Closing the local digital divide

by Lisa Gardner-Springer

Until 1975, no one owned a personal computer, and only the military and a few academic institutions had access to what would become the Internet. A quarter of a century later, 51 percent of U.S. households had at least one computer and 42 percent had access to the Internet.

Yet the distribution of computer ownership and Internet access remains far from equitable. Wealthy and well-educated adults are far more likely to have computers in the home and access to the Internet than are less well-off and less educated populations. Race matters too. Whites and Asian Americans are significantly more likely to own a computer or access the Internet than are blacks or Hispanics.

These persistent demographic patterns speak to a society of information haves and have-nots, a divide between those with access to technology and those without, often referred to as the digital divide.

Locally and nationally, the digital divide has economic, social and civic implications. Techno-savvy cities, including San Diego, Seattle, Atlanta and Chicago are taking comprehensive and concerted steps to close the local digital divide. Minneapolis and the metro area should do the same. Although national marketing studies indicate Minneapolis ranks among the top 20 “most wired” cities, the city has taken little or no action to either measure the local digital divide or to address it. Minneapolis should take its cue from other cities and embark on a strategic, concerted effort to close the local digital divide.

The economic impact of the digital divide

Why should we as a community care about the digital divide? Access to computer technology has a workforce impact—nationwide, people who use computers on the job earn 43 percent more than other workers, according to the Minnesota Planning Commission. And demand for technology workers is growing.

In 2000, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projected that employment in the computer and data processing services would grow by 117 percent between 1998 and 2008. The BLS anticipates this sector will need more than 2 million highly-skilled workers to fill new jobs or replace other IT workers during that 10-year period.

Closing the digital divide, however, has implications beyond jobs and wages. Opportunity, whether it is economic, social or educational, is based on having good information. As more people and institutions communicate by providing information online, those who cannot access this information will become disenfranchised. In the future, as many as 75 percent of all government transactions are expected to take place online, including delivery of food stamps and information about Medicaid, according to Susan Goslee’s 1998 study, “Losing Ground Bit-by-Bit: Low Income Communities in the Information Age.”

Measuring the divide

As household computer penetration and Internet access continue to rise nationwide, household income and race are key demographic factors that contribute to the divide.

In 2000, the National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA) found that 51 percent of all U.S. households owned a computer and 42 percent connected to the Internet. Eighty-eight percent of households with incomes of $75,000 or more owned at least one computer compared to only 28 percent of households with incomes below $25,000. In 2000, white, non-Hispanic (56 percent) and Asian-American...
Making Minnesota a destination for workers, business and tourists

by Morrie Anderson

Workforce issues that were so prevalent a year ago are no longer on the front page. Clearly, the economic downturn and the events following September 11 have pushed workforce into the background. However, when the economy moves toward recovery and terrorism is in recession, the workforce needs of a strong and growing economy will be back in the forefront. They will need to be addressed if we expect sustained economic growth.

Over the past two years, we have evolved several 21st century workforce assumptions that have almost become "axioms":

A. Human capital is critical.
B. Technology drives skill requirements for workers.
C. The workplace is a revolutionary place.
D. The "digital divide" is real.
E. Wages Premium equate to education.
F. Long-term employee-employee loyalty is gone.
G. Less-educated and unskilled workers are in a knowledge-based economy.
H. The current labor-market support system is archaic.
I. Skills development is a universal need.
J. The quality of education equates to the quality of the workforce.
K. Someone else in the world can do your job.

In Minnesota we have had numerous reports, both public and private, that have studied and reinforced these axioms and have uniformly concluded that Minnesota must develop a comprehensive workforce development system integrated with economic and educational policies and practices in Minnesota to be a 21st century economic leader.

The issue is not whether a workforce system is needed or whether we should undertake its development. The issue has been where and how to begin that process that will fundamentally change the work, the culture, the behavior of disparate interests, processes and programs which have operated in well-worn tracks for decades.

Minnesota needs to start with the recommendations of the legislatively-created transition team and its report entitled "Putting it all Together." Many who have worked on the workforce and economic development agenda for the past 3-1/2 years hope this is the "last" report. "We’ve studied enough, now we need to do something!"

