



REPORT

24th Annual IFLA Pre-Conference

Library and Research Services for Parliaments

AUGUST 6-8 2008

OTTAWA CANADA



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Legislative Libraries: Partners in Democracy

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Acknowledgements

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Chair's Foreword

The Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section of IFLA places great importance on its annual pre-conferences.

One of the Section mission statements is:

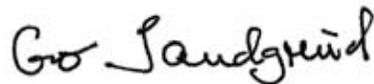
To exchange experiences, knowledge and problem solving, and promote networking amongst parliamentary libraries and research services as well as with others serving in a political environment.

This report sums up the challenges and best practices in parliamentary libraries from many parts of the world.

My hope is that both parliamentarians and those working in the field of research and information services for parliamentarians will find the report useful.

I would like to thank colleagues in the Library of the Parliament of Canada for all the work they have done in preparing this report.

I would encourage you all to read it and learn from your colleagues from around the world.



Gro Sandgrind
Chair, IFLA Section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments

Preface

For three days in August 2008, representatives from legislative libraries around the world met in Ottawa to share their ideas with colleagues, explore ways in which we can be more effective in assisting parliamentarians, and join in discussions about how smaller libraries seek out innovative ways of offering a full range of services to their clients. We examined potential partnerships and heard expert panellists explain their international work. We connected with our colleagues as we discussed ideas, shared best practices, and learned from each other and from Canadian parliamentarians. A conference such as this could not have succeeded in achieving its objectives – facilitating discussion and encouraging the development of initiatives designed to help legislative libraries become stronger partners in democracy – without the enthusiastic participation of representatives from so many legislative libraries from around the world.

For the Library of Parliament of Canada, hosting this important event was a privilege and an opportunity for me and my colleagues to learn much about how we can address the challenges of adapting to the evolving needs of our parliamentary clients. The context in which we do so is characterized by the ever-increasing need to absorb new ways of sharing and creating knowledge as democracy evolves at different speeds, in different contexts, relying on different tools. The conference brought home once again the essential values we all share as professional, independent providers of information and research to parliamentarians, and our commitment to ensure that we can continue meeting our clients' changing needs.

The participation of several Canadian parliamentarians in the conference was invaluable for participants seeking to learn more about what our clients need and expect. I would also like to thank Vicki Whitmell, Sue Bishop, and Philippe Sauvageau, three colleagues from provincial legislative libraries in Canada, who helped put the program together. Finally, I would like to extend a special thank you to my staff at the Library of Parliament of Canada – and in particular, Marie-France Gareau, Joseph Jackson, Ariel Lebowitz, and Donald Wilson – for their hard work, determination and enthusiasm in organizing this conference.



William R. Young
Parliamentary Librarian of Canada

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Representatives of over 40 international, national, and sub-national legislative libraries met in Ottawa, Canada, from 6 to 8 August 2008 for the 24th Annual Pre-Conference of the Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). The theme of the conference was “Legislative Libraries: Partners in Democracy.” Discussions and presentations focused on how parliamentary libraries work to assist parliamentary clients to make the democratic process more effective. The experience of smaller libraries seeking out innovative ways of offering the full range of services to their clients was one of the main themes of discussions and presentations.

While the conference highlighted the diversity of legislative libraries, characterized by their different histories, political contexts, mandates, sizes, and levels of resources, it also demonstrated the notable similarity in the key challenges facing legislative libraries in the early 21st century: the profound transformation of the information and knowledge environment in the digital age, and the equally profound shifts in the needs and demands of our parliamentary clients. In this rapidly changing environment, libraries are faced with an ever-increasing need to absorb new ways of sharing and creating knowledge as democracy evolves at different speeds, in different contexts, relying on different tools.

Legislative libraries must develop strong and effective partnerships to meet these challenges. First, libraries should seek to be reliable, trusted partners of legislators, ensuring that they better understand clients in order to be able to meet their changing knowledge needs. Second, they should further develop

partnerships with legislative libraries in other jurisdictions so that everyone benefits from the accumulated experience and insights. This will be particularly useful when developing innovative strategies for addressing the challenges identified at the conference.

Among the many ideas, insights, and concrete recommendations shared by participants and presenters at the conference five key points deserve particular emphasis:

1. Technological advances which have driven the profound transformation of the information and knowledge environment have not only led to profound changes in the needs and demands of parliamentary clients; they have also led to higher expectations, both concerning the turn-around time for responses to requests for information and research, and the ability of legislative libraries to deal with a multiplicity of information sources and a growing complexity of requests.
2. There has been a notable change in both the nature of requests from parliamentary clients and the format and delivery of information: (i) the number of simple information requests has decreased considerably, and demand for more complex and multi-faceted analysis, often of an interdisciplinary nature, has grown; and (ii) the need for traditional library services and materials is declining, but there is a growing need and demand for electronic formats and information.
3. Profound changes in client needs and expectations, including technology-driven changes and politically driven changes in mandates or resources, force legislative libraries to break their traditional moulds.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- While this is a challenge, especially for well-established organizations, it is also an opportunity for adaptation and renewal.
4. Providing orientation and training to parliamentarians and their staff opens the door to a rebranding of services in light of changing client needs and growing expectations; it is also an opportunity for building partnerships with legislators.
 5. For many legislative libraries, providing excellent services when limited by available resources presents a tremendous challenge, one that is compounded by rapidly changing technologies and client needs and expectations. Working with partners in other jurisdictions and through IFLA is an essential element of developing and implementing successful, innovative strategies for addressing this challenge.



1. INTRODUCTION

The 24th Annual Pre-Conference of the Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) was hosted by the Library of Parliament of Canada in Ottawa from 6 to 8 August 2008. The theme of the conference was “Legislative Libraries: Partners in Democracy.” The conference brought together more than 120 officials, librarians, and researchers from over 40 international, national, and sub-national legislative libraries, some well-established, others only recently founded, some from long-standing and others from emerging democracies. With this diversity in mind, the conference was designed to offer all participants opportunities to discuss ideas, share best practices, learn from each other, and explore practical tools, by including a range of topics and elements – plenary sessions, workshops, informal discussions.

Overall, discussions focused on how parliamentary libraries work to assist their parliaments, parliamentarians and others to make the democratic process more effective. The experience of smaller libraries seeking out innovative ways of offering the full range of services to their clients was one of the main themes discussed. Contributions highlighted notable distinctions between the experiences and practices of legislative libraries in different jurisdictions, owing to their varying histories, political contexts, mandates, sizes, and levels of resources. However, one of the key themes running through this conference was the striking similarity of some of the key challenges facing our organizations in the early 21st century: the profound transformation of the information and knowledge environment in the digital age, and – in part as a result of that – the equally profound changes in the

needs and demands of our parliamentary clients. As Dr. William Young, Canada’s Parliamentary Librarian, noted in his opening remarks:

In an age characterized by advances in technology that are more rapid and persistent than ever before, we are faced with the challenge of responding to the changing needs of our client legislatures. Our role as knowledge providers increasingly has as much to do with connections as it does with collections.

To be able to respond to the changing knowledge needs of parliamentarians, legislative libraries need to better understand their clients. According to Canadian parliamentarians participating in the conference, direct contact between them and library staff is essential for that to happen, as are more formal avenues, such as client surveys and meetings. Legislative libraries, then, must seek to be reliable, trusted partners of legislators, maintaining their commitment to the principles of confidentiality and non-partisanship and to providing accurate research and information.

This report includes summaries of presentations and discussions in the plenary sessions, which included the opening ceremonies (Part 2), two sessions on understanding our clients (Part 3), and an armchair discussion with Canadian parliamentarians who talked about their information and knowledge needs (Part 5). There is also an overview of the service fair that gave conference participants an opportunity to learn about the range of information, research and other services offered to parliamentary

1. INTRODUCTION

clients by the Library of Parliament and its partners on Parliament Hill (Part 4). It then summarizes the discussions and conclusions of the workshops, which dealt with three challenges facing legislative libraries seeking to respond to the changing information and research needs of parliamentary clients: new technologies, approaches to research, and building leadership capacity (Part 6). Part 7 summarizes the presentations given at the

plenary session on recent innovations in parliamentary libraries. Part 8 summarizes the closing speeches, and Part 9 draws together the key themes of the conference, with a view to the upcoming conference, whose theme will be “Informing Democracy: Building Capacity to Meet Parliamentarians’ Information and Knowledge Needs” (Geneva, 16 October 2008).

