

## News & Announcements

The Employment and Training Administration has released the Program Year 2006 Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) for Core Products and Services Grants.

This TEGL provides the states with guidance for populating and using the Workforce Information Database (previously ALMIS Database).

Read the Statement of Work Guidelines to make sure your state is in compliance. The details of what's required can be found at [http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL03-06\\_Att3.pdf](http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL03-06_Att3.pdf) or <http://www.almisdb.org/10guidelines.cfm>

## Need Your Input!

A successful Workforce Information Database training class was held in Madison, Wisconsin in July 2006. We are currently considering offering another training (similar curriculum) in early 2007 based on need. So, if you think you would be willing and able to attend a classroom training at that time, please let us know by emailing [mskalberg@yahoo.com](mailto:mskalberg@yahoo.com) THANKS!

## Analyst Resource Center: *What's in a Name*

*...That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet...*

If you haven't already gotten the word on the street, yes, the ALMIS Database is being renamed the Workforce Information Database and the ALMIS Employer Database will be referred to, as simply, the Employer Database. While the newly named Analyst Resource Center (ARC) will continue maintenance, support and development of the Workforce Information Database and Employer Database as before, the name change heralds an expansion and enhancement in current services and products offered by the workgroup.

While we're on the topic of something as basic as a name, we thought we would also seize this opportunity for those of you who might be unfamiliar with the ARC or the Workforce Information Database, to give the basics on who we are and what we do. For those of you who feel quite comfortable with this information, we encourage you to skip ahead to the rest of this edition of the newsletter for a summary of what was discussed at the latest ARC meeting and some useful insights, resources and examples of work from other DBAs.

### ARC Basics

The Analyst Resource Center is a joint effort between the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration and the states to enhance information delivery to workforce customers in the employment, education and economic development sectors. (We began as the ALMIS Database Maintenance Consortium in 1996.) While the maintenance and update of the Workforce Information Database (previously ALMIS Database) remains a primary concern to the Analyst Resource Center, the ARC provides a range of additional services including training of database administrators, operation of the ARC website, operation of the National Crosswalk Service Center (NCSC), and management of the Employer Database Master Agreement through the State of Iowa.

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# DBA in the Spotlight

## Dana Placzek

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*(Dana is on the right and his handsome son Andrew is on the left)*

### How long have you been involved in the world of LMI?

I was hired by the State of Connecticut in January of 1999, so that makes 7 ½ years now.

### How long have you been an Workforce Information DBA?

I've been a Workforce Information DBA since around April 2001, when I also became involved with the ALMIS Database Consortium (now ARC). I hadn't realized it had been so long until you asked this. Scary how time flies...

### What is your educational background?

I have a Bachelor of Science in Biology, with a minor in Math, and I took a couple of years of post-graduate courses in Statistics right after this.

### What are your interests outside of work?

I've been playing traditional Irish music for about 20 years now, most recently in a band called Celtic Knots. I've also developed an obsession with shortwave radio, listening to international news and other broadcasts. This is a fun way to get other perspectives on current



events, as most countries broadcast in English, at least a little. And I read too much, or so I'm told. And of course there is my 7-year old son, who is a whole set of interests all on his own.

### What is your favorite work-related web site? Why?

Not sure that "favorite" is the right word, but certainly my most-visited and useful is the National Crosswalk Center site, followed closely by the Census Bureau site. Both are great sources of data. (Steve, you owe me one for the plug...)

### Do you have any project management tools or tips you'd like to share with other DBAs?

Not really. I think each DBA has to develop his/her own ways that work. I use Microsoft Access almost exclusively to reformat data and upload into our Workforce Information Database. I find Access to be fairly intuitive, yet have programming tools (VBA) that are powerful and flexible enough to handle any data issues I've encountered. However, other tools will also work, and be more intuitive for others. I suspect choice of program has much to do with what one was first introduced to. More important is to learn how to use the tool to its full potential.

