



For Your Information

Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services

Winter 1999

Year 2000 Contingency Planning

By Teresa Karnes, ITS Strategic Services

Hopefully, your agency has nearly completed work on the Year 2000 problem. However, there is always a possibility that systems that have been renovated and tested may encounter unanticipated Year 2000 problems. The risk of failure is not limited only to the agency's internal information systems. Many state agencies also depend on information and data provided by their business partners, including federal agencies, other state agencies, and pri-

vate sector entities. Finally, every agency depends on services provided by the public infrastructure—including power, water, transportation, telephone, and data communications.



Because of these risks, agencies must have business continuity and contingency plans to reduce the risk of Year 2000 failures. Specifically, each agency must ensure the continuity of its mission critical functions. This effort should not be limited to the risks faced by its own internal systems, but must include the potential Year 2000 failures of others, including business partners and infra-

structure service providers. With one weak link in the chain of critical dependencies, even the most successful Year 2000 program will fail to protect against major disruption of business operations.

The business continuity planning process focuses on reducing the risk of Year 2000-induced business failures. It safeguards an agency's ability to produce a minimum acceptable level of outputs and services in the event of failures of internal or external mission-critical information systems and services.

The United States General Accounting Office has developed guidelines for business continuity and contingency planning. The key processes are listed on page 4. More detailed information is also available at <http://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/bcguide.pdf> should you opt to follow these recommendations.

— See Contingency Planning on Page 5

Electronic Records Initiative in Mississippi

By Dr. Patricia Galloway, Dept. Of Archives & History

Few things are as vital to the operation of state government as information. It is the core around which decisions are made, resources are allocated, and determinations of benefits are made. Many agencies could not complete even their most basic functions without access to the files that contain the records of past action, present policy, and ongoing activities. Without a means for preserving the information that records their actions, agencies cannot demonstrate that they have performed their most basic functions. While technology has provided the means by which vast amounts of information can be stored economically, accessed rapidly, and preserved without

fear of degradation, it has also created many challenges with regard to the security, accessibility, and compatibility of electronic records. As agencies become dependent on electronically generated and stored records to carry out their missions, it is imperative that they adopt safeguards to insure that this information will be available both now and in the future.

As the state agency charged with maintaining the integrity and availability of state records, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History launched the Electronic Records Initiative nearly eighteen months ago. The program, initially grant-funded, has the goal of designing and putting in place a pro-

— See Electronic Records on Page 5

Inside This Issue . . .

- State Information Technology Consortium (SITC) . . . page 2
- SPAHRS Celebrates First Birthday page 2
- MDAC Moves Into the Information Age page 3



State Information Technology Consortium

By Claude Johnson, ITS Strategic Services

The Department of Information Technology Services, on behalf of the state of Mississippi, has recently joined the State Information Technology Consortium (SITC). Other member states are: Alabama, California, District of Columbia, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin, and Virginia.

Several state IT executives have worked in collaboration with the nonprofit Software Productivity Consortium (SPC) to create SITC, whose sole mission is to help its member states meet the significant challenges to state IT organizations resulting from the sudden devolution of federal programs (e.g., welfare, job training) to the state level and the ongoing and rapid advances in information technologies. The Executive Committee of the National Association of State Information Resource Executives (NASIRE) formally endorsed the formation of SITC in August of 1997 to serve as a NASIRE "technical arm."

Governed by a board of directors comprising state IT executives appointed by the President of NASIRE, SITC will provide a program of workshops, seminars, training classes, videos, technical reports, and other assistance in IT areas of most critical need to the states.

The initial focus of the SITC program is in helping state IT managers and executives identify and mitigate the many risks inherent in the development of large, complex information systems. An initial offering in this area, the Risk Management Workshop, was previewed to NASIRE state members at their annual conference in Williamsburg, Virginia, on October 1, 1997. An update to the workshops was given at 1998 NASIRE midyear conference in Lexington, Kentucky on April 21. The slides presented at this conference are available for download. The full one- or two-day Risk Management Workshop and other risk mitigation training services are now available to SITC members. California, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, South Dakota, and Washington have already benefited from workshops conducted in their states. Additional workshops for other states are being scheduled.

Beyond these initial offerings, the types of products and services that SITC will offer include the following:

- Workshops, seminars, and training classes in areas deemed of common interest to state IT executives;
- Videos and technical reports documenting critical IT issues, best practices, and "lessons learned";
- Access to a library of existing videos and reports;
- Access to the SITC website for electronic copies of best practices, guidelines, reports, templates;

- Use of SITC Washington D.C. area office and meeting facility;
- Representation and reporting on key standards and intergovernmental activities, as requested by NASIRE;
- Participation in multi-state IT initiatives coordinated by SITC;
- Further leverage via federal and private foundation grants acquired by SITC; and
- Participation on SITC boards for governance and technical direction.

