2004 Montana Legislator Computer Use Survey Results
Compiled By Legislative Services Division
August 2004

(1) Do you use a personal computer in your home or office?

    97 - 95.1%   Yes   5 - 4.9%   No

(2) What type of computer programs do you personally use?

91 -	98.9%	Word Processing
91 -	98.9%	E-mail
89 -	96.7%	Internet
49 -	53.3%	Spreadsheet
47 -	51.1%	Database
35 -	38.0%	Financial/Accounting/Budgeting
22 -	23.9%	Presentation
21 -	22.8%	Graphics
5 -	5.5%	Other: Access, Photoshop, video editing, web editing

(3) Do you have a home E-mail, business E-mail, or constituent E-mail account?

94 -	96.9%	Home	1 -	1.0%	None
43 -	44.3%	Business	2 -	2.0%	Other: At school, campaign
25 -	25.8%	Constituent			

(4) **(a) During the Interim**, approximately how many E-mails do you send/receive a week that deal with legislative activities?

3 -	3.1%	None	6 -	6.3%	30 per week
48 -	50.0%	10 per week	8 -	8.3%	50 or more per week
28 -	29.2%	20 per week	3 -	3.0%	Other: 1 or 2 a week; 3-4 per month; occasionally I receive one

(4) **(b) During the Session**, approximately how many E-mails do you send/receive a week that deal with legislative activities?

1 -	1.2%	None	14 -	16.7%	300 or more per week
30 -	35.7%	50 per week	4 -	4.8%	Other: 20 per week; 50-200 depends on the bills; depending on upcoming bills; varies from 50-500+
24 -	28.6%	100 per week			
11 -	13.1%	200 per week			

(5) What operating systems are you familiar with?

61 -	63.5%	Windows 95/98/ME
55 -	57.3%	Windows XP
38 -	39.6%	Windows 2000
11 -	11.5%	Macintosh

(6) Have you used the Legislative Branch website?

    90 - 94.7%   Yes   5 - 5.3%   No

If the answer is "No" please go to question #9.

(7) **(a) During the Interim**, how often do you use the Legislative Branch website?

5	-	5.5%	None	50 - 54.9%	Once or twice a month
5	-	5.5%	Daily	1 - 1.1%	Other: occasionally
30	-	33.0%	Weekly		

(7) **(b) During the Session**, how often do you use the Legislative Branch website?

2	-	2.5%	None	2 - 2.5%	Once or twice a month
61	-	76.3%	Daily	1 - 1.3%	Other: 3 or 4 times/day
14	-	17.5%	Weekly		

(8) How easy is it to find the information you are looking for on the Legislative Branch website?

51	-	57.3%	Fairly easy	3 - 3.4%	Fairly difficult
35	-	39.3%	Very easy	0 - 0.0%	Very difficult

Do you have any suggestions for improvements to the Legislative Branch website?

- "Look up Bill Information" pages: Subject dialog box not necessary since you can't type anything into it. List of subjects needs more instructions & more subjects--retrieves only exact words.
- Can be made a lot easier--navigating
- Have one real person respond to inquiries from each department
- I still like the Illinois model--instant access & e-mail anywhere, anytime.
- Video-streaming sites on home page for easy access. A "Welcome to MT Leg" video clip by leadership.
- It is a great website. I haven't had good luck using the search option between executive & legislative searches
- Look at recording committee votes on the main bill page, as you now do with floor votes
- Make it easier to run status reports on committee actions -   direct access from MT gov home page -   include list of folks who testify at hearings
- No, the more I use it, the easier it is
- Speed it up.
- The 100 House members, 50 Senate members link should be more visible. It is hard to find legislator (name phone # if you are not familiar with the site.
- The capitol dome icon--I did not know you could click on it for the longest time.
- Works fine!
- Yes and No votes of committee votes

(9) If the Legislature provided you with a computer and software programs for you to use for legislative work (at your home or in the Capitol), would you be willing to use different software programs than you currently use (for example: WordPerfect vs Microsoft Word)?

80 - 87.0%	Yes	12 - 13.0%	No

(10) Whether or not you currently use a personal computer at home or at work, which applications would be valuable to you in your legislative work?

93	- 95.9%	Access to bill status information (currently available on the Branch website)
91	- 93.8%	Access to bill text (currently available on the Branch website)
90	- 92.8%	Access to fiscal notes (currently available on the Branch website)
89	- 91.8%	Access to text of amendments (currently available on the Branch website)
77	- 79.4%	Internet
76	- 78.4%	Word processing (to draft letters, notes, speeches, etc.)
74	- 76.3%	Access to state budget and financial data (other than what is on the state

website)
68 -	70.1%	Standardized E-mail address for legislators (e.g., senmsmith@mt.gov or repbjones@mt.gov)
55 -	56.7%	Presentations given by staff to legislative committees
54 -	55.7%	State E-mail account (Microsoft Outlook)
34 -	35.1%	Spreadsheet
25 -	25.8%	Personalized databases
5 -	5.2%	I am not sufficiently familiar with computers to know for sure
2 -	2.0%	Other: All my legislature information is in word processed/typed form; E-mail is fine if it is accessible everywhere there is a computer worldwide

Please list any other applications that you feel would be beneficial for legislators.

