

Opening Government's Official Legal Materials: Authenticity and Integrity in the Digital World

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Increasingly, state governments are moving toward making primary legal materials available online via state government websites. The goal in these efforts, and also the challenge, is to provide users with more efficient access while ensuring that the electronic versions of primary legal materials are as "official" as their paper originals. The desire of state governments to make this a priority is strong. However, they currently lack the necessary policies and management practices necessary for success. State legislators and their staffs, legislative reference librarians, state archivists, and chief information officers all have important roles to play in laying the foundation for these efforts through the creation of new policy, management, and technology capabilities. This brief provides background to the recently approved Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act (UELMA), explores the concepts behind authenticated electronic materials, defines what it will take to create, maintain, and make available official electronic legal material, and provides recommendations for states.