

House Modernization Project

The House Modernization Project is a joint initiative being undertaken by two offices in the U.S. House of Representatives - the Office of the Law Revision Counsel and the Office of the Legislative Counsel. Each of the two offices is engaged in a set of interrelated projects to modernize systems used to produce and maintain certain legislative data. This document describes the portion of the House Modernization Project being undertaken by the Office of the Law Revision Counsel.

Background Information on the Office of the Law Revision Counsel

The Office of the Law Revision Counsel (OLRC) is an independent, non-political office in the U.S. House of Representatives. The OLRC produces and maintains the United States Code (<http://uscode.house.gov/>), which is the official codification of the general and permanent statutory law of the United States arranged into 51 broad titles according to subject matter. The United States Code is a large, complex document (approaching 50,000 printed pages and growing). The OLRC produces both print and online versions of the United States Code. For the print version, a complete new edition of the United States Code is produced every 6 years, and cumulative annual supplements showing only the changes that have occurred since the last complete edition are produced in each of the 5 intervening years. For the online version, the United States Code is updated continuously as new laws are enacted and kept as current as possible.

The staff of the OLRC is relatively small, currently consisting of 13 attorneys and 6 support staff. The OLRC attorneys are divided by function into 2 groups: attorney editors and codification attorneys.

The attorney editors maintain the official version of the United States Code by incorporating new statutes into the United States Code as they are enacted. This work involves classifying newly enacted statutes to determine whether and where they are to be included in the United States Code and updating the text of the Code to reflect amendments to existing law and the enactment of new law.

The codification attorneys analyze, reorganize, and restate existing law to be enacted into new positive law titles of the United States Code. This process is known as positive law codification (see <http://uscode.house.gov/codification/legislation.shtml>).

Overview of the OLRC Portion of the House Modernization Project

In essence, the goal for the OLRC portion of the House Modernization Project is to enable OLRC to do its work using XML-in/out systems. The work is proceeding in 3 stages:

- Stage 1: Conversion Tool to Convert United States Code Data into XML.
- Stage 2: Positive Law Codification System
- Stage 3: U.S. Code Editing and Production System

Stage 1: Conversion Tool to Convert United States Code Data into XML

Stage 1 work was completed in 2013, and the United States Code is now available in XML (see <http://uscode.house.gov/download/download.shtml>). In addition to the Code data itself, the USLM Schema and a detailed User Guide are provided for developers.

Although the United States Code is now available in XML, the underlying Code data is still produced and maintained using an antiquated GPO locator format. Each time the United States Code is updated to incorporate new laws, the conversion tool is used to create updated XML files as well. This ongoing

conversion will be required until Stages 2 and 3 are completed. In Stages 2 and 3, the OLRC will replace antiquated systems with new XML-in/out production systems so that the native environment of the United States Code data will be XML.

Stage 2: Positive Law Codification System

Work on Stage 2 is currently underway. In Stage 2, we are designing and implementing an XML-in/out production system to replace the antiquated system and enable codification attorneys to prepare bills and specialized report material in XML. In addition, we are automating much of the manual, labor-intensive tracking work required in positive law codification. The new system will also produce "reviewer documents" to facilitate side-by-side comparison of existing law and proposed changes.

Stage 3: U.S. Code Editing and Production System

In essence, the task for Stage 3 is to develop and implement an XML-in/out production system to maintain and update the United States Code. The new production system will enable Code editors produce both the online and print versions of the Code very efficiently and without compromising the OLRC's traditional high standards for precision and accuracy. In addition, the new production system will facilitate OLRC trend toward up-to-date currency for the online version of the United States Code.

Questions and Comments

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