2. OPENING CEREMONIES

The opening ceremonies for the 24th annual IFLA pre-conference took place in the historic chamber of the Canadian House of Commons. They were presided over by Lynn Brodie, Special Advisor to the Library of Parliament of Canada, and featured welcoming remarks by Dr. William Young, Canada's Parliamentary Librarian, Mark Audcent, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel at the Senate of Canada, Audrey O'Brien, Clerk of the House of Commons of Canada, and Gro Sandgrind, Chair of the IFLA Section on Libraries and Research Services for Parliaments. Their speeches provided the context for discussions over the subsequent days.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Young noted that the venue for the opening ceremonies “reminds us of the great obligation – and privilege – we share in supporting the legislators of a democratic country.” He asserted that the common challenge for legislative libraries around the world, “as information specialists and researchers, is ensuring that our services continue to evolve to meet the challenges of today's modern information environment.” Parliamentarians today “must deal with the 24/7 news environment. They interact with well-informed constituents, journalists, lobbyists, and bureaucrats. And they make decisions about ever-more complex problems. To respond to these realities, they require authoritative and reliable information. They need it in the right format. And they need it at the right time.” Dr. Young made the point that while legislative libraries continue to fulfil their traditional roles – collecting, storing, and providing access to books, documents, periodicals and information resources of all kinds – they also have to adapt to a technology-driven information age. As a

result, “our future depends more and more on our connections – as much as our collections – and on building those networks that will keep us relevant in a rapidly evolving information environment.” In this changed context, Dr. Young said, legislative libraries “need to consider how to innovate while respecting parliamentary procedures and time-honoured traditions.” Dr. Young argued that in seeking to balance the need for change and adaptation with our traditional roles in parliamentary systems, we must “always keep our eyes on our clients – the parliamentarians who rely on the information and analysis we provide in order to perform their roles as legislators and public representatives – roles that are at the very heart of our democratic system.” While these challenges of transformation and adaptation are considerable, he said, legislative libraries “must recognize that there are a great many things we can learn from each other. And this, of course, is the spirit in which we welcome you all to this 24th annual meeting of the Library and Research Services to Parliament Section of IFLA.”

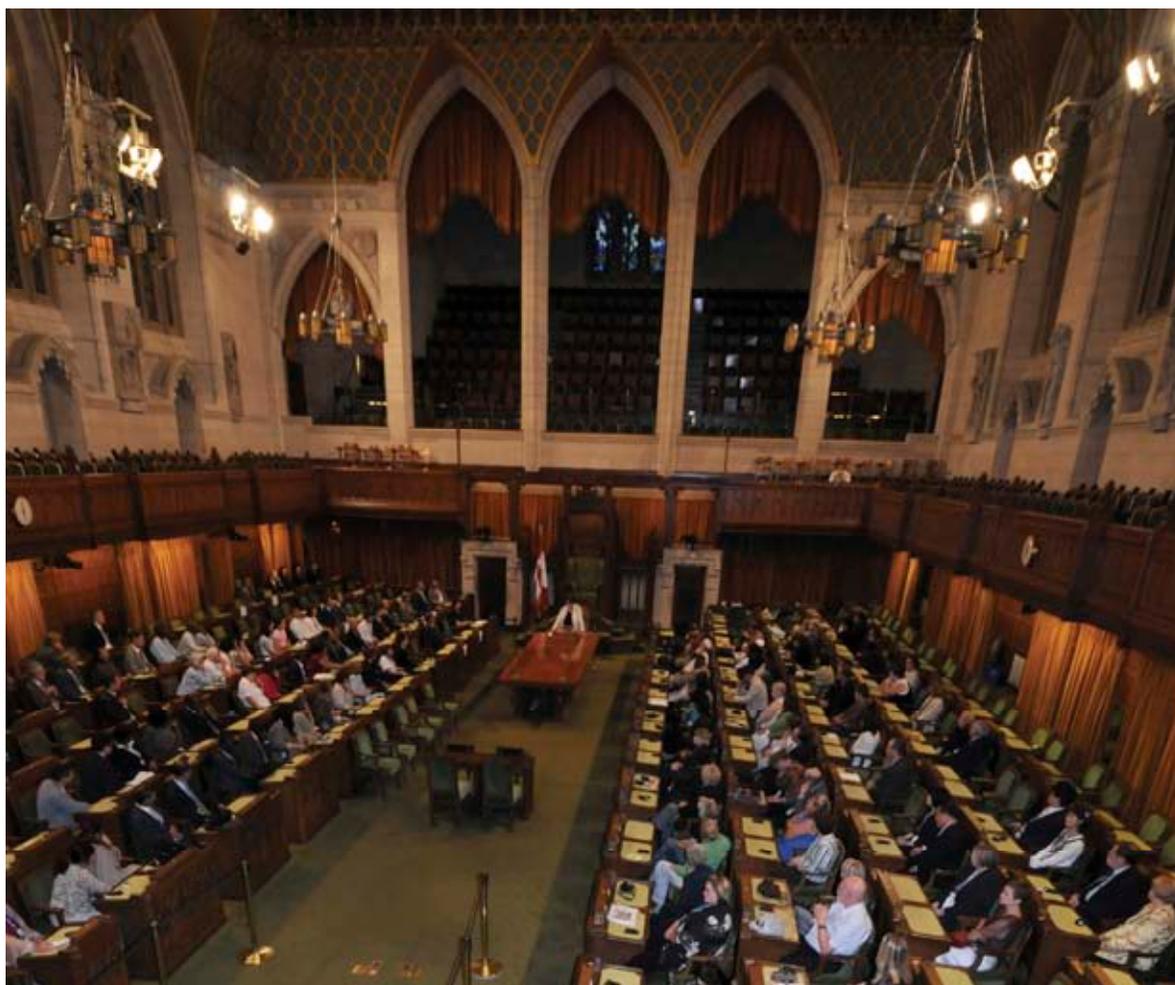
Mark Audcent, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel at the Senate, welcomed participants to Canada and to Parliament on behalf of the Honourable Noël Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate, and of all Senators. He gave an overview of Canada's parliamentary history and system and explained the role of the Senate, emphasizing that it is not only the chamber of sober second thought, but the chamber that has ensured the representation of Canada's regions, women, and Aboriginal peoples in Canada's national political institutions. Mr. Audcent noted that parliamentary staff work in the “somewhat surreal atmosphere” of Ottawa, a capital city dominated by the public service and federal

2. OPENING CEREMONIES

politics and an environment in which “maintaining our political neutrality is a primordial obligation.” He assured participants that “the staff of the Library of Parliament has maintained the highest standards” and provides excellent services. As a result, he said, the Library is held in high esteem by Canadian parliamentarians.

Echoing Mr. Audcent’s remarks, Audrey O’Brien, Clerk of the House of Commons of Canada, “set the stage for the conference by telling [participants] about some of the roles parliamentarians play.” She described for participants the many functions that Members of Parliament (MPs) in Canada carry out: They study legislation, “participate in debates on motions and resolutions,” serve

on committees that conduct studies, hold hearings, and study legislation and government spending estimates. Constituency affairs occupy a large portion of MPs’ time, both when they are in Ottawa and when they are in their ridings. Members also participate in meetings of international assemblies and attend international conferences. Finally, MPs belong to political parties, where they perform other functions. “In these various roles, our Members of Parliament deal with a wide variety of people, each of whom has a different level of understanding of the parliamentary process. Almost daily, MPs deal with constituents, journalists, lobbyists, party officials, bureaucrats, foreign parliamentarians, and dignitaries. The information MPs need to



cope with this wide range of often overlapping demands can be staggering. Of course, with little time to devote to each demand, MPs need their information to be accurate, relevant, succinct, and timely. ... Given these demands on MPs, the challenges for legislative libraries are immense.” Ms. O’Brien concluded by citing the prayer read by the Speaker each morning as the House of Commons begins its work: “Grant us wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to preserve the blessings of this country for the benefit of all and to make good laws and wise decisions.”

In her speech, Gro Sandgrind, Chair of the IFLA Section on Libraries and Research Services for Parliaments, explained that the purpose of this year’s pre-conference was to come together to share knowledge and experience about ways in which legislative libraries can assist parliaments and parliamentarians to make the democratic process more effective. Because resources in many legislative libraries are scarce, “we need

to seek innovative ways to play our role as knowledge providers in a democratic environment.” Noting the involvement of Canada’s Library of Parliament in the IFLA Section on Libraries and Research Services for Parliaments, Ms. Sandgrind told participants that “many of us look towards Canada to get inspiration and to learn how to develop a modern library and research service.” She paid tribute to Richard Paré, who passed away in April 2008. Mr. Paré was Canada’s Parliamentary Librarian from 1994 to 2005 and the Section’s Chair from 1999 to 2001. Ms. Sandgrind also provided a brief overview of the Section’s main activities in 2007–2008, including the involvement of several members in the 2007 World e-Parliament Conference, the upcoming conference whose theme is “Informing Democracy: Building Capacity to Meet Parliamentarians’ Information and Knowledge Needs” (Geneva, 16 October 2008), organized with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, and the revision of the *Guidelines for Legislative Libraries*, a two-year project funded by IFLA.

3. UNDERSTANDING OUR CLIENTS

The first two plenary sessions explored ways in which legislative libraries can be more effective in assisting parliamentarians. They focused on how smaller libraries seek out innovative ways of offering the full range of services to their clients in response to shifts in their clients' behaviours, expectations, and information needs. The two sessions gave conference participants opportunities to learn about the different concrete, innovative initiatives undertaken by smaller legislative libraries in Canada and around the world to address key challenges. Chaired by Dr. William Young, Canada's Parliamentary Librarian, Session 1 featured presentations by representatives of the libraries and information services serving four provincial or territorial legislatures in Canada, three of which are either relatively new or have recently undergone significant changes. The second session was chaired by Gro Sandgrind, Parliamentary Librarian, Norwegian Parliamentary Library. It featured speakers from four members of IFLA's Section on Libraries and Research Services for Parliaments representing comparatively small libraries or information services, three of which were only recently established in young democracies. While there are considerable differences between the eight institutions represented on the two panels with respect to the experience they have, the types of services they offer and the settings in which they exist, these organizations face many of the same challenges, including limited resources, adapting to changing client needs in the digital information age, and finding and retaining staff with the right skill sets to ensure that client needs are met. Among the issues addressed by the panellists, several were raised in both sessions: demands exceed resources to meet them; there is a pressure of

constant change in a legislative environment; and understanding our parliamentary clients is of central importance when developing new initiatives and services. Panellists discussed different strategies for determining client needs.

Session 1: The Canadian Perspective

Yvonne Earle, Legislative Librarian at the Nunavut Legislative Library, spoke about working at the newest legislative library in Canada – Nunavut became a Canadian territory in 1999, following the settlement of land claims with Inuit, the main Aboriginal group in that region. The Library's primary clients are members of the legislature (both elected and elders). The Library operates with very limited resources and serves clients in up to four languages (Canada's two official languages, Inuktitut, and its most common alternative dialect, Inuinnaqtun). In addition, in response to the pressure to serve where territorial departments do not have library support and communities have few public, academic, or school libraries, the legislative library has activities which often go beyond its mandate, as collaboration with community members is an important way to support the Library's primary clients. To meet these demands and constraints, the Library collaborates with other libraries in Canada, both local and legislative, on matters from holdings and subscriptions to training for staff.

Philippe Sauvageau, Director, Library of the Quebec National Assembly, provided a general overview of trends and events that have changed how libraries meet their clients' needs, and he spoke about the need to rethink

long-standing services. Press clipping delivery, for example, predates even telephones, much less other electronic communications developments, and past press clippings need to be digitized to allow clients to access them. Technological advances, Mr. Sauvegeau pointed out, have led to higher expectations. In addition, legislators are an increasingly diverse group, with varying backgrounds and interests. Mr. Sauvageau emphasized the importance of knowing clients' needs, which may be a more significant undertaking in larger legislatures than in smaller ones.

Sandra E. Perry, Legislature Librarian for the Province of Alberta, spoke about Alberta's long-term political stability, with the same political party having formed majority governments for long periods. The current government, though from the same political party, has introduced reforms regarding how the legislature conducts its business,

including the establishment of policy field committees, which are all-party standing committees requiring research support. Ms. Perry explained that an examination of other models suggested such support could be located in the legislative library (as is the case for the Parliament of Canada), and when the position of coordinator of research was created in May 2007, the incumbent was to report to both the Library and the Committees Branch of the legislature. However, as research staff increased, the authority was moved to the Committees Branch exclusively, and the research staff became key clients of the Library. Ms. Perry said that this experience highlights the challenge legislative libraries face in continuing to provide service while change is affecting internal processes and staff.

Kimberley Hammond, Director of Information Management at the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly, explained that



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the sharp impetus for change in the legislative library in Newfoundland and Labrador came from a 2006 Auditor General's report and a resulting legislative change in 2007. The Library was assigned responsibilities in new areas, including Hansard, access to information requests, records management, and the legislative website. Although support for these changes was widespread, Library staff were faced with new skills and technological demands and policy development requirements. Ms. Hammond said that the experience of the Newfoundland and Labrador legislative library shows that when new opportunities present themselves, they force libraries to change the way they operate.

When panellists were asked about lessons learned, they noted the need for flexibility, including among librarians, in order to meet new demands and develop new approaches to respond to existing demands. Ms. Perry spoke about the new understanding that clients need concise information, directly relevant to their work, and the importance of having the resources to meet the expectations of clients. Ms. Hammond summed up her experience as follows: "When opportunity knocks, we should be prepared to break out of our library mould."

Session 2: *The International Perspective*

In her presentation, Tembi Chalabesa-Mtine of the Parliamentary Information and Research Library, National Assembly of Zambia, provided an overview of the history of the Library, which was established in 1953. In performing their duties inside the legislature and in their constituencies, members of the Assembly rely heavily on the Library, since they do not have their own research staff. In providing high quality and relevant information services to parliamentarians, the Library seeks to ensure that it maintains its reputation as the principal source of independent, non-partisan information. Ms. Mtine described how Library staff occasionally sit in committee meetings and

provide materials relevant to committee meetings. At the request of Assembly members, they also package materials and pamphlets on different topics for distribution to constituents by members. The Library has worked on several initiatives to enhance the quality of services it provides to its clients and to orient clients to services that are available. It also plays an important role in providing access to information, specifically by offering Internet service to parliamentarians and by following developments and policy debates in other countries in the region.

The Information Department of the Latvian Parliament (Saeima) was established in the 1990s, following the country's independence from the former Soviet Union. According to its director, Anita Dudina, the development of information and research services offered by



3. UNDERSTANDING OUR CLIENTS

the new institution was very much driven by client needs in a rapidly changing technological environment and political context (the emerging national democratic institutions, Latvia's application for and eventual membership in the European Union, and the changing role of national parliaments in the EU). In seeking to meet growing and changing demands from the 100 Members of Parliament, over 100 personal assistants, and over 300 staff members, with limited resources, the Library is relying and focusing on electronic information resources, with the parliamentary intranet playing a central role in organizing and disseminating resources and information. The intranet is also an important tool for informing clients about Library services and for fostering increased collaboration between different parts of the Latvian Parliamentary system. With limited resources, the Latvian parliamentary library does not maintain large collections of hard-copy materials. Client access to books and other collections is secured through interlibrary loans from several good libraries in the Riga area. This approach reflects a general theme in Ms. Dudina's presentation, which was noted by other panellists and participants during the conference, namely the notable change in both the nature of clients' requests and the format of information and delivery: there are fewer simple requests from clients but more complex and multi-faceted requests, often of an interdisciplinary nature. At the same time, the need for traditional library services and materials is declining, while there is an increasing need for electronic formats and information. This is seen as reflecting the increasing availability of information on the Internet. During the discussion that followed the presentations, Ms. Dudina was asked why libraries should maintain resource collections, considering the drop in the number of requests for hard-copy materials. She responded that libraries should keep permanent collections of basic materials,

but that "you can't fight digitization and the digital generation."

Innocent Rugambwa, Director of Library and Research Services at the Parliament of Uganda, gave an overview of his organization, which was created in 1999. The role of the Library is to provide information services in a timely, objective, and non-partisan manner to Members of Parliament and their staff. The Library also provides some services to academic researchers, government officials and civil servants, as well as members of the press. Mr. Rugambwa examined the impact of digitization on the Library's work and found that MPs are increasingly relying on the Internet. In this environment, library services are sometimes provided by cellphone, SMS, and emails, with less reference to books. There is a need for on-going training of MPs who increasingly require information and communication technology skills to perform their duties. At the same time, Mr. Rubwamba observed that the training of MPs opens the door to a rebranding of services in light of growing expectations, and that there is the need for librarians to diversify their roles to meet the changing needs of its clients.

Awfa Zuhair Khudhair, Chief of the Research Department, Council of Representatives of Iraq, explained that her organization contains a research and study department, a legal studies department, a budgetary analysis department, and a library department. For research staff, one of the important elements in discussions with clients is the challenge of providing excellent service despite constraints on resources. Staff answer information requests and provide reference materials and other information services. Ms. Khudhair explained the unique circumstances facing research staff operating in a post-conflict country in the midst of developing new institutions and a new constitution. Many laws have been abolished, enacted, or amended to bring them

into line with developments in the country, which is still working to establish democracy. The security situation has also affected the research department's development, as has the

lack of resources. The department aims to advance and improve its services and to bring them in line with international standards. An important factor in achieving these aims will be knowledge gained from continued learning about the experiences of other countries.



4. SERVICE FAIR

A service fair gave conference participants an opportunity to interact with staff from the Library of Parliament of Canada and its partners on Parliament Hill and to learn about current innovative practices in the delivery of services to Canadian parliamentary clients and the public. To simulate the orientation offered to new parliamentarians and their staff, conference participants were asked to imagine that they had recently been elected to the Canadian House of Commons or appointed to the Senate. They were invited to learn about services and products that would assist them in their roles as legislators, committee members, and representatives of their constituents. Seven kiosks offered information on the following products and services:

- **Parliamentarians as legislators:** Library staff demonstrated LEGISinfo, a database of all proposed legislation with links to related press releases, debates, and articles, and discussed the production of Legislative Summaries, publications prepared for most bills, which include a history of the bill, analysis of it, and a review of commentary about it.
- **Keeping parliamentarians informed:** The Library of Parliament offers parliamentary clients access from their offices to a wide range of electronic information resources (Links and CD-ROMs). It is also responsible for ParlInfo, an online information resource that allows users to find facts and create reports about the important events and people that have shaped Parliament since the creation of Canada in 1867.
- **Supporting the work of Parliament:** A communications officer from the House of Commons demonstrated PRISM, an information management system for procedural information. PRISM is now used in the production of House of Commons records and information (including Journals, Debates, Committee minutes, and delegation reports).
- **Keeping parliamentarians current:** Library of Parliament staff discussed the production of Quorum, the Library's news clipping service and one of its most popular products, and demonstrated PARLMEDIA, the Library's in-house electronic media monitoring system for parliamentary clients featuring full text articles from over 70 Canadian and international news services.
- **Supporting committees and associations:** Researchers and the new Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) explained how the Library provides research, policy analysis, and consultation services to parliamentary committees, associations, and delegations to international meetings. Products for committees include briefing notes, background papers, and draft reports prepared by the Parliamentary Information and Research Service, as well as independent analysis of the state of the federal government's finances and national economic trends and costing of proposals for new government programs prepared by the PBO.
- **Parliamentarians as representatives:** At this kiosk, participants learned about the learning and information services the Library offers to the public, as well as the annual Teachers Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy, a professional development week for teachers from across Canada that provides an insider's view of how Parliament works.

- Preserving Parliament's past: Staff from the Library's bindery explained their role in the conservation and restoration of

parliamentary publications. There was also a display of the ancient art of book binding.



5. ARMCHAIR DISCUSSION: CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS TALK ABOUT THEIR INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE NEEDS

The armchair discussion with five Canadian parliamentarians, representing both Houses of Parliament and four political parties, was perhaps the highlight of the conference, as it embodied its central concern: the need for legislative libraries to better understand their clients in order to be able to meet their changing knowledge needs. As noted earlier, direct contact between parliamentarians and library staff is essential for that to happen. This session provided a rare opportunity for parliamentary librarians and researchers to engage directly with our clients and, in the process, to affirm the role of legislative libraries in assisting their parliaments, parliamentarians and others to make the democratic process more effective; to discuss and evaluate how we have fulfilled that role in the past; and to learn from each other how we can meet the changing information and research needs of our clients in the future.

The session was moderated by James R. Mitchell, an expert in public policy and administration and in public service reform and founding partner of the Sussex Circle, an Ottawa-based consulting group. It included two representatives from the Senate, Canada's upper chamber, and three from the House of Commons. The five parliamentarians were asked for their views on three broad questions with respect to the Library of Parliament of Canada: (1) What has your experience been with the Library of Parliament? What role has the Library played in meeting your basic

information needs? (2) How have your information and research needs changed over the last five to 10 years? (3) Are there any strategic priorities that should guide library and research services for Canadian parliamentarians?

Overall, the assessments of the parliamentarians were very positive. Each reflected on the valuable services that the Library of Parliament provides to Canadian parliamentarians, describing how clients are given detailed information on legislation coming before committees, support for the preparation of speeches, information for question period, and responses to requests for research and analysis, among other services. As a recurring theme, the five parliamentarians stressed their need for substantive research and analysis and assistance from researchers in understanding the issues before them and evaluating the myriad sources of available information. While they recognized increasing time pressures for these services, they also stressed how important reliable, objective, concise, and complete information and research is for their work.

The Honourable Sharon Carstairs, Senator since 1994 and former Leader of the Government in the Senate, described how she discovered, after arriving on the federal political scene in Ottawa, an "incredible resource known as the Canadian Library of Parliament." She recently met with a group of

Iraqi parliamentarians and told them that she can make a phone call if she has a question, and receive a response in a timely manner. Senator Carstairs described how her needs have changed according to the positions that she has held in the Canadian Parliament. As her needs have grown for greater quantities of information and research, in more depth, the Library of Parliament has always been able to provide relevant and reliable material: “The professionalism with which I have been met by the Library of Parliament has never changed.” For her recommendation on priorities for the coming years, the Senator suggested that the existing teacher program run by the Library be expanded across the country to educate more Canadians on the activities of Parliament.

Similarly, the Honourable Donald H. Oliver, who was appointed to the Senate in 1990, stated that the Library of Parliament is an “essential institution for all parliamentarians,” and that it plays a key role as an institution of Parliament. The Senator, who is a member of

the Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament, said the work provided by Library researchers is high-quality, impartial, and timely. On the second question, the Senator suggested that the needs of parliamentarians have changed since his initial appointment in 1990 because of the digital age and the influence of electronic communication and information. The number of simple requests for Library staff is decreasing, while complex requests are increasing. As a consequence, clients’ expectations regarding the responses Library researchers can provide have also increased. Senator Oliver expressed concerns that despite these growing expectations, resources available to the Library have not increased and said that the Library of Parliament will need to recruit and retain excellent researchers to meet the demands. He also pointed out that increasingly, parliamentarians need support outside the more traditional business hours.



5. ARMCHAIR DISCUSSION: CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS TALK ABOUT THEIR INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE NEEDS

The Honourable Mauril Bélanger, Member of the House of Commons since 1995 and former Minister for the portfolios of Internal Trade, Democratic Reform, and Official Languages, commented that one of the most important functions performed by Library staff is their research support for parliamentary committees, as well as parliamentary associations. He recalled his experience as co-chair of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association, which has a limited budget, and “couldn’t function without these resources.” On the second question, he described how parliamentarians are increasingly bombarded with various sources of information on the subject areas that concern them. He suggested that they need help to digest and understand that information, and substantive analysis and reflection assist them in doing that. He explained that what he needs as a parliamentarian is not to be provided with everything and anything that is available on a given subject – “I want analysis.” As for recommendations for the future, Mr. Bélanger stressed the importance of Canada’s two official languages in the services provided by the Library of Parliament, and he questioned whether the Library is given sufficient resources to meet client needs. Finally, echoing comments made throughout the conference, Mr. Bélanger suggested that Library staff should attempt to make direct connections with members of Parliament, to better understand clients’ needs.

Mr. Nathan Cullen, Member of the House of Commons since 2004, noted that as a newer Member of Parliament, he has seen a considerable change in the sources of information on which people rely, as well as in the media used to communicate that information. He cited the example of a website, whose credibility would have been questionable 15 years ago, but which is now considered an acceptable source. Expressing a sentiment similar to that stated by preceding speakers,

Mr. Cullen said: “I don’t need a lot of research, I need analysis.” He said that parliamentarians need assistance in understanding materials and in working through the high volume of information that is available. Responding to a question, Mr. Cullen suggested that one way in which the Library could consider adjusting its services would be to include more new media sources in its analyses. Echoing the recommendation of Senator Carstairs, Mr. Cullen spoke positively of the Library’s teacher training program and its untapped ability to educate the public on the work of parliamentarians.

Ms. Nicole Demers, Member of the House of Commons since 2004, described her experience as a member of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health. In her view, the work done by the non-partisan Library of Parliament researchers for the committee – information on witnesses appearing before committees, explanations of the issues under discussion, and suggestions for questions to ask of witnesses – was invaluable. She underlined the importance of receiving non-partisan, accurate, and objective information and analysis from the Library, which she can then compare to other information she has received on an issue. This is especially helpful in answering the questions of constituents, which tend to be on a range of topics. Ms. Demers stressed that parliamentarians should seek to represent all of their constituents – not only those who share their views – and that one of their responsibilities is to educate the public on policy issues and Parliament. To be able to do that, parliamentarians require relevant and complete information. Finally, Ms. Demers cautioned that new technologies should be treated as tools for providing information and research services, communicating with clients and constituents, etc.; they should facilitate, not replace, engagement and debate.

During the question and answer session that followed their presentations, the five parliamentarians were asked whether the materials they receive from the Library of Parliament should be made available to the public. Ms. Demers felt that this information could be useful to the public. Senator Carstairs made a distinction between materials prepared for parliamentary committees, which could be made public, and requests provided on an individual basis to parliamentarians, which should be kept confidential. Mr. Bélanger agreed with Senator Carstairs and stated that making research papers requested by and sent to individual parliamentarians public would result in parliamentarians relying less on these services.

Conference participants also asked the speakers to talk about what it is like to be a parliamentarian. Most of them emphasized the competing demands on their time, commenting that they require information and research as

quickly as possible, but that the Library's products must continue to be objective and of the highest quality, while also stressing the need to be concise. Senator Carstairs suggested that in order to understand the roles and needs of parliamentarians, librarians and research staff should reach out more to MPs and senators.

Finally, the parliamentarians were asked how information and research provided by the Library compares to and is reconciled with what they receive from the party or caucus. Their responses stressed the importance of access to non-partisan research and information to allow parliamentarians to have an autonomous capacity to represent the views of their constituents beyond the party line, to be effective when dealing with legislation and policy, and to debate policy with colleagues in their own caucus. As one speaker put it, "The Library of Parliament offers a breath of fresh air."



6. WORKSHOPS

Central to this year's conference were three concurrent workshops. They were organized to allow participants to meet in smaller groups and discuss in greater detail specific issues facing legislative libraries, building on the presentations and discussions of the previous day's plenary sessions. Each workshop developed concrete conclusions and recommendations, which were reported back to the plenary. Participants were asked to select one workshop when registering for the conference. The format and topic of each workshop was developed by organizers with the help of members of the Standing Committee of the Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section of IFLA, and they were facilitated by members of the Section. The following summary of the workshop discussions and conclusions is based both on notes from those discussions and on the reports presented by each workshop rapporteur to the plenary session.

Workshop 1 – Legislative Libraries of the Future: Making the Best Use of Technology

Chaired by Donna Scheeder, Director of Law Library Services at the United States Library of Congress, the first workshop explored the challenges and opportunities of employing emerging technologies to develop and manage information and knowledge to meet evolving client needs. It began with three presentations that provided an overview of the current state of the use of technology to manage information and research and to create and deliver information and research services to clients. In her presentation, New Zealand Parliamentary Librarian Moira Fraser examined options for managing technology, different self-help research tools, and various

roles libraries can play in providing web services and information management. The second presenter, Raissa Teodori, Librarian, Senior Parliamentary Officer at the Italian Senate, discussed the advantages and disadvantages of open source software. Donna Scheeder gave the third presentation on Web 2.0 technologies, such as RSS feeds, blogs, and social bookmarking.

To give participants an opportunity to discuss these issues in greater detail, the workshop broke into three discussion groups that examined documenting the legislative process, building a knowledge base for parliament, and enhancing dialogue with citizens, respectively. Each group was asked to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and obstacles to using new technologies as a way of meeting the changing information and research needs of clients more effectively. Following the group discussions, each group presented its findings to the workshop, which then proceeded to formulate its conclusions and recommendations for presentation at the afternoon plenary session.

In presenting the workshop's conclusions and recommendations to the plenary, Donna Scheeder noted that there was a high level of agreement among participants in the three group discussions. The workshop report identified knowledgeable staff and cooperative teams, good information technology (IT) capacity and data access, and good communications and research skills as key strengths of legislative libraries. At the same time, several weaknesses were identified by participants, which included budgetary constraints, the lack of skilled staff, poor coordination within the library and with IT staff, poor connectivity in some countries,

bureaucratic blocking of technological initiatives, and very traditional organizations. These hamper the ability of the organizations to translate recognized strengths into better, more effective services for clients.

The groups saw several opportunities for adopting new technologies, such as parliamentarians' demands for mobile technology, the arrival of younger people through legislative turnover and staff retirements, the need to replace older applications and institute new websites, and the pressure to reduce costs and improve transparency. They also identified a number of obstacles to technological innovation, including the difficulty in keeping up with technological advances and in ensuring database security and stability. In addition, interdepartmental rivalry (competition for funding, conflict between IT and library staff), a crisis-focused environment, the lack of staff capacity, and client groups that span 50 years in age were seen as key obstacles to employing emerging technologies to develop and manage information and knowledge to meet evolving client needs.

To meet these challenges, the groups outlined several concrete options for action, including:

- regular consultations with parliamentarians and other parliamentary clients;
 - improving marketing to clients;
 - fostering good relationships between librarians and IT departments;
 - developing services for handheld devices;
 - experimenting with wikis and blogs for library research teams to facilitate information sharing and the development of better relations among staff across the organization;
 - increasing and improving training of library staff and management; and
- identifying and sharing best practices in the use of new technologies across jurisdictions.

Workshop 2 – Approaches to Research

Workshop 2 examined strategies and options for structuring and providing a research service to best utilize available resources. It was chaired by Sonia L'Heureux, Assistant Parliamentary Librarian, Canada, and featured a joint, interactive presentation by Soledad Ferreiro, Director of Chile's Library of Congress, and Daniel P. Mulhollan, Director of the Congressional Research Service in the United States. This format allowed for a lively discussion of four major themes outlined by the presenters: clients, services and products, organization, and personnel. In addition, participants explored how research libraries can best maintain objectivity and non-partisanship.

In the discussion of the first theme, clients, the presenters and participants explored what "understanding our clients" means concretely, both in the Chilean context and elsewhere. Ms. Ferreiro argued that legislative libraries need to understand the lives and contexts of their clients, in particular the various roles performed by parliamentarians, who are responsible for law-making, constituency work, parliamentary diplomacy, and for placing local concerns in the national spotlight. In addition, parliamentarians must manage a variety of relationships and issues in short amounts of time. Parliamentarians therefore require support for a range of knowledge and communication roles. Participants noted that the role of legislative libraries in meeting client needs varies across jurisdictions, depending on their mandates and the range of services they offer. For example, while Chile's Library of Congress provides research services to district offices,

6. WORKSHOPS

Congress personnel, and Chile's citizens, most of the parliamentary research services represented at the workshop serve only parliamentarians.

With regard to research services and products, participants agreed that research libraries must be in a position to give clients the information and research they need, at the level of detail that they need, when they need it. In other words, they must offer a range of services and products tailored to the requirements of clients. For example, Chile's Library of Congress has adopted a "holistic" approach, which refers to a research service that provides analysis, reference assistance, loans, speeches, media analysis, and explanations of laws for citizens in addition to research. New technologies, including web-based tools, are increasingly facilitating such an approach. To illustrate, Ms. Ferreiro gave a demonstration of the website of the Chilean Library of Congress, which is updated regularly and includes weekly interviews with senators, questions from citizens, and blogs about specific topics, such as seniors and Asia-Pacific issues.

In dealing with the first two themes, participants and presenters noted that a research library must build trust and credibility with the clients to be able to fulfill its mandate. This is especially important in new parliaments, where there can be many first-time members. Mr. Mulhollan explained that one strategy for bringing the services of a research library to the attention of clients is to concentrate resources on a very topical subject and then provide this to parliamentarians. Essential in this context is the ability of libraries and staff to maintain objectivity and non-partisanship. There was widespread agreement that a research service must prove itself to be objective if parliamentarians are to use the services it provides. Several strategies for maintaining objectivity were discussed:

Language: Attention to unbiased terminology was highlighted as being central. For example, using the term "global warming" instead of "climate change" can place a researcher in a potentially awkward position. Therefore, there is an acute need to find neutral language in order to balance conflicting positions on an issue.

Organization: Ensuring objectivity should be a central concern in the organizational design of research libraries. For example, having researchers work in multi-disciplinary teams and developing proper workflow procedures can ensure objectivity. However, doing this is a particular challenge for smaller libraries. One option is to use external research, such as that presented by university academics, to bolster the range of services provided by the library.

Appearances: It is important to appear to be objective at all times. Where researchers sit and who they talk to in committee meetings and at other events can be as important to maintaining objectivity as what researchers write. In addition, it must be clear to all parliamentarians that research is provided to both the governing party and the opposition parties.

Value-added research versus value judgments: Researchers must remember to provide solid, evidence-based analysis that improves understanding and allows clients to draw conclusions based on that analysis. In general, participants agreed that objectivity can be better maintained when providing analyses and syntheses, rather than when assessing policy.

The discussion of objectivity and non-partisanship addressed some issues concerning the organization of research libraries, the workshop's third theme: how a library is organized affects not only its ability to provide

the right research services to parliamentary clients effectively and efficiently, but is key to how the library is perceived by parliamentarians. Mr. Mulhollan observed that a library needs to understand the parliamentary body it serves when determining the best organizational model for its research services. The research library must be able to adapt to the structure of the parliament it serves. For example, if a parliament is organized primarily around committees, the research service should reflect this in its organization. Where a library mainly serves individual parliamentarians, a research service organized around subject areas may be more appropriate. In addition, organizational choices are dependent on resource and staffing levels. They must also allow legislative libraries to adapt to the changing needs of their clients. It is imperative, therefore, that research libraries are always aware of what their clients want and need.

In seeking to provide objective, non-partisan research services to clients in a timely manner and in a format that best meets their requirements, research libraries need to hire, train and retain the right personnel – the final theme for this workshop. Staff face a myriad of challenges in their day-to-day jobs: they must understand the moods of parliamentarians and what parliamentarians do; they must educate at times; and they must be aware of current events and how these affect the issues that concern the legislators. In addition to being subject area specialists and having excellent analytical skills, researchers have to have strong interpersonal and communication skills, and they must have good judgment. However, hiring and retaining the best and the brightest people possible, can be difficult given the competition from the private sector and other public institutions. Mr. Mulhollan suggested that legislative libraries should aim to find

“civic-minded” individuals, for whom working in an organization that supports the democratic, legislative process and helping parliamentarians write better laws and create better public policy is an important element in choosing a career. Finally, while hiring the best and the brightest in the relevant subject areas is a priority, shortages in some fields may present challenges, as is the case now with economists. One strategy to address this situation is to fill knowledge gaps in research service by seeking outside support, for example from universities.

Workshop 3 – Building Leadership Capacity

The third workshop examined the skills and characteristics needed by those who lead parliamentary libraries, the issues related to the development of those skills, and the role the Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section of IFLA could play in the preparation of current and future parliamentary library leaders. It was led by Vicki Whitmell, Executive Director of the Legislative Library, Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The need for this workshop was identified by conference organizers and the Section’s Standing Committee based on a number of observations. First, the library workforce is aging and many of those currently in leadership roles are nearing retirement. Legislative libraries must therefore seek to fill leadership positions in the future by identifying, developing, and training future leaders. Second, while many libraries are not taking a strategic approach to staff and succession planning, management must understand the skills, attitudes, and approaches needed by our future leaders and staff to ensure that changing and growing client needs for information and research can be met. Third, because parliaments are unique institutions in many ways, staff and management in legislative libraries need a

6. WORKSHOPS

specialized set of characteristics and skills that allow them to fulfill their organizations' mandates. Fourth, legislative libraries need to be seen as attractive places to work and as employers of choice in order to attract the best and brightest. Finally, the knowledge environment has changed profoundly, transforming the role of legislative libraries.

In this context, building leadership capacity is one of the most pressing issues for legislative libraries, but also for other private and public institutions. Given the demographic and technological shifts, the pace of change, and the scope of challenges coming our way, workshop participants agreed that capacity-building in this area is "mission critical." Following an introductory discussion of these issues, the workshop examined the skills and characteristics needed by those who lead parliamentary libraries. Participants developed a long list of characteristics, competencies, and special skills. While recognizing that not all leaders can ever have all of these characteristics and that some are more necessary in certain circumstances than others, participants did agree that leadership is not the same as management: the latter is primarily concerned with running a system, the former involves initiating and managing change by creating and implementing a vision for the organization. Successful leadership is determined by different factors, including effective communication skills, energy, creativity, and a sense of humour. Also important are the abilities to identify the right people at the right place, to know and connect with people, and to build on individuals' strengths in creating a collaborative work environment and in maximizing the organization's ability to respond to changes in its environment and in clients' needs.

The workshop identified several challenges to the development of leadership capacity, including the organizational environment (the

traditional and hierarchical structure of parliamentary organizations), stereotypes of parliamentary libraries and of library and research professions which inhibit recruitment of staff, reluctance on the part of staff to assume leadership roles, lack of opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles, and the lack of training and development provided to staff and existing managers. Based on this discussion, the workshop proceeded to discuss strategies for finding and developing parliamentary library leaders, including:

- creating a better understanding of "leadership" as distinct from "management";
- creating an attractive environment that encourages staff to take on leadership roles;
- providing leadership opportunities, for example through acting posts, mentoring, special assignments, and project management roles;
- actively recruiting potential leaders from inside and outside the organization;
- demystifying leadership by making the requirements of specific roles explicit;
- making it easy to get involved in leadership development in the work process and through professional development opportunities; and
- collaborating within the organization and with other organizations.

Finally, participants developed several concrete recommendations for the Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section of IFLA, so that it can better assist parliamentary libraries in finding and developing future leaders. These included:

- keeping the leadership topic on the agenda for future conferences, newsletter articles, etc.;

- considering creating an “e-learning” leadership institute;
- sharing case studies that illustrate the development of leaders in parliamentary libraries;
- promoting parliamentary library work as a career through the creation of promotional materials (to gather information for this promotional material, the Section could conduct a survey on the position of parliamentary libraries in their institutions and on the libraries’ staffing and resources);
- working with universities to attract students to work in parliamentary libraries by explaining what skills/ characteristics we have and need considering the geographical context in the need for and development of parliamentary library leaders; and
- facilitating secondments and exchanges between parliamentary libraries, for example by creating a website where secondment and exchange opportunities would be posted.



7. RECENT INNOVATIONS IN PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIES

Building on discussions on this theme at the 2007 pre-IFLA conference in Cape Town, the session showcased innovations in the areas of partnership, research services, staffing, and technology. The session was chaired by Canadian Member of Parliament the Honourable Dr. Carolyn Bennett, P.C., Vice-Chair of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament.

Parliamentary information days held at the beginning of the legislative session

– Samuel Fonkam Azu'u, Assistant Secretary General, National Assembly, and Alim Garga, Director, Parliamentary Research Centre, Cameroon

The information days organized by the General Secretariat, which provides procedural, administrative, and other services to the National Assembly, were initiated following the observation that newly elected members of the National Assembly required more information about parliamentary work. The General Secretariat felt that it was critical not only to provide parliamentarians with essential information on the institution's functioning, but also to explain to them the various benefits provided by the Parliament's administration. It organized days to disseminate to parliamentarians information on a variety of topics, including acquisitions policy, the parliamentary website (used by the presenters to give an overview of their services to participants), the Assembly's financial system, legislative procedures, and even health-related information for parliamentarians. They also focused on publicity for the library. The interactions and feedback from parliamentarians

allowed the administration to improve the quality of services provided.

Parliamentary Budget Officer

– Kevin Page, Parliamentary Budget Officer, Library of Parliament, Canada

The creation of the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) reflects a broader trend in parliamentary democracies, several of which (the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the Philippines) have an office of budgetary oversight for legislators. The PBO's mandate, which was defined in the *Federal Accountability Act* (2006), is to provide parliamentarians and parliamentary committees with independent analysis of economic and fiscal trends and scrutiny of government estimates and budgetary figures. The PBO can also prepare independent financial cost estimates of policies and programs related to areas over which Parliament has jurisdiction. Mr. Page commented on the challenges facing the PBO, including the expectations of parliamentarians for these new services, the resources that will be made available, and recruitment of staff who have experience in these economic and costing fields. The complexities of the issues also present challenges (for example, costing carbon taxes or private members' bills). Finally, a key issue for the new Office is access to government information. The PBO's objective is to provide oversight of government spending for parliamentarians. However, the office must request the data necessary to fulfill its mandate from government departments. This presents challenges for an independent office of Parliament.

The Hungarian Constituency Database – a brand new service

– Irén Horváth, Research Service of the Library of the Hungarian Parliament

Hungary has a mixed electoral system, where 176 of the 386 members of Parliament are elected in constituencies. The Research Service in Hungary identified a need among parliamentary clients for up-to-date and what Ms. Horváth termed “reliable, fast, and unbiased (party neutral)” economic and social data for each constituency. The idea for launching a database to meet that need first arose during a visit to the Research Service of the House of Commons in London, England. The Hungarian Constituency Database was set up and made available to members of Parliament and their staff in 2007. Data is provided by the Hungarian Statistical Office. Approximately 180 categories are classified

into sixteen large groups, which include such subject areas as health care (e.g., number of paediatricians), service industries (e.g., number of railway stations), public services, demographic changes, and housing stock. Time series data is available from 1998 onwards. The database was constructed according to three major criteria: simplicity, transparency, and ease of access and use. The objective was to create a search interface that would allow even an inexperienced user to find useful statistical information. Members of Parliament can use time series data to conduct comparisons between constituencies, or comparisons with the national level, and to present that data in a form that is intuitive and accessible even to audiences who may not feel comfortable with statistics. The database is also useful for the Research Service itself when compiling material on economic and social issues in the country.



7. RECENT INNOVATIONS IN PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIES

Information-seeking Behaviour of Pakistani Parliamentarians

– Bushra Nazli, Manager, Parliamentarians' Resource Center, Parliament Lodges, Pakistan

The Parliamentarians' Resource Center was created in 2005 with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under its Pakistan Legislative Strengthening Project. According to the Centre's mission statement, "The main purpose of the Resource Center is to promote, advocate, and consistently work to achieve the highest level" of information services to parliamentarians. The Resource Center provides quick reference services, electronic resources including database access, document delivery, Internet searches, bibliographies on information pertinent to the parliamentary agenda, and access to newspapers and periodicals. The Center also provides conference services and conducts special courses for parliamentarians, such as "English Communication for Legislation" and "Computing Skills." It is open 15 hours a day, seven days a week, but has only five staff members. In preparation for a new National Assembly following the February 2008 election, the Parliamentarians' Resource Center drafted a work plan on how to improve services for its clients, and conducted an interview-based survey. The Centre also conducted a review of services requested and usage by clients since 2005. The survey indicated that MPs were particularly interested in improving their research and language skills – through language courses, computer training, and instruction to improve their research abilities – and in reference and research services designed to assist them in understanding the government budget, doing year-to-year comparisons of budgets, participating in post-budget discussions, and performing their legislative duties. The Center has worked to ensure that the needs

identified by its clients are addressed, including by making parliamentarians aware of the services it offers. For example, it has distributed an introductory package to newly elected MPs and given orientation sessions to groups of MPs. The result of these initiatives has been an increase in parliamentarians' use of the Centre, and much positive feedback from clients.

Digitizing Hansard: Putting Two Hundred Years of Parliamentary Debates Online

– Edward Wood, Director of Information Management, House of Commons, United Kingdom

The digitization of Hansard was undertaken to allow better and wider access (including free text searching) to parliamentary debates for parliamentary clients and the public; to ensure cost-efficient, high-quality conservation of Parliament's official record; to consolidate Hansard into a single, official set; and to reduce the need to store several hard copies of 200 years of debates. A joint project of the House of Commons and House of Lords libraries, the process of digitization began in 2005 with a procurement exercise. The contract specified text conversion to an accuracy level of 99.5% and involved development of an innovative triple-compare process for optical character recognition. A small team of developers worked closely with users inside and outside Parliament. Quality assurance work was carried out by the contractors and staff of the House of Commons Library. Currently, records spanning 202 years (1803–2005) have been successfully scanned and loaded. This constitutes approximately 2.75 million pages. The text files have been placed on the Internet for free download in XML, and an experimental database and search interface have been developed using an agile, iterative method. The "beta" search interface is available on the

Internet and, as Mr. Wood explained, features faceted searching, which “allows assignment of multiple classifications to an object, enabling the classifications to be ordered in a variety of ways, rather than in a single, pre-determined order. The facets used include date, volume number, monarch, chamber, content type (debates or questions), constituencies (electoral divisions), Members of Parliament and offices held.” Digitization of the debates of Standing Committees will begin shortly. The project is still in a “beta” version and is not linked to the official Parliament website. However, even this version is receiving over 1,500 hits a day. This project will allow free online access to Hansard for the public. Users have been consulted for input and will have a high degree of confidence in the service.

The presentations are available on the conference website (<http://www.preifla2008.ca/presentation-e.asp>). In addition to these five presentations, the following seven papers

were received but could not be presented due to time constraints. These are also available online.

- Library of Congress (Chile), *BCN and the Social Web*
- Maija Jussilainen (Finland), *Collaborative Knowledge Support for Law-drafting Projects*
- Ida B. Kelemen (Hungary), *New Electronic Services for the Parliament and the Public*
- Meena Malla (India), *Library Services for Members of Indian Parliament*
- Rup Narayan Das (India), *Research Support to Members of Parliament*
- Eun-Hee Hyun (Republic of Korea), *Foreign Law Information Database System*
- Helene Limèn (Sweden), *The Swedish Research Service – Its Organization and Implementation of New Guidelines*

8. CLOSING SPEECHES

In his closing remarks to the conference, Canada's Parliamentary Librarian, Dr. William Young, noted the conference's events and high points, as he experienced them, including the session on Canadian provincial legislative libraries, the concurrent workshops, and the service fair. However, in his view, the armchair discussion with Canadian parliamentarians was the highlight of the conference, as it allowed participants to hear from our clients "about what they value in terms of the services that we provide, our challenges and where we are – or should be – going in the future." Mr. Young reminded participants that "what we heard from the senators and members of Parliament is a very strong affirmation that they truly value what we do and have strong, and pretty sensible, views on where we should be going. And in fact that is what this whole pre-conference is really about: affirming our value and thinking about how to move forward."

Commenting on the different experiences shared by participants representing both well-established and newly established institutions, Sonia L'Heureux, Assistant Parliamentary Librarian, who joined the Canadian Library of Parliament in June 2008, thanked participants for the opportunity to learn about the important role played by legislative libraries and research services and about the various concrete tools and initiatives employed around the world in meeting the challenges of adapting to changing client needs in the information age. She remarked that legislative libraries must increasingly be partners with legislators to help the legislators confront the issues they are dealing with and the sheer volume of information they face.

Alessandro Palanza, Deputy Secretary General of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, provided a glimpse of next year's pre-conference in Rome, which will focus on strategies and tools for developing parliamentary libraries in the knowledge-based society. This will be a great opportunity for parliamentary libraries, which are fundamentally knowledge institutions, to further explore ways of adapting to the information age. The up-coming Rome pre-conference will also consider the task of preservation, including the long-term preservation of websites.

Andy Richardson, Information Specialist at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), reflected on how parliamentary research and library services are a key element of parliamentary institutions, particularly in emerging democracies. He linked the discussion and key themes of the pre-conference to the upcoming conference, whose theme is "Informing Democracy: Building Capacity to Meet Parliamentarians' Information and Knowledge Needs" (Geneva, 16 October 2008). Organized by the IPU in cooperation with IFLA and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, "the Conference will focus on the evolving information needs of parliamentarians, the role that can be played by parliamentary library and research services, and the development of good practices. It will enable an exchange of perspectives on the challenges faced by parliaments in obtaining the information and knowledge they require." In this context, Mr. Richardson argued that links between the IPU and IFLA should be strengthened, and he pointed to technical assistance and collaboration through the Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies in Parliament as well as parliamentary library assessment and development missions as important areas of cooperation.

* Anders B. Johnsson, IPU Secretary General, Conference invitation, <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/asgp08/invitation.pdf>.

In her closing remarks, Gro Sandgrind, Chair of the IFLA Section on Libraries and Research Services for Parliaments, summarized the highlights of and lessons learned from the conference and reflected on the importance of sharing knowledge and experience, a key part of the Section's mission. She felt that all

participants had broadened their understanding of how various libraries provide services to parliamentarians and of the role played by libraries in the new information society. Ms. Sandgrind concluded that we must continue to build connections with our clients, but also with our partners around the world.



9. CONCLUSION

After more than two days of presentations, plenary discussions, workshops, a service fair, and informal meetings, it would be tempting to conclude that the Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section of IFLA represents a great diversity of legislative libraries, characterized by their very different histories, political contexts, mandates, sizes, and levels of resources. While this is true, one of the key themes running through this conference was the striking similarity in some of the key challenges facing our organizations in the early 21st century: the profound transformation of the information and knowledge environment in the digital age, and – in part as a result of that – the equally profound changes in the needs and demands of our parliamentary clients. At the same time, legislative libraries in democratic

jurisdictions around the world also share the same purpose – to provide reliable, accurate information and research to our parliamentary clients – even if the libraries’ mandates, local contexts, and resources differ greatly.

In striving to meet their objectives and address the challenges of the digital age, legislative libraries must develop strong and effective partnerships. That is perhaps the main conclusion to be drawn from discussions among the conference participants and with Canadian parliamentarians. This means at least two things. First, legislative libraries must seek to be reliable, trusted partners of legislators by striving to better understand legislators in order to meet their changing knowledge needs. Second, legislative libraries in different jurisdictions should further



develop partnerships among themselves. Discussing innovative strategies for meeting objectives and dealing with the challenges of the digital information age, sharing best practices, and exploring practical tools for using new technologies, developing research capacity, building leadership capacity, and addressing other issues will allow each legislative library to develop more effective strategies.

The Ottawa pre-conference was an important step towards developing closer, more effective partnerships. For many participants, whether representatives of well-established or new

legislative libraries, from long-standing or emerging democracies, it was an excellent professional development opportunity. The next step will be the conference on the theme “Informing Democracy: Building Capacity to Meet Parliamentarians’ Information and Knowledge Needs” (Geneva, 16 October 2008), which is being organized jointly with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments. That conference will help strengthen the links between the IPU and IFLA and advance cooperation in the development of new initiatives to facilitate partnering between legislative libraries and between the libraries and their clients.

10. PROGRAM

Legislative Libraries: Partners in Democracy 24th Annual International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Pre-Conference of Library and Research Services for Parliaments

Wednesday, August 6, 2008

08:00 – 17:00 Registration

14:00 Tours of Parliament Building

17:00 – 19:00 Opening Ceremonies and Welcome Reception

Host:

- Lynn Brodie, Special Advisor, Accommodations, Library of Parliament, Canada

Remarks by:

- William R. Young, Parliamentary Librarian, Library of Parliament, Canada
- Mark Audcent, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, Senate of Canada
- Audrey O'Brien, Clerk of the House of Commons of Canada
- Gro Sandgrind, Chair of the IFLA Section on Libraries and Research Services for Parliaments

Thursday, August 7, 2008

08:00 – 10:00 Registration

08:45 – 09:00 Opening Remarks

09:00 – 10:15 Understanding Our Clients (1) – The Canadian Perspective

Chair:

- William R. Young, Parliamentary Librarian, Library of Parliament

Speakers:

- Sandra E. Perry, Legislature Librarian, Province of Alberta
- Kimberley Hammond, Director, Information Management, Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly
- Yvonne Earle, Legislative Librarian, Nunavut Legislative Library
- Philippe Sauvageau, Director, Library of the Quebec National Assembly

10:30 – 11:45 Understanding Our Clients (2) – The International Perspective

Chair:

- Gro Sandgrind, Parliamentary Librarian, Norwegian Parliamentary Library

Speakers:

- Awfa Zuhair Khudhair, Chief, Research Department, Council of Representatives of Iraq
- Anita Dudina, Director, Information Department, Latvian Parliament (Saeima)
- Innocent Rugambwa, Director, Library and Research Services, Parliament of Uganda
- Tembi Chalabesa-Mtine, Parliamentary Information and Research Library, National Assembly of Zambia

11:45 – 13:15 Lunch

13:15 – 15:00 Service Fair

Delegates will have an opportunity to meet Library of Parliament representatives as well as selected parliamentary partners to learn more about and discuss innovative practices in the delivery of services.

15:00 – 16:30 Armchair Discussion: Canadian Parliamentarians talk about their information and knowledge needs

Moderator:

- James R. Mitchell, Founding Partner, Sussex Circle

Speakers:

- The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C., Senate of Canada
- The Honourable Sharon Carstairs, P.C., Senate of Canada
- The Honourable Mauril Bélanger, P.C., Member of Parliament, House of Commons of Canada
- Nicole Demers, Member of Parliament, House of Commons of Canada
- Nathan Cullen, Member of Parliament, House of Commons of Canada

18:30 – 21:15 Cultural event and dinner – Aboriginal Experiences, Victoria Island

Friday, August 8, 2008

08:45 – 09:00 Opening Remarks

09:00 – 12:00 Concurrent Workshops

10. PROGRAM

Workshop 1 – *Legislative Libraries of the Future: Making the Best Use of Technology*

Chair and Presenter:

- Donna Scheeder, Director, Law Library Services, Law Library of the Library of Congress, United States

Presenters:

- Moira Fraser, Parliamentary Librarian and Group Manager, Information and Knowledge, Parliament of New Zealand
- Raissa Teodori, Librarian, Senior Parliamentary Officer, Senate of the Republic, Italy

Workshop 2 – *Approaches to Research*

Chair:

- Sonia L'Heureux, Assistant Parliamentary Librarian, Library of Parliament, Canada

Presenters:

- Soledad Ferreiro, Director, Library of Congress, Chile
- Daniel P. Mulhollan, Director, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, United States

Workshop 3 – *Building Leadership Capacity*

Facilitator:

- Vicki Whitmell, Executive Director, Ontario Legislative Library, Canada

12:00 – 13:30

Lunch

13:30 – 14:45

Recent Innovations in Parliamentary Libraries

Chair:

The Honourable Dr. Carolyn Bennett, P.C., Member of Parliament, House of Commons of Canada

Presentations:

- Parliamentary Information days held at the beginning of the legislative session – Samuel Fonkam Azu'u, Assistant Secretary General, National Assembly, and Alim Garga, Director, Parliamentary Research Centre, Cameroon
- The Hungarian Constituency Database – A Brand New Service – Irén Horváth, Research Service of the Library of the Hungarian Parliament

- Parliamentary Budget Officer – Kevin Page, Parliamentary Budget Officer, Library of Parliament, Canada
- Information-seeking Behaviour of Pakistani Parliamentarians – Bushra Nazli, Manager, Parliamentarians’ Resource Center, Parliament Lodges, Pakistan
- Digitizing Hansard: Putting 200 Years of Parliamentary Debates Online – Edward Wood, Director of Information Management, House of Commons, United Kingdom

15:00 – 15:45 Summaries of Workshop Discussions

Chair:

- Dianne Brydon, Interim Director General, Learning and Access Services, Library of Parliament, Canada

15:45 – 16:15 Closing Speeches

Chair:

- William R. Young, Parliamentary Librarian, Library of Parliament, Canada

Speakers:

- Sonia L’Heureux, Assistant Parliamentary Librarian, Library of Parliament, Canada
- Alessandro Palanza, Deputy Secretary General of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Rome 2009: A Focus on Strategies and Tools for Developing Parliamentary Libraries in the Knowledge-based Society
- Andy Richardson, Information Specialist, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva, October 2008: Informing Democracy: Building Capacity to Meet Parliamentarians’ Information and Knowledge Needs
- Gro Sandgrind, Chair of the IFLA Section on Libraries and Research Services for Parliaments

19:00 – 22:00 Closing Reception and Dinner – Canadian Museum of Civilization

APPENDIX

Picture References

- p. 2 Parliament of Canada
- p. 6 Speaker: **Audrey O'Brien**, Clerk of the House Commons of Canada
- p. 9 From left to right:
Yvonne Earle, Legislative Librarian, Nunavut Legislative Library
Philippe Sauvageau, Director, Library of the Quebec National Assembly
William R. Young, Parliamentary Librarian, Canada
Sandra E. Perry, Legislature Librarian for the Province of Alberta
Kimberley Hammond, Director, Information Management, Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly
- p. 11 From left to right:
Tembi Chalabesa-Mtine, Parliamentary Information and Research Library, National Assembly of Zambia
Anita Dudina, Director of the Information Department, Latvian Parliament, (Saeima)
Gro Sandgrind, Parliamentary Librarian, Norwegian Parliamentary Library
Innocent Rugambwa, Director, Library and Research Services, Parliament of Uganda
Awfa Zuhair Khudhair, Chief, Research Department, Council of Representatives of Iraq
- p. 13 **Soledad Ferreiro**, Director, Library of Congress, Chile
- p. 15 Library of Parliament
- p. 17 From left to right:
The Honourable Sharon Carstairs, P.C., