

## **Public Sector News**

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### **Archiving Government Web Content**

Government information has been published on the Web now for many years, but until recently, the concerns expressed by librarians about being able to access this information in the future have fallen on deaf ears.

However, in April of last year the then Leader of the House of Commons, Jack Straw, wrote to the Cabinet Office Minister Hilary Armstrong about failings in archiving of and access to online documents. The response was a commitment to provide a solution.

When work was begun by the National Archives and the British Library to try to find that solution, their initial investigations showed that 60% of the links from 1997 to 2006 in Hansard were broken. As Hansard is the official record of proceedings of Parliament, and those proceedings have an impact on everyone of us, that is clearly an unacceptable situation. This percentage of broken links is no different from standards outside of government, but one might expect higher standards for government and Parliament. The concern is that increasingly URLs are quoted in answers to Parliamentary questions, and if the link is dead then the reader cannot see the complete picture.

The vision for the project is that 'every link works and every piece of online information cited remains accessible in perpetuity'. The solution is comprehensive archiving by the National Archives and development of a software component for use on all government websites which would deliver the information to the user whether it was on that site or in the archive.

The British Library's role is to find ways of using the National Archives index to extract what they need to preserve and to give access to it.

## **National Indicators And Electronic Delivery Of Services**

In local government, our performance used to be measured using an extensive list of Best Value Performance Indicators or BVPIs. These are being replaced by a set of 198 National Indicators, and there is one known as N14, which is defined as 'avoidable contact'. It is designed to measure the average number of customer contacts required to deal with a request from a customer. It will see how well authorities are doing at tackling 'failure demand'. This is the number of contacts required by customers whose request for information or application for services requires them to phone, call or e mail more than once because their request was not managed effectively the first time. You can see details of the indicators at:

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/indicatorsdefinitions](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/indicatorsdefinitions)

SOCITM (Society of Information Technology Management) has expressed concern that even after consultation on this indicator, there is insufficient focus on the use of the Web as a tool for citizens to access the information and services they need.

There is much discussion in local authorities about channel management. Should we be directing the public to the web, one stop shops or call centres? Figures produced by the North West e-Government Group show the relative costs of these channels as:

Face to face **£7.81**

Phone **£4.00**

Web **17p**

(Figures from the North West E-Government Group)

Although there is inevitably a focus on efficiency savings as local authority budgets get tighter, it is also clear that the Web is, for a growing number of people, the channel of preference.

The Web team in my own authority have produced another set of statistics about the use of the Web to supply information and services. I am sure these figures are replicated across local government, but in Warwickshire we found through an exit survey offered to a sample of users:

73% of the people who used the site said that if they hadn't found the information they wanted they would have contacted WCC another way, that is, by phone, by e-mail, by a visit or by letter.

This represents:

- 3 million extra phone calls
- 1.5million extra e-mails
- 960,000 extra visits
- 400,000 extra letters!

We also found that:

- 85 million pages were viewed in 2007, an increase of 58% over 2006
- 2.7 million different people visited the site which represents a 43% increase over the previous year
- 60,000 visits were made to the bus timetables on the site.

*Public Sector News is supplied by ALGIS (The Affiliation of Local Government Information Specialists) which represents information professionals providing information services to local authority staff and elected members. Jane Inman is currently Chair of ALGIS. ALGIS welcomes anyone with an interest in public sector information who feels they would benefit from being part of a community working in the same area. For more information go to <http://www.algis.org.uk>.*



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