### What training have you taken recently and would you recommend it to other DBAs?

The most useful training I've had for being a Workforce Information DBA has been in Visual Basic/Visual Basic for Applications. Although I had dabbled in VBA before coming to the Labor Department, the VB courses, presented by our State

Department of Administrative Services, really helped crystallize and expand what I knew. I think programming skills are a major asset to a Workforce Information DBA. Using them can save a lot of time trying to tame raw data. Plus, it can even be a lot of fun, coming up with your own little interface where you push a button and your data is magically reformatted!

### What is the strangest job you ever held?

I sorted coupons for a coupon clearinghouse. Grocery stores sent us redeemed coupons, and we separated them and sent them on to the manufacturers. Between the excitement of sorting coupons for 8 hours a day and the, shall I say, characters that were my coworkers, it was a funky job. But it paid the bills at the time.

### What is the most rewarding aspect of your current job?

I like being able to take a request for a report, like "we need the employment by sector by town", and turning out a report that meets this need. Similarly with mapping/GIS. Coworkers will often ask for a map, and I really enjoy coming up with something meaningful. I knew nothing about GIS before coming to DOL; I took the courses then offered in Portland, Maine, and have really enjoyed mapping ever since.

Finally, I've been lucky enough to be involved with a couple of academic studies that have tied into some performance measures work that I do. These are very interesting, as they go beyond data collection and description, to actual analysis and interpretation of the data.

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## DBA in the Spotlight...continued

*(Continued from page 2)*

### What do you see as future challenges for DBAs?

Keeping up with the flood of data that ARC continues to add to the Workforce Information Database, and also presenting that data to customers (however "customers" is defined.)

### What's spinning on your CD player or on your iPod?

My music obsession right now is a group called Flook. They are labeled as traditional Irish, but really push the limits, mixing Balkan tunes and jazz and rock styling with the standard jigs and reels. Plus they have one of the best flute/whistle players, and an alto flute adding some incredible harmonies! Fun stuff!

### What is the most interesting or awe-inspiring place you've been?

Ireland (of course.) My wife and I went on our honeymoon there, for a little over a week. Ireland goes from chilly, misty, places to a barren moonscape to a sunny southern coast complete with palm trees. Also amazing coastlines and truly green rolling hills. Add to this a culture going back a couple of thousand years, with castles and wonderful little cities and towns, and it's the perfect place to visit. Or to live, if I could just talk my wife into moving...

### Read any good books lately (personal or work-related) that you would recommend others read?

Most of what I read is non-fiction, usually history or politics/economics.

Usually pretty dry, style-wise, but interesting information. However, the recent one I would recommend is a collection of short stories by Ursula Le Guin called "A Fisherman of the Inland Sea". Very interesting, and well-written. And any book by Noam Chomsky is worth the read. In this vein the book "Killing Hope", by William Blum, is extremely eye-opening.

As far as work-related books go, most of what I read is reference material, so it's not what I think of as "reading". With that in mind, I generally like the O'Reilly series of computer references. O'Reilly covers just about any computer topic one may be interested in. Their "Access Database Design and Programming" is a very good guide for MS Access.

*("What's in a Name", Continued from page 1)*

The ARC has four primary products and services offered for workforce information professionals. Here are the specifics:

1. The **Workforce Information Database** provides states with a common structure for storing information in a single database in each state. The database serves as the cornerstone for information delivery, workforce research, and product development for information that is standard and comparable across all states. The database, once populated, brings together critical workforce information from many sources to promote better analysis and more sophisticated interpretation. Using the same version of the database in all states is important for providing interstate access to workforce information.
2. The ARC provides customer access to a comprehensive **Employer Database** with information on more than 10 million businesses across the country, along with other valuable resources.
3. The **National Crosswalk Service Center (NCSC)** functions as a clearinghouse for national, state and local data from standardized sources. NCSC provides essential support and is a vital resource on occupational and training classification systems for Federal agency and state staff.
4. The ARC provides **Capacity Building** through its ongoing technical assistance and training to Federal and state staff for effective implementation, maintenance, and use of the Workforce Information Database and related resources.

