

Keynote Address
Preserving State Electronic Documents
by Clark Kelso
March 23, 2004

General Outline for Keynote:

1. *Need for Preserving State Publications*
2. *Recognition of Need for Plan*
3. *Active Role for State*
4. *Model Should Draw Upon the Best*
5. *Model Should be Cooperative and Collaborative like other current State initiatives: CPR & the IT Council*

Opening remarks:

As the state chief information officer, as a professor in a law school, and as a person who has served several governors in looking at problems with state government, I know that the published record of what the state is doing is critical, not just for historic research but for helping us understand how we got to where we are and where we fell short.

Need for Preserving State Publications, including Electronic Versions

The need for preserving State publications follows:

1. Obvious record of state government for historic research
2. Less obvious but more important is as the official public documentation/record of what the state was doing at specific times
3. Not infrequently the one place that agencies can find copies of their own reports when projects have ended, managers reassigned and consultants left
4. Information-rich resource when problems re-emerge
 - a. The energy crisis
 - b. California Performance Review
 - o The IT Council

Discuss impact of current initiatives such as:

1. the CPR and how the Governor has called upon a major re-look at what the State does and how it is doing it – and using much in the existing print record as a base
2. IT Council for the governance of change

Recognition of Need for Plan

When I first heard of the State Library's initiative last year, I was already aware that there was a problem but – and this is a complement to many of you here today – I hoped that librarians and archivists had already worked out the solution.

We need to recognize that most agencies do not have a high level of priority for preservation of publications, either printed or electronic.

- Priority for most agencies, understandably, is providing new content, not ensuring the preservation of previous or current materials.
- Many agencies are unaware or unconcerned with maintaining long-term preservation.
- Preservation responsibility is frequently left with individual programs, project supervisors and or consultants, rather than a departmental archive – seldom at a senior administrator’s level.

That does not mean the issue you are struggling with at this conference is not important – rather it means that your efforts here are even more critical because you are among the few really addressing the issue and need – identifying the problems, looking at ways other states and the federal government are working on approaches, and suggesting options and recommendations that policy-makers can pursue.

Need for the State to Take an Active Role

It is too important for state government not to be involved with how its own public documents are preserved, and how they are made accessible for the public currently and in the future.

- Audience for state information is diverse. The public should be able to expect to find authorized state government information, both current and archived.
- There is a need for the state to ensure that its documents and files can be authenticated as being unaltered – more readily recognized when originals were printed. Electronic files can be altered much more easily.
- It is important for agencies to maintain relationship with electronic documents to ensure accuracy and currency – to deal with the need to post corrections or notice of having been superseded.
- I would suggest that the best model requires clear distinction between current and older versions, not merely collections of state files through some external Internet archive. When people find government information through commercial search engines such as Google and Yahoo, they don’t necessarily recognize that what they find first may not be the version issued by a federal or state agency, or that it is the latest available. I know that you as librarians and archivists guide people with their searches when you have the opportunity. I would ask that you create your ideal models building in that knowledge and structure.

Model Should Draw Upon the Best

It may be difficult in today’s limited resources, but I ask that you draw upon the best that is being done – whether at the federal level, in the different states and abroad. My advice

to the State Library months ago was to look at what others are doing because I believe Californians needs are better met thru inter-government collaboration and coordination. I am pleased by the agenda to see that there are speakers from the federal government, from states developing their own solutions and from a variety of agencies and organizations.

We are talking about long term preservation and access. You, as librarians and archivists – and those of you here as state agency staff – know that these are not simple problems with simple solutions.

The statement – ‘Digital information lasts forever, or five years == whichever comes first – is real, comic, and frightening. We could spend much of these two days simply identifying all the hardware, software, proprietary formats that have come and gone in the last couple of decades:

Do you remember WordStar, CPM, 8 inch disks, dBase III database files, Wang Office Information Systems, DEC., etc.?

Model should be Cooperative and Collaborative

I am pleased that at the conference you are involving:

1. Librarians and archivists who have long fought for public access to government information;
2. The state agencies as content creators, as authors and therefore owners of those documents and files;
3. State and other data centers with the expertise and interest in the technologies that will be needed and,
4. Universities with their expertise in building digital libraries and interest in their preservation.

I would hope that the models that you suggest build upon your working together, so that you have a broad base for cooperation and collaboration.

You have identified a serious problem. Today all of you are taking a significant step to find ways to address it. I wish you all the best – and will be looking forward to working with the State Library, State Archives and State agencies in the next steps to implement your recommendations.