The fundamental findings of this report are not significantly different from past studies. What is different is the context.

This report develops a framework within which workforce, economic development and education issues and policies can be formulated and addressed. The difference can be captured in five factors:

First, the organizational structure of workforce and economic development is dramatically changed. Past report recommendations were left in an organizational and policy vacuum. The recommendations in this report create a statewide policy board with membership from the private sector. It creates eight regional or labor-market sized planning efforts across Minnesota, again with heavy private involvement.

The overarching objective is to create a policy-making structure outside the current program and governmental service delivery system by giving it to the customers and citizens.

It also creates a single agency in which workforce and economic development are wed from a service, policy and budget perspective. No person who has lost his/her job would have to search multi-agencies and institutions. One door could provide entrance to support and choices for opportunity. We can do it in a crisis—we should be able to do it every day.

Second, it requires a commitment of leadership. The commitment of private sector leadership is most critical.

These recommendations ask the Governor to lead the Minnesota Executive Leadership Team, comprised of 17 private and non-profit leaders, to develop a policy framework for Minnesota. These recommendations also ask that regional leadership play a critical role in developing the regional policy and planning strategy for each economic watershed of Minnesota. Models exist in west central and northeast Minnesota that could be prototypes for the remainder of the state.

Within state government there will be an executive leadership group which will be led by the new agency commissioner and will cut across agency boundaries and barriers to comprehensively address workforce and economic development needs.

The success of workforce and economic development hinges on this structure and the commitment of leadership.

Third, a strong education component. Education, workforce and economic development are inextricably linked one to the other. In this knowledge age they are on a convergent course. No competitive society can remain so unless it addresses these factors with a comprehensive strategy. This report integrates education at every level of activity and leadership.

Fourth, internal support is a critical factor. It is particularly true to changes in processes when everyone agrees, and near impossible when few are on the team.

Many of the recommendations in this report were developed with the support of staff and providers. There is an ownership component.

Finally, all of the organizational change and programmatic expectations are surrounded by an accountability and performance structure. These recommendations build off of the work the Governor has already begun through the Office of Results Management. The objective is to "institutionalize" into the policy, planning, programs and budget benchmarks, and outcomes that can be used by legislators and the public to hold agencies accountable in their use of scarce resources.

Our vision is fairly straightforward—vital communities, sustained economic growth and a system defined by great opportunities, good wages, and a healthy environment, meeting world standards, and citizens in the forefront of governance.

In short, Minnesota should be a destination desired by workers, businesses, traders and tourists. The vision is: "Destination Minnesota!"

Morrie Anderson was chairman of the transition team that authored the report "Putting it all together." For copies of the report, call (651) 215-1044 or email morrie.anderson@state.mn.us.

More slowly than much of the nation from the current economic slow down in areas such as manufacturing. According to one think tank, Minnesota has the second lowest school completion rate for African Americans in the United States. From a global perspective, our advantage in education is fading. South Korea now has more people per capita enrolled in post-secondary education than we do. Small business start-ups and expansions have not been Minnesota’s strong suit.

We've seen the move of our metropolitan region to the largest in the country, the growth in high tech jobs. Our metropolitan region, now almost 400 miles across, has long outstripped our appointed regional government’s borders several times over. Our two core cities—never mind one—have a shrinking percentage of the metropolitan area’s population, and redistricting will soon reduce their representation in the Legislature.

Clearly the challenges we move forward are great.

It strikes me that one way to move forward is to begin or continue to build a vision for our metropolitan region’s future on the twin pillars of ambition and inclusiveness. We need to turn aside "pretty good" and "comfortable mediocrity" and pick our niches where we can become world class. We should make sure that vision includes suburban elements, a commitment not to leave any part of our society behind, and an unwillingness to fail in either goal.

In order to move in this direction, we as a community will no doubt have to answer many questions. How do we arrive at such a shadow of a vision? How can we stand to advance such a vision? Who can provide the energy to sustain our attention and to insist on the tough decisions that will need to be made? While there is no sure recipe, there are promising practices from around the country from which we can draw some conclusions even now.

