We are having problems getting permission to move the MSC server from its current location, at the Dept. of Administration, to ~~its new home at~~ the State Library. ~~We may, on short notice, need your help in this process.~~ This is a longish message, I'll keep it as short as I can. Here's what's going on:

Business Plan
Our MSC server migration has been a long and thoughtful process, beginning with the MSC Business Plan which was reviewed, modified, and approved by the MSC Membership, Networking Task Force, and State Library Commission. The Biz Plan directed us, Sarah, Mike, and Bruce, to move the MSC servers out of Administration (DOA, ITSD). Lack of root access to the operating system, non-standard hardware configuration, repeated service interruptions, and anticipated higher annual costs were our initial motivations.

Server Siting Process
Our first thoughts were to move it to the iConnect service here in Helena by July 1. We thought that this 'Internet Hotel' would be a good place for the MSC server. On further investigation we discovered that it had functional flaws and a much higher price than we had anticipated. Subsequently we had discussions with MSL/NRIS staff, who let us know that the server environment in the State Library was maturing far more rapidly than we anticipated. Temperature control was complete as was physical security, network switching, and backup. Dual homed Internet Access (two roads out of Dodge, instead of just one) (THIS IS FROM ISTD AND NOT MLS) and fire suppression were in the works or in early planning. Additionally, the MSL has installed a very fast and capacious hard disk array called a Storage Array Network, or SAN. Using the SAN (instead of internal hard disks on our servers) would allow us to speed backup, lower initial costs, achieve significantly better performance, and provide a more bomb-proof server. We double checked this configuration with Sirsi, they said "This sounds great, go for it." or words to that effect.

Server Platform, Sun vs. IBM
At this point we were still thinking a Sun/Solaris (operating system) option was our best bet. Sun is not an approved platform in the State's environment. The other option is an IBM/AIX option, which appeared to be about $80,000 more expensive. The IBM RS/6000 running AIX is an approved server platform in the State environment. Our intent was to purchase two servers, one each production and development boxes, from Sirsi. This would allow us to receive integrated support for database, operation system, web services, and application, all from Sirsi. This was and remains a requirement.

Because we were locating the server at the MSL, and because State funds were involved, the Dept. of Administration (DOA/ITSD) required us to complete an Information Technology Purchase Request (ITPR) and a sole source exception for the purchase order. During the ITPR process we came to realize that using the SAN made the IBM option about the same price as the Sun option, so we changed our preference to the State supported IBM/AIX platform. Actually, we don't really care if servers are Sun or IBM as long as they work, are supportable, and are affordable.

We advertised for bids for both IBM and Sun servers, and received qualified bids for both. The IBM option was affordable, and so this is the option we have chosen. However, we have not yet been able to award the bid and cut a purchase order to get things moving.

ITPR Disapproved
This is where things stand now. DOA has disapproved our ITPR, that is, they have told us that we cannot move the server from DOA's mid-tier server environment in the Mitchell Building. Without DOA's approval, we cannot cut a purchase order. And it turns out that they actually have the authority to deny our request; unlike in a routine customer/service provider relationship, we do not have the ability to vote with our feet.

MSC's ITPR was denied for financial, technical, and system configuration reasons. We adamantly disagree with their finding and with their reasoning. We do not believe that they have their facts straight, ~~and I feel that the real reason for the denial was DOA wanting to keep the application in their environment (for financial and other business reasons). I suspect DOA would disagree with me on this point. The bottom line is that DOA's server environment does not now, and is highly unlikely to in the future, meet our needs. The MSL server environment would be peachy. How are we going to change their minds?~~

~~Your Help May Be Needed~~
~~We may need your help to convince DOA to approval our ITPR and let us order two IBM servers, to be located at the MSL. We may need you to write, call, or come to Helena for a meeting with DOA (please hold off until we know if this will be necessary and helpful). Frankly, at this time, we are stuck.~~ This has been a very difficult process, a very frustrating and aggravating process, one that has consumed hundreds of hours of our time. Mike and Karen have been champs, assembling information, writing memos, taking meetings... but we have not yet been able to effect the desired outcome. Please know that MSL is doing everything in its power to help DOA do the right thing. <u>We are asking for more information from DOA and after we receive that, we will decide if to appeal the decision. If so, we may ask members of the MSC to help with the appeal.</u>

We will keep you in the loop. Unfortunately our timetable, for getting the new servers up and running by July 1, are shot. August 1 is what we are aiming for now. We are adding another couple dozen libraries to the MSC. If we get the servers in place by August 1, we should be okay... we are beginning data conversion and training now, these activities can happen in our current server environment. But we are concerned about unforeseen costs in running our application longer than we anticipated at DOA, and know that for operational reasons we have to move the MSC servers into the MSL as quickly as possible.

Thanks for taking the time to read through this. Sorry to bring you bad news.

Bruce