Bill Drafting Systems: A Collaborative Effort
Office of Legislative Counsel, California

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Background

• California Legislature
  • 40 Senators and 80 Assembly Members
    • Two-year session; full time legislature

• Office of Legislative Counsel
  • Nonpartisan agency
    • Legislative Counsel Bureau
      • 85 attorneys and ~100 legal support staff (end users)
    • Legislative Data Center
      • ~300 staff
  • 16,000 bill and amendment requests each year
# Bill Drafting - System Components

<table>
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<th>Component</th>
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<td>Workflow of Requests and Measures</td>
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<td>Bill Drafting (XMetaL editor)</td>
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<td>Publishing (Office of State Publishing)</td>
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<td>Indexing (Statutory Record) and Code Compilation</td>
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<td>Interfacing Systems (internal and public access)</td>
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Critical for system design

- **Automation**
  - Follow applicable legislative rules
  - Over-automation can be restrictive

- **Access to information**
  - Copy previous sessions’ bills, codes, and other requests from old system to new system
  - Different users view different areas of system

- **Usability and Efficiency**
  - Focus on how users actually use system
  - Allow easy creation of drafts that are similar to previous work

- **Flexibility**
  - Build the system for what is known and include flexibility for what is not
  - Other systems need the same data in different formats
Evolution of Systems and Collaboration

1990s
Mainframe Bill Drafting and Code Compilation
First automation at agency (from typewriters to mainframe)

2004
New user group (included attorneys and reps from other end user roles), other state agencies, Senate and Assembly

2008
Indexing group; focused on designing automation that significantly reduced time to finish work

2011
User group, Senate and Assembly Desk staff, Rules Committees, Chamber support staff

2016
User group: reps from every business group responsible for readiness of their team

Automate Workflow, Publishing and Interfacing Systems; rewrite Bill Drafting
Major project effort. Several new components added; attorneys now using system for drafting

Auto-generate Instruction Amendments
Updated drafting and publishing of requests; transformational for end users

Rewrite Workflow application
Replaced COTS product with application written in-house
Partnership Among Stakeholders

• Identify end users and set expectations
  • Establish diverse user group
  • Ensure knowledge of system use and IT project lifecycle
  • Avoid unrealistic expectations

• Share ownership
  • Understand perspectives of others
  • Provide responsibilities for end users

• Communicate with accuracy, timeliness, and clarity
  • Consider different languages and work styles
  • Adjust traditional IT methods
  • Establish preferences for method and frequency
Implementation Strategies

• Consider everything when determining scope and schedule
  • Implement in stages
  • Make time for feedback
  • Go live between legislative sessions or during recess

• Provide multiple opportunities for users to learn
  • Jointly teach training classes
  • Offer labs for additional practice
  • Focus on transitioning users from old to new
Managing Feedback

- Collect feedback throughout the project lifecycle
  - Invite volunteers to participate in a pilot
  - Test early, often, and effectively

- Have a process for requested changes
  - Designate a point of contact
  - Use a tracking tool
  - Define categories of requests
  - Provide reasons
  - Designate decision makers for each business group
  - Demonstrate willingness to negotiate and compromise
Concluding remarks

- Collaboration
  - Essential
  - Evolves

- Key takeaways
  - Partnership and shared ownership from all stakeholders
  - Realistic expectations
  - Mutual respect
Appendix
Workflow Component (Legal Services Application)
Bill Drafting Component (XMetaL editor)