We might be able to learn something from Atlanta’s slogan "too busy to hate," which helped bridge divisions between black and white residents by setting forth a joint ambition to make the city a national and global economic player. Indeed, news headlines about Atlanta now focus on a city choice of being the busiest airport in the world. This is a far cry from the Atlanta of 1945, or even 1965. We could learn from Miami, the "Gateway to Florida" and the "City of Champions" in California that has had great success in teaching Latino and African American students advanced math and science. Perhaps using one of Minnesota’s educational pathways we might be able to learn from Charlotte, North Carolina, which developed a set of signature initiatives, including welcoming attractions at the airport, to help build a regional identity. Perhaps the newly established University of Minnesota’s Center for Education Policy Research, which will work in concert with other agencies, may give us a clearer perspective and we can lead the way.

We need an ambitious and inclusive vision for that region.

Clearly we are going to have to make tough choices. It will not be enough to follow Yogi Berra’s advice: "When you come to the fork in the road, take it." Ensuring Minnesota’s future is as bright as its past will require a convergence of strong political leadership, business leaders willing to work at a variety of systems level issues, and a philanthropic community that either funds or fulfills the "think-tank" work needed to identify gaps, strategies and tactics for moving ahead.

Changing corporate, philanthropic and social realities may make this a daunting challenge but we will pay the price if we fail to meet the challenge. Perhaps this question is answered by the Psalmist "without vision the people will perish" is an overstatement, but we need an ambitious and inclusive vision to help the region regain forward momentum to ensure a better future.

Lyle Wray is executive director of the Minnesota League. He can be reached at (612) 338-0791.
Design principles for an efficient, responsive government

by Lyle Wrye and Duane Benson

There's an old joke that goes like this: "Three guys walk into a bar..." you'd think one of them would have ducked. Think of these principles as rules of thumb to guide public sector spending.

Principle 1. Target public subsidies directly to people who are financial-ly needy. Provide subsidies only to individuals who have low incomes and low wealth, and ensure that subsidies follow individuals who qualify for them. Redirect resources explicitly rather than through indirect methods, and ensure equal access to basic services in which there is a compelling state interest.

Principle 2. Use competition to align institutional self-interest with the public interest in quality and cost of services. Break up the monopoly elements of public services by separating the different interests of institutions and the public, and by forcing service providers to win the public's business. This does not mean privatization; competing providers may be public or orga-nizations. Competition may be introduced in three ways:

Create citizen markets. Give cit-iens their utilities (or their equivalent) and allow them to choose their public services from among competing public and private providers.

Principles continued from page 4

The world is changing. We're rapidly shifting toward a knowledge-based, service economy with more dirty ties than dirty fingernails. We're producing more food with fewer farmers and more products with fewer factory workers. Co-workers often live in different states or nations, passing projects from one computer to another. Decisions will help address almost any issue with a constituency by spending money—with little concern about the correlation between government spending and desired results.

continued on page 5

The Citizens League's Design Principles for Better Value

There are only a few strategies that orient people to accomplish public purposes while meeting their own interests, and that systematically link spending with results. They are captured in the following five principles. Think of these principles as rules of thumb to guide public sector spending.

Principle 1. Target public subsidies directly to people who are financially needy. Provide subsidies only to individuals who have low incomes and low wealth, and ensure that subsidies follow individuals who qualify for them. Redirect resources explicitly rather than through indirect methods, and ensure equal access to basic services in which there is a compelling state interest.

Principle 2. Use competition to align institutional self-interest with the public interest in quality and cost of services. Break up the monopoly elements of public services by separating the different interests of institutions and the public, and by forcing service providers to win the public's business. This does not mean privatization; competing providers may be public or organizations. Competition may be introduced in three ways:

Create citizen markets. Give citizens their utilities (or their equivalent) and allow them to choose their public services from among competing public and private providers.

Principle 3. Allow prices of public services to reflect true costs, including the social cost of individual decisions. Prices give purchasers important information that helps them to make decisions about how to spend their money. Current policies often distort the true cost of public services and distort citizens' choices about how to spend their money. Public policies should give government a stake in their personal decisions.

Principle 4. Meet more public responsibilities through non-gov-ernmental communities in which people already have relationships of mutual obligations. Citizens are not merely consumers of government pro-gress. Families, ethnic organizations and neighborhoods perform a variety of public purposes, including child care, teaching the young, and educating. They are producers and problem-solvers. Government can make use of the motivation and expertise in these private communities by carrying out some of its responsibilities through them.

