

Michigan Capital  
Area Chapter of The  
American Society for  
Public Administration

Mid-Michigan's Voice for  
Public Service  
Since 1951



# PA Forum

A Journal of the Michigan Capital Area Chapter of ASPA

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## Welcome to the Michigan Capital Area Chapter

**By George Orban**

The most internationally renowned of our Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin, believed that the highest calling in life was public service – even more so than making a fortune as printer or being one of the most successful scientist/inventor of his times.

If you're reading this article, you're involved in public service arena in some form. And right now, in 2007, in the State of Michigan, you may have some doubts about the "high calling of public service." And that's where the Michigan Capital Area Chapter (MiCAP) comes in. MiCAP has been in existence as a Chapter of The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) since May 3, 1951 – a remarkable 56 years of service.

ASPA's Mission is also our Chapter's Mission that:

- Advances the art, science, teaching, and practice of public and non-profit administration.
- Promotes the value of joining and elevating the public service profession.
- Builds bridges among all who pursue public purposes.
- Provides networking and professional development opportunities to those committed to public service values.
- Achieves innovative solutions to the challenge of governance.

If you are in the public service, especially as a young professional, and are seeking a way to expand your network and have access to an array of career resources, then membership in MiCAP is just what you are looking for! We are here to be a service and resource to you and your professional needs.

At the Chapter level, MiCAP offers programs and seminars that explore the relevant topics of today and offers hands-on seminars to give you the tools you need to excel as a public servant. Just as importantly, ASPA is ready-made network of public service professionals at the state and local level and from academia. Individuals from beginner to highly experienced, who can be a peer and a friend, and who just might have the knowledge and experience that you're looking for (not to mention that the author met his wife through ASPA!)

Nationally, ASPA, founded in 1939, has 9,000 members who work in all levels and aspects of public service and represent a diverse and wide array of individuals

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**Join MiCAP Today!**

Member benefits include:

- Networking with, and learning from, mid-Michigan's public service leaders
- Invitations to seminars and workshops
- Enhance your professional development through your relationship with a professional association
- Future opportunities to apply for mini-grants to support public service research

Go to:

[www.aspanet.org](http://www.aspanet.org)  
for a membership  
application!

*"Mike was a  
renaissance  
man who never  
stopped  
learning."*

## Welcome... continued from page 1

to expand your network even farther. ASPA's publications are premier in their field, the monthly "PA Times" newspaper, the bi-monthly e-newsletter "The Bridge," and the bi-monthly scholarly journal, the "Public Administration Review." Additionally, ASPA has available a number of professional publications and its "Code of Ethics" is regarded as the universal standard in the public service. And to personalize your membership, ASPA has 21 Sections that focus on specialized topics. To find out more about ASPA, we encourage you to explore [www.aspanet.org](http://www.aspanet.org).

We are proud to be in the public service. Although times have been tough for us in the last number of years, the public sector has been remarkably dedicated, perseverant, resilient and innovative. We at MiCAP are equally proud that we're not only still alive and well, but that we're looking to the future and asking dedicated individuals to join us by volunteering to be members of our Board to serve your peers by helping us to produce programs that will serve the daily needs of our profession and expand your own career as well. For more information about member benefits and joining MiCAP, please contact our Chapter President, Veronica A. Johnson, at [veronicj@umich.edu](mailto:veronicj@umich.edu).

## Chapter Mourns Loss of Former President

**By George Orban**

The Michigan Capital Area Chapter mourns the loss of Brigadier General Michael J. Rice (MI), Retired, who passed away on July 10, 2007. Mike had several episodes of prostate cancer, and after his retirement as Deputy Adjutant General of the Michigan National Guard for Administration and Veterans' Affairs, became active in several state and national prostate cancer organizations. Like everything else, he did, Mike not only became a tireless advocate, but also became quite expert about prostate cancer. In the true spirit of ASPA, Mike was a renaissance man who never stopped learning. He was 65 at the time of his death, and had just celebrated his 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

Mike had a long and distinguished career in the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, rising rapidly through the ranks into positions of increasing responsibility, including Legislative Liaison, Administrative Officer, Administrator of the Vietnam Veterans' Trust Fund, and director of the State's veterans' homes. He was active in numerous organizations, including among others, ASPA, United Way, Plymouth Congregational Church, and several military organizations. Another of Mike's major accomplishments was bringing to Michigan a National Military Cemetery, located near Holly, where, appropriately, he was laid to his final rest.

*Continued on Page 3.*

## Remembrance... *continued from page 2*

Mike was Chapter President from 1980 to 1981, during which period I served as Vice President for Programs, and then succeeded him as Chapter President. Mike was not only a role model and mentor of the highest integrity, but also a great friend – he was truly “An Officer and a Gentleman.” His boundless enthusiasm, love of learning and consummate professionalism will be missed by all.

