature. Last but not least, we help people conduct research using the Legislature’s records.

Like Hawaii, Alaska is a young state, and the role and function of the LRL has evolved and changed during the last 51 years. In 1963, the Alaska Legislative Council wrote in its biennial report that it maintained a “modest legislative reference library… primarily for the use of the Legislature,” but which was also open to the public. Reference materials included codes and session laws of most of the states, general reference works, textbooks and casebooks on legislative subjects, and other materials relevant to legislative and governmental research.

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By the mid-1970s, the library, while continuing to serve the research needs of the Legislature, had evolved into the depository for legislative committee records. This function was formalized in the Uniform Rules of 1981, which provided that committee minutes, tapes and files for each bill or subject be sent to the Legislative Library at the end of each session.

The Library experienced growing pains throughout the 1980s as an increasing number of legislative documents accumulated in its constrained space. A barebones library staff not only processed and archived all these documents, but also had to provide access to legislative history material for patrons. They simultaneously completed many lengthy, time-consuming legislative histories for Legislative Information Offices around the state and the Anchorage and Fairbanks law libraries. Much of the material was unique and is still available only at the LRL.

The 1980s also saw the beginning of computerization. Minutes of committee meetings were put on the Alaska Legislative Computer System (ALECSYS) starting in 1982. This legislative local area network soon expanded to include Alaska statutes, bills and resolutions, session laws, and House and Senate journals and was available to the public at Legislative Information Offices.

Since 1997, the Alaska State Legislature Home Page, www.legis.state.ak.us, has made available an ever-expanding quantity of legislative information and has significantly changed the role of the LRL and the librarians. Now, we frequently guide researchers over the telephone as they navigate the Website and direct them to sources of information not on the Internet. Even documents that are available only on paper or microfiche can be quickly scanned and e-mailed to a patron in a remote location. Since 1990, the library also has produced and regularly updated the Guide to Legislative History Materials, which is available on the “publications” page of the Legislature’s Website. The guide is an essential tool for determining the form and location of documents.

In 1999, the LRL moved (for the fourth time) to a completely renovated space in the newly created Terry Miller Legislative Office Building (formerly a Juneau elementary school) across the street from the state capitol. The librarians happily and creatively designed the allotted space to optimize the function-
The Meeting of Champions. Kentucky, where legends are born and champions are bred, epitomizes the innovation, creativity and fighting spirit that distinguish state legislatures in these extraordinary times. Like Kentucky legends Abraham Lincoln, Muhammad Ali and Secretariat, the Legislative Summit is a legend all its own, championing strong states, right solutions to tough issues and ideas that inspire.

**LRL Preliminary Agenda**

**Sunday, July 25**

1:00 pm - 2:45 pm

**What’s Up in Your Library/Meet and Greet**

Providing library services to state legislators and their staff in the fast-paced atmosphere of a legislative session creates unique challenges. Learning how other legislative librarians have dealt with an issue, and the results that followed, is a valuable part of the LRL experience. Roundtable participants will discuss new programs, changes and innovations in state legislative research libraries.

7:15 pm - 9:15 pm

**LRL Dutch Treat Dinner**

Join librarian colleagues from around the country for a great evening at a local restaurant. Spouses and guests are welcome.

**Monday, July 26**

3:30 pm - 5:00 pm

**Legislative Staff University – Leadership in Challenging Times**

Designing innovative solutions to thorny issues is important in tough budget times, particularly when the public’s trust in government is waning. Learn the essential leadership skills to motivate and inspire that can make a difference in policymaking and personnel management.

6:00 pm - 11:00 pm

**Social Event: Country, Culture and Cuisine: Opening Event**

Tuesday, July 27

7:30 am - 8:45 am

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**LRL Breakfast and Business Meeting**

The Legislative Research Librarian Staff Section will meet to discuss staff section business over breakfast.

4:30 pm - 5:45 pm

**Digital Information and Copyright Issues**

Online and digital information presents new challenges to fundamental copyright doctrines. Copyright issues are among the most hotly contested. Come hear a discussion regarding how legal principles and technological capabilities are constantly challenging each other and every outcome can directly affect the future of libraries.

**Wednesday, July 28**

11:15 am - 12:30 pm

**Salute to Legislative Staff**

12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

**Tour of the University of Louisville Library**

The University of Louisville is a state supported research university located in Kentucky’s largest metropolitan area. It was a municipally supported public institution for many decades before it joined the university system in 1970. The University of Louisville has several libraries, including the William F. Ekstrom Library.

2:15 pm - 3:45 pm

**Legislative Staff University**

4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

**Protecting Legislative Records in the Digital Age**

Joint with National Association of Legislative Information Technology

Legislative documents have survived for decades. But now they consist of digital content including text, images, audio, video and more, and are more fragile than paper. Digital materials and content depend on technology and active management to ensure ongoing accessibility. Learn about a proposed model law, technical solutions and other collaborative efforts to ensure that digital legislative records are authentic, trustworthy, enduring and accessible.