Principle 5. Consider long-term eco-nomic growth to be one of the objectives of state spending. To get the best results from state interven-tions, policy makers should think long-ly about their role as investors. Doing so means making sure that expenditures on infra-struction, research and education are met with measurable, demonstrated results. Also, in turn requires that results be evalu-ated. Government must measure the real cost of spending, "investing" simply means getting the most value from every dollar of state expenditures.

Principles continued from page 4

But the world is changing. We're rapidly shifting toward a knowledge-based, service economy with more dirty ties than dirty fingernails. We're producing more food with fewer farmers and more products with fewer factory workers. Co-workers often live in different states or nations, passing projects from one computer to another. Decisions will help address almost any issue with a constituency by spending money—with little concern about the correlation between government spending and desired results.

continued on page 5

A Make it clear that the customer is who and the provider is. To remain globally competitive, we must make government more produc-tive and accountable by making it clear that people are the customers, not the government.

B Make it clear that people—not institutions or programs—pay for things. The relationship between those who pay, those who benefit and those who provide should be as clear and direct as possible. This will enable people to understand actual costs and require providers to respond to actual needs.

B Fund people, not institutions. People should be the direct beneficiaries of public programs, not the sys-tems that were developed to provide those services.

B Provide timely, understandable information to help people make decisions. Meaningful information can help people make informed decisions based on actual outcomes rather than on the per-ceived value of certain inputs or government programs. People make better choices and help providers understand and respond more appropri-ately to people's demands.

B People should have choices and the ability to exercise them. People are in the best position to understand their individual needs and should have options for how to best meet those needs. Government may be one option, but it is not necessarily the first or only option.

Don't like our guiding principles and the solutions they lead to? Fine. But we're going to make things a bit prettier soon. If you've got a duck to dump, Duck. Do something. Or else...make way for Lumpy.

Lyle Wrye is executive director of the Citizens League. Duane Benson is executive director of the Minnesota Business Partnership.
The energy debate heats up.

The Mankato Free Press (2/23) also adds incentives. "Reducing this country's dependence on foreign oil is crucial to the stability and economic well-being of our nation. That's why Minnesota lawmakers should move forward on the biodiesel issue. But to mandate the use of biodiesel without providing the same types of financial incentives that spurred the development of ethanol would be wrong. Minnesota won a lead role in the projected number of college graduates will not be enough to replace retiring workers," the Worthington Globe (2/23) argues. "Governor Pawlenty warned that, with a budget deficit and higher degree own computer, but only 46 percent of those with the high school diploma own one.

The local picture: Minnesota's 11st most populous state and 10th in per capita income, tends to be on the other side of the digital divide in general households numbers. According to the Census, the state has 15th in computer penetration and 13th in home Internet access. But a February 2000 Nielsen report showed 58 percent of the Minneapolis/St. Paul households access the Internet, placing the metro area 18th among other large national metropolitan areas and slightly below average, given the Twin Cities areas rank 15th in the nation by population.

Breadth and depth household computer penetration and Internet access numbers, and given national trends, Minneapolis has likely a digital divide based on race and income. But drawing a clear picture is difficult, since Minneapolis has not assessed the extent of its digital divide. Assessing the digital divide, it will be key for the Minneapolis Economic Empowerment Zone, where the poverty rate exceeds 20 percent. By extrapolating digital divide data from the Regional Telecommunication and Information Administration by race, an estimated 75,000 residents of the empowerment zone do not own a computer. Public libraries cannot meet the demand by residents who live in the empowerment zone. The national average for public Internet access workstations in urban libraries is 17.3 per library. In the empowerment zone, there is an average of 10.2 workstations per library. Schools are leading the way to bridging the digital divide in Minneapolis. On average, elementary, middle, and high schools in the empowerment zone have newer computers than the district overall, but the percentage of those computers connected to the Internet is lower than the district average. The reason for the disparity is unclear, but one possible explanation is that schools in high poverty areas have received money through federal programs for hardware, but no money to wire those computers to the Internet. Community computing centers offer alternative option for providing Internet access. The Community Computer Access Network (C-CAN), a nonprofit organization working to increase technology access in the Twin Cities, has created an online database of the known community centers in Minneapolis. Excluding libraries and schools, C-CAN has identified 12 community computing centers in Minneapolis, nine of which serve low-income residents. The Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board identified five community centers that offer open computer labs for children after school. Mijga Communications, a nonprofit that serves the Twin Cities Native American community, has helped establish consortium of an additional 14 computer centers in the Twin Cities, with 10 in the empowerment zone. Even given these additional resources, there are still not enough community computing centers to adequately serve the number of residents who lack computer access, especially residents of Minneapolis' northside.

