

# State of Minnesota Streamlines Document Publishing with PTC's Arbortext® Software

**Automates publishing and boosts efficiency by installing advanced XML-based solution**

## Office of the Revisor, State of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

The State of Minnesota's Office of the Revisor of Statutes is responsible for creating, updating and publishing tens of thousands of vital documents during each legislative session, including statutes, bills, session laws, amendments, committee reports, resolutions and administrative rules.

During each session, the process to draft and amend some 20,000 documents involves numerous parties and multiple review cycles across a wide body of disparate legislative offices, including elected members, advisors, attorneys, researchers and support staff. Each time proposed legislation is amended, the Revisor's office is tasked with tracking all changes in all official versions and ensuring accuracy. And since the duration of each session is a matter of months, they have the added challenge of working within a tight deadline to publish the final legislation on time and in multiple formats.

## The Challenge: Modernize an Outdated Publishing Process

In 2002, the Information Technology (IT) department realized that their bill creation and management process was becoming unwieldy. Moreover, running the software on an aging mainframe was not a viable long-term solution. Even worse, maintaining the system was becoming increasingly burdensome; outdated parts were hard to replace, legacy software was written in outdated languages, and staff members who were experts on the system would soon retire. They needed a whole new system based on technology that would allow the legislature to draft 'structured' information so it could be easily reused, repurposed and published.

## The Solution: Arbortext XML-based Dynamic Publishing System

Fortunately, as their concern over this aging system was peaking, the IT group learned that XML-based technology was transforming the way other government organizations were drafting and publishing information. The Revisor's office began diligently exploring how XML could help their own publishing efforts by providing the structured authoring and publishing environment they needed. They evaluated numerous technologies. With Arbortext, they found the best available solution for editing, approving, engrossing, archiving and retrieving bills – a process that represents the lifeblood of legislation.



With the Arbortext Dynamic Publishing System, the Office of the Revisor of Statutes now has a state-of-the-art, XML-based solution for managing some 20,000 documents involving numerous parties and multiple revision cycles.

## The Results: Publishing Documents in a Fraction of the Time

The new Arbortext system went online in late 2005 for Minnesota's first general session which ended in May 2006, and the early returns have been quite impressive. For instance, simply emailing a single bill, which took up to 30 minutes with the old system, now takes just 5 minutes. And by printing directly from the new system, it now takes just 30 minutes from start to finish to make copies of the 278-page tax bill for the senate chambers, a process that required 90 minutes with the previous system. With Arbortext, the Revisor's Office has a long-term solution for efficiently creating and reusing content, tracking multiple change requests, and automating a publishing process within a very tight session schedule.

**“Arbortext software allows our users to more easily automate the publishing process, reuse text, build bill titles, add numbered references and collaborate with other agencies.**

**As our new system matures, I believe the Arbortext software will help us work more efficiently and make our jobs easier.”**

– Michele Timmons,  
Revisor of Statutes,  
State of Minnesota

### Time for a Change

In nearly every industry across the globe, speed and efficiency are now tantamount to success; every company needs to get a better product out the door faster in order to win. Remarkably, that mantra applies equally to state and federal governments; as soon as new legislation is passed, it must be published and posted immediately in order for the law to be enforced properly.

For the State of Minnesota, it's not surprising that when their document publishing system was fast becoming archaic and unsupported, the Revisor's Office began searching for a solution to last well into the new millennium.

In addition to their main objectives of greater publishing speed and accuracy, they also had a long list of additional expectations. They needed a high-performance system that enables numerous changes to legislation – often made at the last minute; a system that performs well in all parts of the document lifecycle, including creating, managing and publishing to different formats, both print and electronic; and one that provides efficient document archival and retrieval, along with absolute security.

Each time proposed legislation is amended, the Revisor's Office must 'engross' the legislation, that is, apply necessary edits to the original text, and distribute it back to the House and Senate for another round of reviews. To support this process, any new publishing system had to provide change management and change tracking. It also had to automatically number each line in a bill or amendment for accurate referencing, as well as disable automatic numbering between drafts. All changes are made before the legislation is presented to the governor for signature or veto.

Once the governor has signed the final legislation, the Revisor's Office then publishes the legislation in multiple print and electronic formats. Every two years, a full set of statute books is published. First, the Revisor's Office publishes the new set out to the Web. Then, six to eight weeks later, the printed version is ready for distribution. A supplement to the set is created and published during the year in between.

For the Revisor's office, with a full set of technical specifications in hand, along with a demand for change management and full security, it appeared that finding the technology that would meet all of these criteria was not going to be easy.

### Fitting the Bill: Arbortext Dynamic Publishing System

Before the Revisor's Office made the decision to work with PTC (Arbortext at the time), they evaluated several XML editors during a six-month pilot project that ended in October 2002. The Arbortext results were impressive, according to Michele Timmons, Revisor of Statutes.

"A major feature of any software is its ability to show page and line numbers as reference points in legislative documents. This is how lawmakers talk to each other when discussing changes to a bill," says Timmons. "Arbortext software allows our users to more easily automate the publishing process, reuse text, build bill titles, add numbered references and collaborate with other agencies."

The Revisor's information systems serve multiple purposes. In addition to documentation, these systems of inter-related data structures provide repository functions and source data for a number of publishing venues: Website presentation, commercial print publications, interim reports, and other highly styled documents.

The Revisor's Office selected Arbortext Editor, Arbortext Styler, Arbortext Architect and Arbortext Publishing Engine for the authoring and publishing components of their new system, which includes content management, commercial applications and customized applications. The system is used by more than 100 people.

### Early Results: Several Improvements in Efficiency

Because the new system went into production in late 2005 for the state's first general session, it's too early to report full results on all anticipated benefits. However, a number of benefits of the Arbortext system are already clear:

- Completely replaced outdated system to create, amend and publish bills, amendments and statute data
- Ability to efficiently create and reuse content
- Gained ability to track multiple change requests
- Faster publishing to PDF and HTML via multi-channel output, with real-time publishing to internal and external Websites
- Automated publishing within a very tight session schedule
- Interoperability with other data sources and applications

### Bonus: Easy to Use, Easy to Learn

With Arbortext, the State of Minnesota Revisor's Office not only found a dynamic publishing solution that could meet their exacting technical specifications, but they received a bonus in having a solution that makes their work easier, and required limited training.

"One of the great things I see about Arbortext software is the ability to provide our authors with an intuitive, user-friendly environment as we create and publish legislation," Timmons said. "As our new system matures, I believe the Arbortext software will help us work more efficiently and make our jobs easier."

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