# DBA in the Spotlight

## Jeremy Deyo

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The secret is to learn which keywords typically work best, and also to tack on a "re:" after your search string. This will usually filter out the questions and only show the answers.

### Do you have any project management tools or tips you'd like to share with other DBAs?

Maintaining the ALMIS database can be time consuming. Try to automate your procedures for updating the data so you can spend your time working on other projects. Integration Services for SQL Server 2005 is extremely helpful in doing this. Mostly all of my ALMIS tables are updated from SSIS packages, and some of them even run on an automatic schedule. I would also recommend that DBAs get their Project Management Professional (PMP®) certification through the Project Management Institute (PMI®).

### What training have you taken recently and would you recommend it to other DBAs?

In addition to the ALMIS training provided by ARC, the following Microsoft classes are very helpful:

- 2071 - Querying Microsoft SQL Server 2000 with Transact-SQL
- 2072 - Administering a Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Database
- 2073 - Programming a Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Database
- 2779 - Implementing a Microsoft SQL Server 2005 Database
- 2780 - Maintaining a Microsoft SQL Server 2005 Database

### What is the most rewarding aspect of your current job?

Seeing how much time I have saved staff members in our LMI shop. I have automated several tasks that have previously been done by hand, which saves a tremendous amount of time and money.

### What do you see as future challenges for DBAs?

Keeping up with technology. DBAs really need to learn a wide variety of skills that go beyond simple database administration. Learning .Net, for instance, is important because a DBA needs to know how applications are connecting to the database servers. Additionally there are a lot of advanced features in SQL Server 2005 that you can take advantage of with a little knowledge of C# or VB programming in the .Net framework.

### What's your hidden talent?

I enjoy playing the piano.

### What's spinning on your CD player or on your iPod®?

Too much, my iPod® is almost full! I listen to just about everything, which might explain why my iPod® is running out of space.

### Read any good books lately (personal or work-related) that you would recommend others read?

A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide) - Third Edition, by the Project Management Institute (PMI®). Not as thrilling as the DaVinci Code, but a good read nonetheless.

### How long have you been involved in the world of LMI and been a Workforce Information DBA?

Two and a half years.

### What is your educational background?

I received my B.B.A. degree in Computer Information Systems from James Madison University in December 2003. Currently I am applying to graduate schools and plan to go back full-time in the Fall of 2007 to earn my M.B.A.

### Are you originally from Virginia?

We moved to Virginia when I was two months old, so I consider myself a native Virginian.

### What are your interests outside of work?

I run my own consulting business outside of my normal day job, so that usually keeps me fairly busy. When I take a break from both jobs, I enjoy playing tennis.

### What is your favorite work-related web site? Why?

Google Groups™ (groups.google.com). It is an extremely rare occasion when I cannot find an answer to a question that I have after searching their newsgroups.

# Workforce Information Database in Action

## Virginia

By Jeremy A. Devo, Database Administrator, Virginia Employment Commission

Our Workforce Information Database [ALMIS Database] website is called the Virginia's Electronic Labor Market Access (VELMA) and can be accessed online at <http://velma.virtuallmi.com>.

The application was developed by Geographic Solutions, Inc. and is also referred to as Virtual LMI. VELMA uses the latest 2.3 version of the ALMIS Database, and is hosted on a SQL Server 2005 server. For the most part we house all of our data in ALMIS tables. We did, however, develop a few plug-ins for VELMA that pull data in from slightly modified ALMIS tables.

**Virginia Employment Commission**  
VIRGINIA'S ELECTRONIC LABOR MARKET ACCESS

Home | Labor Market Analysis | Services for Individuals | Services for Employers | Products

Register or sign in here!

Home

About this Site

**Job Seekers**  
Get help selecting a new career, finding a new job, and locating suitable education or training.

- Find a Job
- Education and Training
- Career Assistance
- Labor Market Information

Explore!

**Employers**  
Analyze the labor market. Determine competitive starting salaries, review suitable training, place job orders, and find suitable candidates.

- Recruitment Services
- Education and Training
- Labor Market Information

Explore!

**Analysts and Researchers**  
Research labor market, economic and demographic data and compare information over time and between regions.