ITS plans to coordinate several SITC Risk Management Workshops on strategic IT projects in Mississippi. Information will be posted on ITS's web site: <http://www.its.state.ms.us/et/>. For more information about SITC, visit their web site on the Internet at <http://www.state-itc.org/>. ■

SPAHRs Celebrates First Birthday Online

By Gayle Chittom, Department of Finance & Administration, MMRS

SPAHRs, the *Statewide Payroll And Human Resource System*, turned one year old on November 21, 1998. Authorized by Section 7-7-3(5), MS Code of 1972, Ann., SPAHRs is currently administered by the Mississippi Management and Reporting System (MMRS), an operating office of the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA), under the direction of Cille Litchfield. Like most one-year-olds, SPAHRs is providing new and exciting experiences for all who know and love it.

As a fully integrated payroll and human resource system, SPAHRs is distinctive in that the system uses a *single* database to support the personnel business processes required to administer both human resources and payroll functions for state employees. It replaces the applicant and employee/position tracking system formerly used by the State Personnel Board (SPB) and the payroll systems used by the DFA and other agencies. Litchfield sums up the effectiveness of SPAHRs with her statement, "Integration of these two functions reduces data redundancy and increases data accuracy, while allowing almost immediate feedback to the user. SPAHRs also provides uniformity in the application of federal and state regulations and policies."

According to J. K. (Hoopy) Stringer, State Personnel Director, SPAHRs "allows a good integration of personnel budgets and personnel expenditures—one is the plan and one is what you actually carry out. It enables fast feedback on what was paid vs. expectation."

— See SPAHRs on Page 3

MDAC Moves Into the Information Age

By Umesh Sanjanwala, IMD Division Director, MDAC

When Lester Spell assumed his role as commissioner of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) in 1996, the functions of the agency were something less than automated. In fact, the agency had only eleven PCs and sixteen typewriters in operation. The PCs were antiquated and inefficient. The amount of information stored on 300,000 index cards and in paper files was monumental. Commissioner Spell made it one of his top priorities to introduce technology into the agency thus furthering his goal to "...move agriculture to the 21st century—to improve life for every Mississippian."

The Department's Information Management Division (IMD) was established in 1997 with the mission of migrating the agency into the information age. The division set out to improve the agency's decision making ability by providing better ways to capture, access, analyze and report on information. Accomplishment of this goal would allow the departments within the agency to share information easily, thus enabling them to respond to citizen's needs quickly. IMD staff searched for ways to utilize tax dollars in a cost effective manner while im-



Joe Hardy, Director of Regulatory Services, attends first ever in-house PC training session.

proving efficiency and quality throughout the agency.

The first, and perhaps most important, step in accomplishing this mission was planning. A three-year, three-phase plan was developed to provide automation for each employee in the agency. Care was taken to use technology that was mission-driven and that best answered the needs of the agency. IMD didn't want to use a technology just because it was impressive or was the latest fad. We wanted to use technology that would best promote the state and its agricultural products.

Also critical to the success of the project was the support of the state Legislature. Funding for the technology initiative was made available via a master lease purchase program.

Since implementation of the plan, MDAC has made considerable progress. There are currently 110 workstations operating on the agency's WAN which connects remote offices at the Bureau of Plant and Industry in Starkville, the Mississippi State Coliseum, and the Agriculture and Forestry Museum to the main office. All workstations are configured for Internet access, internal and external e-mail, and can send faxes. Standard wordprocessing, spreadsheet and database applications have been implemented throughout the agency. Limited dial-up access is available to provide automation to field agents.

The agency has moved from a completely manual method of tracking fixed assets to a PC based system using bar codes. It also has online access to SAAS (Statewide Automated Accounting System) and SPAHRS applications for administrative functions. Labor intensive printing and distribution functions have been replaced by electronic data exchange. Several agency publications, such as the Mississippi Market bulletin,

— See MDAC on Page 4

— SPAHRS (Cont'd from Page 2)

He also noted that, "SPAHRS changes the way we run our personnel system and provides the basis for future modernization of other facets of the business processes of the personnel system."

At a cost of approximately \$8 million, and with its complex integration requirements demanding expert and highly qualified technical and functional staff, SPAHRS had quite a lengthy gestation period.

The concept began in February 1991, when SPB initiated an exhaustive study of its information needs. Work sessions were held among Information Technology Services staff (then known as Central Data Processing Authority), SPB staff, DFA staff, representatives of other control agencies in state government, and agency personnel officers. The outcome was a compilation of functional requirements and a data dictionary for a new system. In November 1992, a task force with payroll and personnel staff was brought together and in October 1993, an RFP for the purchase and implementation of SPAHRS was released. The official kick-off for the SPAHRS project was a little more than a year later, on November 16, 1994.

Three years (and one false start) later, on November 21, 1997, implementation of the human resources functions for six pilot agencies launched the first phase of SPAHRS. As SPAHRS passes its first birthday, approximately 75% of scheduled agencies are utilizing the system for human resource (HR) functions and more than 20% of scheduled agencies have been brought online for payroll. It is anticipated that 100% of scheduled agencies (including non-SPB purview agencies) will be utilizing the system for HR by July 1, 1999. Implementation of payroll for all agencies will be completed by October 1999.