What needs to be done: Governments in high-technology focused cities, like Seattle and San Diego, as well as more economically and racially diverse cities like Atlanta and Chicago, have instituted city-sponsored programs and partnerships to further narrow the digital divide in their local communities. While each of these cities has taken a slightly different approach, all have been able to leverage financial resources, partnerships between government and nonprofit organizations, and local leadership to improve public access to computer technologies in urban neighborhoods with the least household computer penetration. These cities are coordinated, strategic, and mindful of the economic impact of improving access to and knowledge of computer technologies in impoverished communities. Current digital divide efforts in the city of Minneapolis take place in a sporadic and ad hoc manner. To address the digital divide, Minneapolis needs to develop a concerted effort that integrates current public access efforts and to improve access to technology in the most need. Based on estimates of the local digital divide and best practices from the cities proactively addressing the divide, the city should undertake the following "digital closure" efforts:

- A Department in the city administration. Digital divide initiatives. Planning or the MCCA could effectively lead citywide initiatives.
- Develop one or two executive change agents to drive this program. To provide accountability and simplicity in managing the program.
- A public/private collaboration community comprised of community activists, local business leaders, and government executives to advise the city and the Mayor on digital divide efforts.
- To increase visibility make Mayor Rybak champion of Minneapolis digital divide initiatives. Develop local partnerships with established community nonprofits to strategically instigate public computer community centers. Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board has identified five community centers that offer open computer labs for children after school. Mijga Communications, a nonprofit that serves the Twin Cities Native American community, has helped establish consortium of an additional 14 computer centers in the Twin Cities, with 10 in the empowerment zone.

Liz Gardner-Springer is a graduate student at the University of Minnesota School of Public Affairs. The study is available online at http://ccan.org/resources/implbldivide.pdf (Requires Adobe Acrobat). To request a copy contact her at (763) 921-6355.
Soldier scholars. The U.S. Army is offering soldiers a free online education through its eArmyU portal in exchange for their continued enlistment. In the 12 months since its introduction 16 percent of participants have either re-enlisted or extended their current enlistments.

eArmyU currently offers over 90 degree programs to soldiers stationed at Fort Benning, Fort Campbell, and Fort Hood, but the majority of enrollments take place at only six out of 23 member institutions, either because of their physical proximity to the bases or their long-standing relationship with the Army’s education initiative.

American Distance Education Consortium CEO Janet K. Foley recommends that the program increase the number of participating colleges and bases if it wishes to reach its goal of educating 80,000 soldiers worldwide by 2005. Soldiers learn online anytime and anywhere, and can transfer their course credits within the program, regardless of which college they enroll in. However, eArmyU’s administrative requirements are sometimes at odds with college procedure, requiring that courses be offered on a quarterly basis, which can conflict with traditional college schedules. Some of these problems are being addressed. Portal administrator PricewaterhouseCoopers has widened the role of college officials in the program’s operations, and has revised its standards so that colleges are required to offer at least 50 percent, rather than 100 percent, of their degrees online.—Lyle Wray.

More than half of Americans perceive their local public schools as good or excellent, according to a recent poll by Phi Delta/Gallup. This is the highest rating in the poll’s 33-year history.—L.W.

Almost half of the states are considering raising tobacco taxes as a means to offset budget issues caused by a downturn in the U.S. economy. Many anti-smoking organizations are pleased to hear this. If Massachusetts’ accomplishments are what all states can expect, it might be more beneficial to put the revenue from increased tobacco tax into programs to help decrease smoking overall. The Massachusetts Tobacco Control Programs economists estimate $3 worth of savings in health care costs for every $1 used for tobacco control. The state also saves more than $15 million annually due to a reduction in the number of low-weight babies, resulting from increased awareness of risk highlighted by the tobacco prevention programs.