## Public Administrators as Web Site Developers?

### Oh My!

**By Robert J. Sobie, Ph.D.**

With the prevalence of personal computer software products, such as Microsoft Publisher and Microsoft Word, a broad spectrum of users are capable of creating Web sites for personal and professional purposes without formal Web design and development training. Public administrators and many street-level bureaucrats like police officers, finance officers, and record clerks can produce informative and creative Web sites in a short period of time using prepackaged templates. This makes the Web an attractive alternative for disseminating information to the public in a cost-efficient and effective manner.

For public administrators, adoption of Web-based electronic government (e-government) strategies provides opportunities to improve public service delivery as a key concept of public sector reform. The pressure to reduce fiscal deficits and consolidate public budgets (Aichholzer, 2004) can be intense, further encouraging e-government initiatives that replace traditional service delivery methods. An unintended consequence from some template-based Web tools is the creation of new social divisions that make digital inclusion for some people more difficult, if not impossible.

Although this article focuses on accessibility for people with disabilities, more specifically those individuals with blindness or low vision, other factors such as income and education disparity should also be concerns for public administrators as participatory democracy may be reduced with each new public service offered online when conditions of access persist in our society.

This problem arises when administrators and their street-level cousins develop and implement Web sites without considering how to make the site accessible to marginalized groups like people with blindness or low vision. Because the Web is mostly a visual medium (Hudson, 2002), this particular group of nearly 20 million Americans (Chavan and Steins, 2001) will experience digital exclusion from virtual worlds of the Internet when Web sites undergo development without an evaluation of accessibility. This becomes particularly acute when the Web site is the only source of information and services.

When 65% of Internet users in the United States expect information from government to be online (Horrigan and Rainie, 2002), it's easy to understand the tremendous growth and rush to e-government that does not allow time to learn about accessibility requirements and develop an accessibility-compliant Web design process.

*“65% of Internet users in the United States expect information from government to be online.”*

*Continued on Page 4.*

## Web Site... continued from page 3

To aid novice and experienced professionals involved in Web development, passage of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 1998 was partially intended to facilitate the development of technologies to increase accessibility for people with disabilities. A major contribution of WIA was that it amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to include a series of accessibility design and programming guidelines (see Section 508, Subsection 1194.22 of the Act). These guidelines took effect in June 2001 for federal agencies but some past research indicates application to state and local governments under certain conditions.

The desired public policy outcome was to increase accessibility to government Web sites, but the assumption that this outcome has been met is anything but certain. For example, the author is an experienced technology director who created the same Web page using four Microsoft products: MS-Publisher 2000, MS-Publisher 2003, MS-Publisher 2007, and MS-Word 2003. Using a software program called Bobby 5.0 (see Watchfire Corporation at [www.watchfire.com](http://www.watchfire.com) for more information) to evaluate how accessible a Web page is following Section 508's guidelines, MS-Publisher 2000 and 2003 produced a Web page with 93 instances of accessibility errors programmed into the page. MS-Publisher 2007 produced 38 instances and MS-Word 2003 produced 16 instances of errors for the same page. Newer versions of software may be more intuitive regarding accessibility than older versions, but not all newer versions are the same.

Some clarity is required to understand what an accessibility error is and the degree in which these errors impact Web site accessibility. Section 508, Subsection 1194.22, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as amended) contains 16 standards, labeled 'a' through 'p', that Web developers can use to improve Web site accessibility. Some standards benefit people with blindness or low vision. Other standards benefit people with hearing impairment, and so on.

One particular standard, 1194.22 (a), is especially important to people with blindness or low vision because it mandates the use of alternative text descriptions for images or other graphics on a Web page. The sample hypertext markup language (HTML) shown below provides a useful example of a graphic image called "jobs.jpg" that links an Internet user to job postings.

*Without alternative text:*

```
<p></p>
```

*With alternative text:*

```
<p></p>
```

The absence of alternative text is a common problem on many Web pages and is problematic for people with blindness who use screen reading technology

*Continued on Page 5.*



http://www

**“digital  
inclusion of  
marginalized  
client groups  
is possible.”**

# Web Site... continued from page 5

because the screen reader cannot interpret the meaning of a graphic image called “jobs.jpg”.

Although limitations exist, Bobby 5.0 software evaluates the hypertext markup language (HTML) created when you build a Web page or entire site using products like those referenced in this article. If Bobby 5.0 determines the HTML programming statements, such as the ones that allow you to access and download an employment application from a government Web site, do not meet one or more of the standards, an accessibility error is reported.

Web developers can use a tool like Bobby 5.0 as part of an e-government accessibility initiative to improve accessibility to the virtual world of government. When this occurs, digital inclusion of marginalized client groups is possible.