6:00 pm - 10:00 pm

**Social Event: Race to the Finish Line: Closing Event at Churchill Downs**
Legislative Staff Membership on the 2010-2011 NCSL Executive Committee

By Nancy Cyr, Nebraska, NCSL Staff Chair

NCSL’s 2010 Legislative Staff Nominating Committee is seeking nominations for legislative staff to serve on the 2010-2011 Executive Committee. The task of the 2010 Legislative Staff Nominating Committee, which meets at the NCSL Legislative Summit in Louisville, Ky., in July, is to nominate a slate of 16 members and three officers of the NCSL Executive Committee for 2010-2011.

Ten current members of the Executive Committee are eligible for nomination for another one-year term. There are six vacancies among legislative staff positions on the Executive Committee this year. The vacancies are created by Executive Committee members reaching their limit of three consecutive one-year terms.

Legislative staff interested in serving on the 2010-2011 NCSL Executive Committee should review the nominating procedures information and write a letter of declaration, which must be postmarked or electronically transmitted by the following deadline dates. Declarations and letters of support shall be addressed to Patrick O’Donnell, Chair, NCSL 2010 Legislative Staff Nominating Committee, in care of the NCSL office in Denver at this address. NCSL will acknowledge their receipt and notify all members of the nominating committee.

Candidates for Staff Vice Chair

The letter of declaration must be postmarked or electronically transmitted no later than June 1, 2010.

Candidates for At-Large Membership

The letter of declaration must be postmarked or electronically transmitted no later than June 15, 2010.

All letters of support must be postmarked or electronically transmitted no later than July 1, 2010. Submit all letters to NCSL using the following address:

Patrick O’Donnell, Chair
NCSL 2010 Legislative Staff Nominating Committee
Attn: Joyce Johnson
National Conference of State Legislatures
7700 East First Place
Denver, CO 80230
or e-mail to joyce.johnson@ncsl.org

2010 Professional Development Seminar Postponed

By Heather Morton, NCSL

At the end of April, the LRL Executive Committee sent a survey to LRL members, foreign librarians and interested parties regarding attendance at the upcoming 2010 Legislative Summit and LRL Professional Development Seminar. Forty responses were received and tabulated. The results showed that the state fiscal situation is still difficult and many states are under travel bans. The number of members who would be able to travel to the fall seminar was very low.

After reviewing the responses, the LRL Executive Committee voted to postpone the 2010 Professional Development Seminar and urge members to attend the Legislative Summit, if possible. The LRL Executive Committee is in discussions to resume the Professional Development Seminar in October 2011, in Denver, Colorado.
## NCSL Publications

### Reports:
- NCSL’s Guide to Leaders and Legislatures 2010—Ziegler/Rogers
- Strengthening the Health Care Safety Net Workforce—Tobler (meeting summary/WEB)
- Improving Child Health—Saunders (meeting summary/WEB)
- Digital Preservation of Legislative Records—Greenberg
- Care and Early Education 2009 Legislative Action—Fagan (WEB)
- State Tax Actions 2009—Waisanen (WEB ONLY)
- Strengthening Forensic Science Oversight—Williams/Hammond
- Promoting Healthy Communities and Reducing Childhood Obesity—Morandi/Shinkle/Winterfeld
- A Look at Pennsylvania’s Early Childhood Data System—Stedron
- Report to the Hawaii Legislature—Kawanabe/Sikkema
- Weather or Not? State Liability and Road Weather Information Systems (RWIS)—Rall (WEB)

### LegisBriefs:
**February 2010**
- Improving Child Nutrition—February 2010, Vol. 18, No. 8
- Redistricting: Making the Census Count—February 2010, Vol. 18, No. 9

- A Rough Road to REAL ID—February 2010, Vol. 18, No. 10
- Recovery Act Funding for Dislocated Workers—February 2010, Vol. 18, No. 11
- Reducing Sodium to Improve Health—February 2010, Vol. 18, No. 12
- Older Drivers—February 2010, Vol. 18, No. 13

**March 2010**
- Paper, Plastic, Reusables: What’s Your Bag?—Vol. 18, No. 14
- The Common Core State Standards Initiative—Vol. 18, No. 15
- Oral Health Care for Women and Children—Vol. 18, No. 16
- Recovery Act Funding for Youth Employment—Vol. 18, No. 17
- The MOVE Act: States Confront Military and Overseas Balloting Requirements—Vol. 18, No. 18
- State Wellness Initiatives—Vol. 18, No. 19

**April/May 2010**
- High-Speed Rail: On the Fast Track—Vol. 18, No. 20
- Preventing Falls Among Older Americans—Vol. 18, No. 21
- Growing Groceries in Food Deserts—Vol. 18, No. 22
- Chronic Health Conditions and Minority Youth—Vol. 18, No. 23
- Recovery Act Funding for Green Jobs Training—Vol. 18, No. 24
- Preventing Teen Suicide—Vol. 18, No. 25