—Scott McMahon.

California is leading a new charge to promote the use of electric cars. State regulators recently made it a requirement that 2 percent of car sales within the state be electric cars. The regulators are also asking that the 2003 fleets reduce emissions by 10 percent. New York, Vermont and Massachusetts were set to follow the lead, but carmakers convinced them that the demands for new cars in those states (CA, MA, NY, VT account for 20 percent of U.S. car market), make it impossible to meet the requirement. The implementation for NY, VT and MA may be pushed back at least four years. —S.M.

The Design Institute’s new website is up. The University of Minnesota Design Institute has launched its new website. The Institute, one of the five new strategic academic initiatives at the University of Minnesota, develops research, educational programs and interdisciplinary partnerships to improve design in the public realm. The website is at http://design.umn.edu.—L.W.

The federal government has a new, user-friendly electronic gateway. Firstgov.gov is a good example of a new trend toward “portals” on the web designed around customer groups and their needs rather than the formulaic “smiling face of an elected official and a blurb” that has been common practice since government websites began appearing a decade ago. In the newly renovated website for national government agencies and services, citizens, businesses and other governments are the customer groups greeted on the homepage. The website is at www.firstgov.gov. —L.W.

Of the 15 electric regions in the United States, the Mid-Continent Area Power Pool (MAPP) is the only region forecasting a deficit in the 2005 regional reserve margins, according to the North American Electric Reliability Council and McKinsey Quarterly. MAPP also just happens to be the region Minnesota is in. The next lowest projected reserve margin is the Southeastern Electric Reliability Council, with an 11 percent reserve margin. California, which has recently experienced an electricity crisis, shows a 27 percent margin, while part of New England will have a 61 percent margin.—S.M.

More globalization needed? A recent report on globalization ranked Singapore as the most globalized country in the world. The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and Finland complete the top five. The United States ranked 12th. The report looked at 50 developed countries and emerging markets. Index measures included the level of personal contact across international borders, World Wide Web users and servers, and economic integration. Higher levels of globalisation were associated with greater income equality—less separation of “rich and poor” for both mature and emerging economies.—L.W. MJ

Take note contributors include Minnesota Journal and Citizen League staffers.

The Minnesota Journal
Citizens League
708 S. Third Street, Suite 500
Minneapolis, MN 55415

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE PAID
AT MINNEAPOLIS
MINNESOTA
The Citizens League gets rolling in the '50s

The Citizens League is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a glimpse back at the past achievements and by looking forward to the coming challenges. Last month, we looked at the history of the League from the first board meeting in 1952 to the League's annual meeting in 1957 with guest speaker Frank Lloyd Wright.

In its first few years the League tried to influence policy by playing an active role in the election of local government officials. It published a candidate rating guide and endorsed candidates. This proved to be too controversial and was abandoned, but the League did cooperate with the Minneapolis League of Women Voters to produce several "voting guides" which did get candidates to commit to positions on certain issues.

The growth of the Citizens League in the early 1950s depended mostly on maximum individual participation by interested citizens. The entire membership was invited to participate in League decisions regarding new projects and position on issues. New members were invited to serve on the Projects Committee, which reviewed the League's program to make sure it was in line with the interests and priorities of the members.

The original study committee process involved standing committees, e.g., transportation or taxation, to which public issues were referred.

Before the Board of Directors took final action on issues, members were given facts and arguments and asked for their view on what stand the League should take. Once a League position was taken an action program, usually a pamphlet urging a particular vote on a referendum, was developed.

One early study, in 1954, recommended a metropolitan parks system. A subsequent effort urging a yes vote on a park referendum ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Hennepin County Park District. Ray Black considered this the greatest accomplishment of the League during his tenure as Executive Director.

After charges of mismanagement and fire hazards, the League, at the request of Minneapolis Mayor Eric Hoyer, studied the General Hospital needs of Minneapolis and Hennepin County. The study concluded that the proposed new, expensive facility was not needed. The study resulted in the purchase of new equipment, reduced the cost of improved fire protection, greatly improved employee morale and restored public faith in Minneapolis General Hospital.