Of course, evaluation tools like Bobby 5.0 offer only proxy measures of actual Web site accessibility. The best way to achieve accessibility is through direct testing by people with disabilities. Some emphasis on blindness or low vision is necessary because the Web is mostly a visual medium (Hudson, 2002). But with the proliferation of more audio content, from downloadable music or video, all disabilities should be considered within a comprehensive e-government accessibility strategy.

References:

Aichholzer, G. (2004). Scenarios of e-Government in 2010 and implications for strategy design. *Electronic Journal of e-Government*, 2(1), 1-10.  
 Chavan, A. & Steins, C. (2001). A web for everyone. *Planning*, 67(7), 10.  
 Horrigan, J., & Rainie, L. (2002). Counting on the Internet. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project.  
 Hudson, L. (2002). A new age of accessibility. *Library Journal*, 127(1), 19-21

## Call for Papers and Articles

**Topics:** A broad selection of topics are welcome including common disciplines like governance, strategic planning, leadership, administration and service, public policy, non-profit management, technology, human resources, outsourcing, and case studies.

**Authors:** Practitioners, theorists, students, consultants, and so on. You don’t need to be a member of the MiCAP Chapter of ASPA (although we encourage you to join) in order to have your paper or article considered for publication. If you are a student, or recent graduate, publication of your article enhances your professional development and resume.

**Submission:** Citations must follow academically accepted formats (i.e. APA, Chicago, and Harvard styles). Send your articles, in Word or Adobe formats, to [gorban@voyager.net](mailto:gorban@voyager.net)

**Publishing Schedule:**

November 2007	May 2008
January 2008	July 2008
March 2008	September 2008



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**MiCAP Mission Statement**

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- Achieves innovative solutions to the challenge of governance.

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**Upcoming Events & Opportunities**

**Sept 16—19, 2007:** Michigan Chapter of Government Information Science Annual Conference  
DoubleTree Inn, Bay City, Michigan  
[www.mi-gmis.org](http://www.mi-gmis.org)

**Sept 16, 2007:** MiCAP Chapter Board Meeting  
**Noon—1:00 p.m.**  
The University of Michigan—Lansing Service Center  
101 S. Washington Square, 7th Floor  
Lansing, Michigan  
**\*\* All Members are Welcome! \*\***

**October 4—5, 2007:** Michigan Digital Government Summit  
Lansing Center, Downtown Lansing, Michigan  
[www.govtech.com/events/MichiganDGS2007](http://www.govtech.com/events/MichiganDGS2007)

**March 7—11, 2008:** ASPA's 69th Annual Conference  
Dallas, Texas  
[www.aspanet.org](http://www.aspanet.org)

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the Web:**

[www.PublicServiceCareers.org](http://www.PublicServiceCareers.org)

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Name of additional family member (if using ASPA's family membership) \_\_\_\_\_  I have read and agree with ASPA's Code of Ethics. (see [www.aspanet.org](http://www.aspanet.org))

## Membership Fee

- |   |                 |  |                |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>ASPA Membership</b><br><i>Includes 3rd Class mailing of PAR and PA TIMES and access to archives of both online.</i>   | <b>\$100.00</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Family Membership</b><br><i>For persons receiving mail at the same residence. One copy of PAR and PA TIMES will be provided to the family. Fee applies to each additional family member. Please indicate name(s) of additional family member(s) on the front of this form under additional fees.</i> | <b>\$35.00</b> |
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If applying as a student, indicate academic institution and who referred you: \_\_\_\_\_

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Chapter Number 28

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- Check here if you prefer to be an at-large member.
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## More

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Additional Chapter(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Payment Information

Dues must be prepaid. Send completed application form and payment to:  
ASPA, c/o SunTrust Bank, Department 41, Washington, DC 20042-0041.

Please add the total membership fee and optional fees to arrive at a grand total fee.

**Grand Total Fee \$** \_\_\_\_\_

- Check made payable to ASPA  MasterCard  VISA  American Express

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*\*Public Budgeting & Finance*

**Complexity and System/Studies Network** (CSSN) 22 \$10.00

**Conference of Minority Public Administrators** (COMPA) 11 \$35.00  
*\*Journal of Public Management and Social Policy*

**Section on Chinese Public Administration** (CPAR) 14 \$35.00  
*\*Chinese Public Administration Review*

**Section on Criminal Justice Administration** (SCJA) 6 \$39.00  
*\*Criminal Justice Policy Review*

**Section on Emergency and Crisis Management** (SECM) 17 \$10.00

**Section on Environmental and Natural Resources Administration** (SENRA) FREE

**Section on Ethics** (ETHICS) 13 \$35.00  
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*\*Journal of Health and Human Services Administration*

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