- MCA (or is this already available?)
- Note: I manage and track my own legislation on the branch website.
- Preparation & presentation of computer held projector presentations
- Wireless application for use around capitol
- Would prefer word for easy transport of documents.

(11) If you began to rely on a computer for the functions listed above, would you want to be able to use it:

83 -	86.5%	In a Capitol office assigned to me (if any)
74 -	77.1%	At my home or office in my district
61 -	63.5%	In the Senate or House chambers
60 -	62.5%	Where I stay in Helena during the legislative session
51 -	53.1%	In an area with a shared pool of computers in the Capitol
2 -	2.0%	Other: I do not use or own a computer; would like to see a couple of terminals just off the House floor.

(12) Would you want to access E-mail or the internet in the following places: (Check all that apply)

84 -	89.4%	In a Capitol office assigned to me (if any)
77 -	81.9%	At my home or office in my district
61 -	64.9%	Where I stay in Helena during the legislative session
59 -	62.8%	In the Senate or House chambers
46 -	48.9%	In an area with a shared pool of computers in the Capitol
2 -	2.2%	Other: None; tables off the side in H or S--desks too small.

(13) During the 2001 and 2003 sessions, a dial-up internet connection was provided to legislators, upon request, who brought their own laptops.

(A) Did you use this dial-up internet service?

37 - 38.9%   Yes   58 - 61.1%   No

If not, then why?

- I didn't have a laptop (26 responses)
- I had computer in office (2 responses)
- Other: Computer was provided; brought my own PC & set it up in my hotel room; brought personal laptop; couldn't get it to access--hassle; I didn't have a laptop. Hope to have one next session; I had a state desk top with high speed connection; I used my capitol office and home computers; I used the computers in the Senate office; I worked at home--early AM & evenings. Time during day to use computer is very limited; It was discouraged and I had other access; my office is just off the Floor; my personal email & files were accessible on state network; no need; privacy concerns; slow; used laptop at motel only; used laptop at my apt;

used phone line and personal account; used shared pool

(B) If your answer to A is "Yes", did you find this service useful?

      34 - 91.9%   Yes   3 - 8.1%   No

If not, then why?

- Desk too small
- In 2001, tech support was wonderful. In 2003 it was much harder to find people who could help when I had problems (often!)
- Limited--access was difficult to gain and it didn't work well
- More effective if wireless
- Privacy matters

(14) Also during the 2001 and 2003 sessions, shared pools of computers were provided in selected rooms for any legislator to use.

(A) Did you use these computers?

      63 - 62.4% Yes   38 - 37.6%   No

(B) If your answer to A is "Yes", was the availability of these computers sufficient?

      50 - 80.6% Yes   12 - 19.4%   No

If not, then why?

- Too few (3 responses)
- Most of the time (2 responses)
- Demand for them was so great
- However, at times they weren't all working.
- I had my own office & shared w/ 4 others
- I used my own
- It would be more convenient to have some shared computers on 3rd floor--but where?
- Most of the time, some waiting
- Need more computers.
- Not where I needed it when I needed it or had time to use
- Sometimes none was available -   ours were down because of the flood!
- Too often in use by others
- Used only occasionally

(C) If your answer to A is "Yes", did you find these computers useful?

      51 - 98.1% Yes   1 - 1.9% No

If not, then why?

- But too distracting with so much activity in the room
- Great--I didn't have to carry my laptop from home to capitol everyday
- Useful when I could use it.

(15) Would you support a budget to provide computers, software and computer staff support to all legislators?

      51 - 51.5%   Yes, any reasonable cost
      19 - 19.2%   No

13 - 13.1%   Yes, but limited

Other responses (16%):
- Change to: Legislators That Use Computers, then Yes, any reasonable cost.
- Depends on budget situation
- I need to see figures before I can answer this
- I would be interested, need to see cost & revenue source
- I would have to have more information
- Maybe
- Maybe. Would need to see the proposal.
- n/a I'm term limited.
- Not sure
- This needs to be discussed in more detail.
- Unsure--dependent on available funding
- Would depend upon policy of "who" owns the communications on the computer--can the press, for example, request/demand into? If so, no way.
- Would want to see the cost
- Yes, but I would have to know the cost
- Yes, but not at the expense of other programs.
- Yes, provided we had enough budget available.

