Individual Nomination:

Applications Development Manager of the Year
Norma Clark

Norma Clark was hired by the Legislative Services Office in 2002 to begin developing a new legislative bill drafting system. During her over 15-year technology career in the State Controller's Office, Norma had responsibility for customizing and maintaining the Legislature's bill drafting system, TextDBMS. Among her other responsibilities at the Controller's Office, Norma and her team held the aging software together so well that the Legislative Services Office was able to continue using it in a mainframe environment for over three decades. When the company that owned the software was sold in 1999, however, the new owner decided to no longer support TextDBMS for state government. In spite of this, Norma was able to keep the legislative system operational by consistently patching together new programming "fixes" and converting data as needed to maintain a workable system. She was the troubleshooter for legislative staff whenever a problem developed.

Her experience with the Controller's Office gave Norma a keen awareness of the technology needs of legislative staff and of the legislative process as a whole. In 2002, the Legislative Services Office hired Norma as Applications Development Manager charged with developing a new, integrated bill drafting and tracking system, which became known as GEMS. It speaks very highly of Norma's supervisory experience that two programmers who had worked closely with her at the Controller's Office chose to join her in the new venture.

Norma's extensive experience in information technology and staff management proved essential in her new role. Working closely with an advisory committee of legislative staff, Norma and her team developed an outline system to integrate the many functions necessary to draft and track legislation. New enhancements were added to the outline based on stakeholder needs. To help keep development costs down, Norma incorporated open-source software into GEMS. She thoroughly researched every aspect of the system to ensure the best and least expensive components were incorporated.

Norma is the successful architect of this unique and extremely complex system, the Government Electronic Management System (GEMS). GEMS was designed with three-tier architecture using Java programming to create XML documents stored in an Oracle database. It includes not only bill drafting and tracking, but creation of subject and code indexes, daily documents necessary to the operations of the Idaho Senate and House of Representatives, print publications and Web

publishing. With four members of the Legislature on the ITRMC Council, the Legislature has long been involved with and supported the state's information technology efforts.

Always the consummate professional, Norma worked with her project team in such a manner that their assignments were always manageable with minimal stress or deadline pressure. The team followed a comprehensive timeline for development and testing of every aspect of the system and, under Norma's leadership, every milestone was met or exceeded. GEMS was completed by the summer of 2008. The project team scheduled both group and one-on-one training for all legislative staff to familiarize everyone with the particular sections of the integrated system on which they would be working. Any questions or problems anyone encountered were addressed immediately by the project team. Following Norma's example, team members always listened attentively and thought through their answers to user questions carefully.

Editor Jackie Gunn says, "Norma and her team were ready and able to sort through any problems we encountered. None of these situations seemed to phase them, which, of course, gave us greater confidence. But they didn't just fix things in the system, they patiently taught us how to find solutions ourselves — a very powerful training technique."

Following the successful implementation of GEMS and staff training during the summer and fall of 2008, the Idaho Legislature ran on GEMS exclusively during the 2009 legislative session. There was none of the usual consternation that can develop when transitioning from one system (mainframe TextDBMS) to another. In fact, the transition was seamless and GEMS was deemed an overwhelming success by legislative leadership and staff alike.

Now that the inaugural session is over, Norma is surveying all staff users of GEMS for any suggestions they might have to improve the system. The project team is currently in the process of developing a list of possible new applications and enhancements to the system.

In addition to her Legislative Services Office responsibilities, Norma is an active participant in national IT groups, including the National Conference of State Legislature's National Association of Legislative Information Technology, and regularly attends professional development seminars sponsored by that group and others to keep abreast of new developments in her field.

In summary, Norma Clark is the successful architect of an amazing new data system for the Idaho Legislature, one that integrates a wide variety of complex operations and that promises to streamline government and limit expansion of staff. She has earned the highest respect of her colleagues and legislators alike, and her contributions to bringing the legislative process into the 21st Century cannot be overemphasized.