**At a glance...**

**What's New?**  
The newly revamped Community Profiles are now available!

Click [here](#) to see the latest additions to VELMA.

**Unemployment Rates**

	Jul-06	Jun-06	Jul-05
Virginia	3.3%	3.3%	3.5%
United States	5.0%	4.8%	5.2%

## DBA in the Spotlight

### Darin Anderson

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**What is your educational background?** BS in Criminal Justice with a minor in Human Services.

**Are you originally from North Dakota?** No, I am originally from South Dakota, moved to North Dakota in February of 2005.

**What are your interests outside of work?** Spending time with family which consists of my fiancé Morgan, son Mason (2 years) and our two Weimaraners, Dusty (3 years) Jazmine (8 years). When they aren't keeping me busy Morgan and I like to spend some time riding motorcycles.

**What is your favorite work-related web site? Why?** ARC, mainly it's where most of my time is spent.

**What training have you taken recently and would you recommend it to other DBAs?** Almis DBA Training. Very, Very good training for all levels. It would be nice to have a Level I and a Level II for that course.

**What is the most rewarding aspect of your current job?** Looking forward to working on something different every day.

**What do you see as future challenges for DBAs?** Funding and training.

**Read any good books lately (personal or work-related) that you would recommend others read?** Rich Dad, Poor Dad.

**How long have you been involved in the world of LMI?** 10 months

**How long have you been an ALMIS DBA?** 6 months

# ARC Meeting Highlights

**August 22-24, 2006**  
**Kalispell, Montana**

## **Membership Changes**

Wyoming petitioned for membership in the ARC workgroup. They have been actively participating in workgroup activities for some time now. Motion was made and seconded to add them as a member. The group unanimously approved.

With Mike Blank's retirement from the state of Iowa and Jeff Nall's new position in the state of Iowa that precludes his ability to participate on the ARC workgroup, the workgroup welcomed Gary Wilson as the new state of Iowa representative. Kim Hughes was also welcomed as the new state of Nebraska representative.

## **New Name**

As referred to in the recently released Workforce Information TEGL from ETA, the ALMIS Resource Center (ARC) will now be referred to as the Analyst Resource Center (ARC). The ALMIS Database will now be referred to as the Workforce Information Database while the ALMIS Employer Database will be referred to as the Employer Database. A Statement of Work proposal has been submitted to ETA for the period beginning July 1, 2006, with reference to the new name. The workgroup was asked to reconsider the naming convention for the as of yet unreleased ALMIS Database Version 2.3.1, because of its name change to the Workforce Information Database.

## **Shifting Emphasis**

The workgroup was asked to review the Workforce Information Database to determine the information already present that can be used for economic development purposes and also review any potential data elements that could be included for

those purposes. During the review process, members were asked to also take into consideration states' ability to populate these data elements.

## **Funding**

The remaining payments under the existing Employer Database contract were discussed. The next payment for the Employer Database contract is due October 31, 2006.

The workgroup had requested and had received a "no-cost extension" through Jan 31, 2007, as monies for the period beginning July 1, 2006 had not yet been released.

For the upcoming year, the ARC will be using funding to do research for the next RFI and RFP for the Employer Database contract. The new contract would need to take effect at the expiration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> optional year of the current contract with perhaps some overlap. Funding would also be used to allow Iowa to monitor and support the existing master agreement. Funding would also be used for a national ARC seminar. The workgroup agreed to identify what resources would be necessary in order to do a limited additional piece for the ADAM system.

## **ETA Update**

Olaf Bjorkland joined the meeting via conference call. Olaf confirmed that ETA had received the report for the period ending June 30, 2006 and the Statement of Work for the period beginning July 1, 2006 and gave an overview of current projects and workgroups being funded through ETA. Specifically, Olaf gave an overview of the WITS system and WIRED initiative. A discussion was held regarding the possibilities for expanding the Workforce Information Database for economic development.

The ADAM system was discussed. Currently it is in the hands of pilot states awaiting a sponsor and funding as WIC funding of the ADAM system has ended. It's usefulness as a tool for regional planning and cross-state analysis was emphasized.

## **National Crosswalk Service Center (NCSC) Update**

Steve Rosenow with the NCSC reported:

- There is a new O\*NET database. O\*NET decreased the number of occupations and the codes are now much closer to the SOC code.
- NCSC has recently registered a new domain name for the ARC – [www.workforceinfodb.org](http://www.workforceinfodb.org) to replace the current [www.almisdb.org](http://www.almisdb.org).
- The NCSC continues to get requests for Education files (e.g. for Career Voyages).
- ACINet continues to add more to their system. They will have QCEW data down to the county level.
- Geocoding is about 85% complete on the Schools file and have added county FIPS.

## **ARC and Employer Database Survey Analysis**

Marilyn Skalberg presented results from the 2006 ARC Survey of Workforce Information Database administrators and the 2006 Employer Database survey (as administered and analyzed by representatives from Iowa). The Structure and Education and Communication Subcommittees were asked to review the survey results closely and follow up on issues as needed. Discussion was held regarding requests for FEIN in the Employer Database and on the different methodologies and uses of the QCEW data and the Employer

*(Continued on page 7)*

## ARC Meeting Highlights—continued

(Continued from page 6)

Database. The group decided to put together a document that outlines the purpose, scope, audience, and differences in collection/methodologies for each as a means of clarifying any confusion among users regarding the data sets.

### Subcommittee Reports:

#### Policy/Employer Database

**Subcommittee**– Bob Cottrell reported that he would continue to work with ETA on funding issues for the coming year including the next payment for the Employer Database. He said that he would also notify Wyoming regarding their new membership status. Work would commence on the next RFI or RFP for a new Employer Database contract.

#### Education and Communication

**Subcommittee**– Vicki Boylston reported that there were three basic areas of focus for the group this week: training, website and seminar.

Training continues to offer unique challenges in that every state brings

a unique set of skills, experience level, and needs to the training. Potential ideas for enhancing training/capacity building are currently being examined.

The ARC website is undergoing a significant redesign. The subcommittee made a number of changes to the current prototype and a new site is planned to be available for workgroup approval at the next ARC meeting.

The ARC decided some time ago to alternate classroom training and the national seminar each year. Based upon popular demand from DBAs and regional offices, the workgroup, and other workforce professionals, along with the success and attendance of past ARC seminars, the subcommittee recommended and the workgroup agreed that the ARC hold another seminar in 2007. The subcommittee identified several potential sites including San Antonio, Texas, Savannah, Georgia, Tampa, Florida, and St. Louis, Missouri.

Structure Subcommittee  
Bill Stambaugh reported that the Structure Subcommittee had worked

through their complete list of items to review and had defined a next version release schedule. October 31, 2006 is the target deadline for the release. The release will be under the name Workforce Information Database (formerly ALMIS Database) Version 2.4. Emphasis is that the name change is the only *major* change.

Minor changes in the next release will include: changes in field size, CIP code changed to 10 characters, and adding a suppression flag to the OESWage wage field. The next release will include tables for Job Vacancy, EEO, QWI (Quarterly Workforce Indicators), Benefits Survey, and BED (Business Employment Dynamics). The ESAPPLIC table will be eliminated and replaced by two tables in order to eliminate the issue of too many primary keys. The type of data the two tables contain will remain the same as the content of the ESAPPLIC table. The Structure Subcommittee agreed to provide a “change document” (listing changes from Version 2.3 to Version 2.4).



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If you have any questions regarding **ARC news** or would like to contribute information, please contact Marilyn Skalberg (541) 434-0334 or Email [mskalberg@yahoo.com](mailto:mskalberg@yahoo.com).

*The Workforce Information Database is a normalized, relational database structure developed for the storage and maintenance of labor market, economic, demographic and occupational information. The Analyst Resource Center is responsible for the Workforce Information Database structure development, update, and maintenance. Members include North Carolina (lead), Connecticut, Georgia, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and ETA, along with support from the National Crosswalk Service Center.*