If limited, how much per legislator?

2 - 18.2%	$0	1 - 9.1%	$700	1 - 9.1%	$1,000
1 - 9.1%	$200	2 - 18.2%	$800	1 - 9.1%	$1,500
3 - 27.3%	$500				

(16) If you need to conduct personal business via the internet while in the Capitol, would you be willing to pay for part of the service?

62 - 67.4%   Yes   30 - 32.6%   No

Comments:
- I will not conduct personal business at the capitol using state services.
- Didn't do personal business. Did it at home.
- There is no extra cost for personal use of Internet! The idea of monitoring such use is absurd.
- Not sure how that would work & be monitored.
- Should not be used for personal business

(17) Several budget proposals for providing state-owned laptop computer to legislators have been brought forward over the years. None of these proposals have made it beyond the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee. What are the major barriers as you see them to moving forward with this proposal and how do you believe these barriers might be overcome?

- Cost (5 responses)
- Money (3 responses)
- Inappropriate parsimony brought on by paleolithic thinking
- Providing laptops may be perceived as too unnecessary. I don't object to people having their own, but not state provided.
- Loan lap tops to the ones that need them.
- Priority on spending. It will be hard to justify this expenditure if we are cutting human services and education, etc.
- Cost--amount of use
- Available money.
- Bring more revenue into government.
- Budget issues - there are more pressing issues requiring our money to pay for this at this time

- Budget pressure.
- Budget problems. Not easy to teach us "old folks" new technology.
- Budget. Lack of computer use knowledge by legislators.
- Budgetary concerns
- Cost in light of perceived greater needs. Once we're in better fiscal position, this could have merit.
- Cost per computer --budget deficit
- Cost too expensive. We don't have the money & for those that think they will use a laptop--they won't.
- Cost, Lack of demand
- Cost. Additional cost to update & maintain.
- Cost. Computers have a short life. We would need to provide them very often. Better to provide an allowance or stipend.
- Cost. Have legislators put $200 deposit on damages & sign agreement to replace lost or stolen computer--accountability!
- Cost. Needs to be justifiable cost--work out a good deal with government discounts from Dell or Apple
- Education Funding!
- Education of committee members about other states, and the value to the state of legislators w/these type skills.
- Fiscal impact to no benefit--most legislators use pool, some use lap tops--all are effective
- Funding. More cost effective staff utilization.
- Good question. Cost is my guess & logistics of making it all work smoothly
- I am opposed to additional government spending.
- I am willing to provide my own laptop.
- I can't see where there is a need right now for everyone to have a laptop that would justify the expense.
- In my opinion the services & computers provided by the legislature were sufficient. I used my own lap top on the floor.
- It seems to be a non-essential service compared to many state services
- Knowledge on the benefits of other states and cost
- Lack of funds
- Lack of funds -   keeping track of inventory -   collecting for lost or damaged computers
- Lack of money & incompetent legislators not wanting move into the new world!! Make it a priority.
- Lack of revenue--raise additional revenue
- Laptops are very unnecessary. Regular computers w/keyboards will work!
- Legislators not familiar with how productive & effective . Need to educate.
- Legislators not trained in computers--need to be trained to show benefits. Need to demonstrate cost will be beneficial to constituents "communications"--info--better
- Legislators should provide their own at their own expense
- Legislators who are "technologically challenged" or at least don't personally use computers integrally themselves--in due time that will change
- Legislators who don't use computers, and a public outcry because of the expense.
- Main barrier is fear of public perceptions of legislators providing themselves with computers (perks). Solution (?) perhaps secrecy.
- Maint. of shared laptops is time consuming/expensive. The state could share in the cost of purchase of laptops for legislators, and leave responsibility to the legislator/technical assist from state
- Many states are allowing computer use in capitol & at legislators' home & office. How this is funded, I do not know.
- Money! I feel that would be a waste of taxpayer dollars. We can continue to use the computers at the capitol.
- Money. I believe if Compaq, Dell, IBM, etc were contacted, a lease agreement could be affordable if a majority of legislators signed up for the service
- Money. Legislators who don't use or want computers won't support them. Also some leg have