Although some studies were less successful, the League often brought issues to the forefront or helped frame the debate. For instance, while the League failed to achieve the full scope of its proposals for the reform of the Minneapolis city charter as a strong-mayor system, charter reform became a serious issue and generated much public debate for years. In fact, discussion of Minneapolis charter reform continues today.

In these early years the League was essentially reacting to proposals initiated by local government officials. A key change occurred in 1962. In a review of a school board proposal for the first major building program since the 1920s, the League was critical of the program which recommended just rehabilitating old buildings.

But the League did more. It laid out an alternative program involving closing and demolishing of entire schools, selling sites, and constructing new schools at new sites. The community rejected the school board proposal. A new proposal based on the League's suggestion was prepared and, with the League's support, passed.

The experience taught the organization an important lesson, not only about finding the key points of timing and leverage, but also about its ability to generate its own proposals.

Next month: A Citizens League recommendation creates the Metropolitan Council.
Phil Jenni bids the League a Farewell

Dear Citizens League Friends:

Thank you for your support and dedication for the 16 years. It's been a real pleasure to be a member of the Citizens League staff.

Sixteen years is a long time. But it has never been hard to go to work everyday because each day at the League is filled with stimulation and challenge. While our work was serious, we also had fun. I've stayed here because I love what we do. The Citizens League has made a difference in Minnesota and together we've accomplished truly memorable things.

But mostly I've stayed at the League because of the people—the "regulars" at the Mind-Openers; the committee members and chairs; the Board members; our superb Board presidents during my tenure; and the wonderful fellow staff members. I wish I could personally thank every one of you who have made my tenure here so fulfilling, stimulating and delightful.

While I leave the League with both sadness and satisfaction, I also leave with a sense of concern. Our community has changed greatly in recent years. Some of those changes have made the work of the League even more important. At the same time, those changes have made it more difficult for the League to find the resources it needs.

For the League to continue to have influence, it must have support from the people who know what we do, why we do it and why it matters. That has never been a very long list of people, but it's a list of special people. I know because I've seen you in action. The League needs you now, to defend and support this community treasure. I intend to do my part and I hope you will, too.

Thank you again for letting me be a part of this truly unique Minnesota institution. Let's work hard to make sure it's around for the next half century.

Phil Jenni

Energy Committee starts to see the light at the end of the tunnel

The Citizens League Energy Committee, which met for the first time on July 17, 2001, has held over 15 meetings and is now getting ready to start discussing the possible recommendations. The last testimony session is scheduled for April 8.

The committee has come a long way since that first meeting last July by discussing such topics as the energy bill passed during the last session, to the potential use of renewable resources within Minnesota's energy portfolio, and from the changing market structures around the nation, to the development of regional transmission regulators.

One of the most interesting happenings in the energy world since the committee began was the release of the 2001 State Energy Planning Report, which was released in February by the Minnesota Department of Commerce. The report helps explain how the state plans for future energy needs, and also addresses some of the issues involving conservation and renewable resources. On February 25, Linda Taylor, the Deputy Commissioner of Energy for the Department of Commerce, met with the committee to discuss the report. The full report, along with an executive summary, are available on the Minnesota Department of Commerce's website at www.commerce.state.mn.us.

To learn more about the committee, log on to the committee website at www.citizensleague.net.

Ken Keller receives honor

Professor Kenneth Keller, the director for the Center for Science, Technology and Public Affairs at the Humphrey Center, member of the Citizens League Board of Directors, and current co-chair for the Citizens League Energy Committee, recently received one of the highest professional distinctions awarded to engineers—election into the National Academy of Engineering (NAE).

According to the National Academy of Engineering press release, "Academy membership honors those who have made 'important contributions to engineering theory and practice' and those who have demonstrated 'unusual accomplishment in the pioneering of new and developing fields of technology.'" Professor Keller was elected on the merit of his "leadership in applying quantitative engineering analysis to vascular transport and artificial organ design and in public policy." For more information about the award or the National Academy of Engineering, visit the NAE website at www.nae.edu.