Like proud parents, the state and its contractual partner, SAGA Software (formerly Software AG America) can claim a job well done. Even though it's barely a year old, SPAHRS is no longer a baby mainframe system. It is quickly approaching maturity, capable of carrying the state's payroll and HR functions into the new millennium. ■



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(*) indicates a new course.

For a complete listing and description of courses, contact Susan McClain at (601)359-6196.

Access our entire catalog online at <http://www.its.state.ms.us/educ>. #

— MDAC (Cont'd from Page 3)

are available on the Internet. An interactive video kiosk has been implemented and is used at various locations and trade shows throughout the state to provide important information about agriculture in Mississippi.

Future technology plans include the expansion of the network to 160 workstations. Laptops will be provided to field agents, and dial-up access will be expanded and enhanced. The last

phase of the project will include agencywide database applications which will further enhance productivity.

The support and vision of management coupled with good technology planning has allowed the agency to move well into the information age. Careful implementation of those plans has placed the agency in a position which will allow it to become an information technology leader in agriculture and commerce. #

— *Contingency Planning (Cont'd from Page 1)*

I. Initiation

- A. Establish a business continuity project work group
- B. Develop and document a high-level business continuity planning strategy
- C. Identify core business processes
- D. Define roles and assign responsibilities
- E. Develop a master schedule and milestones
- F. Implement a risk management process and establish a reporting system
- G. Assess existing business continuity, contingency, and disaster recovery plans and capabilities
- H. Implement quality assurance reviews

II. Business Impact Analysis

- A. Define and document information requirements, methods, and techniques to be used in developing the business continuity plan

- B. Define and document Year 2000 failure scenarios
- C. Perform risk and impact analyses of each core business process
- D. Assess and document infrastructure risks
- E. Define the minimum acceptable level of outputs and services for each core business process

III. Contingency Planning

- A. Assess the costs and benefits of identified alternatives and select the best contingency strategy for each core business process
- B. Identify and document contingency plans and implementation modes
- C. Define and document triggers for activating contingency plans
- D. Establish a business resumption team for each core business process
- E. Develop and document "zero day" strategy and procedures

IV. Testing

- A. Validate business continuity strategy
- B. Develop and document contingency test plans
- C. Establish test teams and acquire contingency resources
- D. Prepare for and execute tests
- E. Validate the capability of contingency plans
- F. Rehearse business resumption teams
- G. Update the business continuity plan based upon lessons learned and re-test as necessary
- H. Update disaster recovery plans and procedures

If you have any questions concerning Year 2000 contingency planning, please contact Teresa Karnes at 359-2615.

Visit the ITS Year 2000 web site at: <http://www.its.state.ms.us/yr2000/>. ¶

— *Electronic Records (Cont'd from Page 1)*

gram of archival management of electronic official records of Mississippi state government. The group has been hard at work understanding the issues surrounding electronic records and researching what is being done to manage electronic records in other states. As the body of knowledge has grown, it has become apparent that the best way to develop workable standards governing the administration of electronic records is to solicit input from the agencies which create and use those records.

In early December 1998, the Electronic Records Advisory Panel was formed. The panel is composed of people from several key agencies who have knowledge of their agencies' electronic record keeping and some involvement in its administration, and/or who are aware of some of the issues involved in electronic records administration. In keeping with the mission and internal practice of the Initiative which is preserving all of its records electronically, the panel will conduct the majority of its business by means of online discussion using a listserver, thus doing away with the need for fitting meetings into calendars and for attempting to record verbatim the transactions of meetings.

New forms of electronic records such as E-mail messages, databases, collaboration environments, and web sites emerge every day. Different state agencies often do not use the same software, and, even when they do, they may not use the same versions of that software. The Electronic Records Initiative is attempting to define ways that electronic records of archival value may be captured for long-term preservation, making broad use of open-systems and Internet-based standards. The expectation is that by developing a set of recommended standards in a cooperative and coordinated environment, with input from many agencies, the government and citizens of Mississippi can be assured of permanent access to all of the state's archival records, regardless of their format.

For more information regarding the Electronic Records Initiative visit the Mississippi Department of Archives and History's web site at <http://www.mdah.state.ms.us/electrecs.html>, or contact Patricia Galloway at galloway@mdah.state.ms.us. ¶

ITS Deputy Director Plans Retirement

by Cecil Watkins, ITS Board Chairman

ITS Deputy Director, Russell W. Ferguson, announced his plans to retire effective January 31, 1999. Russell has thirty-three years of state service, twenty-eight of which were with the Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services, formerly the Central Data Processing Authority (CDPA).

Russell was one of the first employees of CDPA, upon its initial creation in 1970, and has remained an integral part of the agency through several organizational changes and reorganizations. Russell has worked in almost every area of the agency, including operations, systems programming, software development, project management, network management, financial and personnel management, as well as serving as deputy director for twenty years.

The ITS Board and staff wish him the best in his retirement and thank him for his thirty-three years of professional service to the State of Mississippi. ■

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