- their own & would prefer to use their own--if it were easy to hook up w/ the session activities
- Most have their own and makes it a redundant service
- Most people do not know how to use the computers. Each legislator needs to be trained as to uses. Will this reduce staff time requested & paper?
- Need money
- Need vs. Cost
- New ideas are almost never funded. Who has the money first keeps getting the money.
- Not all legislators are computer literate. Cost of development.
- Not the state's responsibility. Would need training.
- Overall budget constraints. Education & Human Services far more important.
- Press--believe e-mail constitutes public domain
- Some legislators are living in the 50's-don't understand how valuable the computers are. Some don't want to hear from constituents. Ignorance overcome by education. Money overcome by leadership change.
- Speed efficiency cost savings electronic reading of 2nd reading floor agenda would save paper, time, and money
- The cost is the obvious barrier. Until revenues improve it will be difficult to pass.
- The cost. Not all people use a computer.
- The idea that a legislator gets a lap top seems like too much money to spend.
- The legislature is reluctant to spend money on itself or its operations because it feels like it has to lead by example.
- The major barrier is budget--all we need is enough money and proposal will be accepted.
- The money can be put to use in so many other needy areas. Maybe in the future when the revenue stream improves.
- The state lacks money for services for people & this seems superfluous when the state has no money
- There are much higher priorities that must be funded first!
- They think electors will think it is pork for legislators--remind folks - info can be had as needed right on site for their problem.
- This is a citizen legislature and as such there is no need for this expense
- Tight budgets make the concept a difficult sell
- Too costly
- We need to look at the cost savings of trying to become paperless (or minimal paper). Can we try it with those of us with our own laptop in the 2005 session?
- While useful and helpful, it is difficult for me to quantify in terms of budget priorities.
- Why do we need laptops for all legislators? What is this going to cost the state?

(18) If you were provided with a computer for legislative use, would you participate in pre-session training for legislators in how to use it?

45 - 45.9%	Yes, up to 1 day maximum	17 - 17.3% No
36 - 36.7%	Yes, up to 2 days maximum	

(19) Do you have any comments or recommendations that you want the Legislative Branch Computer System Planning Council to consider in preparing its information technology plan?

- A local internet connection (in Helena) that we could all utilize from our rooms, etc. Then we could all bring our own pc's and "plug in" to the state connection--a fee for this would be appropriate
- Another budget item that would be beneficial would be more staff for research/help during session esp with constituent responses. I appreciate having my own computer in my office
- Any leg who is NOT computer literate is 50% less effective. Constituents have instant access to legislators, bills, hearings, etc-- We have an obligation to use all the technology avail, esp computers
- Budget to implement computer program versus saving of 5 million pieces of paper and printing cost for all the bills.

- Computers cost less in long run -- not as much clutter
- Differentiate House & Senate, we're not the same.
- Don't do this--with all the needs of this state, this is not necessary
- Hard to access Leg. home page from Montana's home page. Need to have more visuals available on floor when bills are presented. Amend, budget info, bills on a large screen .
- Hard to justify $3K per computer. We don't need lots of memory & speed just to do word processing & look up bill information.
- Have to develop plans to assist those that do need computers to function most effectively while Instituting safeguards to ensure less scrupulous members don't take advantage for personal or business
- Having ample desk top computers available might be better than providing & maintaining & keeping track of laptops.
- How would the cost of everyone having a computer at their desks compare to the costs of printing and distributing the massive amounts of paper, as is done now?
- I appreciated the service we had. Did not take my lap top to legislature--used it at home. I'm not adept at using laptop and listening at the same time. Didn't want that.
- I believe that we will evolve into a computer (personal) based legislature. Is this the right time, I don't know, but we should look into it.
- I don't think the state can afford to train legislators to want to use computers anymore than it can train them to read. But those who use computers should receive help.
- I think you're moving in right direction. Easy info is the key.
- I'm all for it. Good luck
- Integration of the chamber (voting and bills) should be part of your plan.
- It would be good to have a dedicated jack for computers so we didn't have to turn off our phones.
- Keep up the good work!
- Keep working toward access to computers for legislators. I think it is invaluable. The training could vary as per leg. expertise
- Legislators absolutely need computers. They're a part of our world. We'll be more efficient in doing the people's work.
- Legislators wanting anything more than currently available can pay for it themselves. We have too much debt now for goodness sake!
- Look at and report savings to the state just in printing and paper costs. If there were computers at ea desk in the chambers & were taught how to access bills a great deal could be saved on printing.
- Purchase 50 computers--first come, first served--for 3 sessions to eliminate whammy on front end. Many legislators do not use a computer frequently
- The past session, for the average legislature, we had all the computer service we needed
- The present system with computers in the hall for public use/the shared pool of computers works fine. As more legislators use them, will need more. Last session was vast improvement over previous.
- These units need to interface with bill drafting department especially for amendments
- This is vital to the state's future. Legislators must be educated to recognize this value in technology.
- We need to know the $ involved as to whether or not it's money well spent
- We need to move ahead! Good luck!
- We need to study the savings of using computers whether its in paper or in efficiency. Appropriation arguments. We should apply for grants or make request of computer co. to donate.
- When economically feasible, it would be a benefit on the floor to have lap tops available with a connection to amendments & proposed changes. Reading the amendments on the board is difficult.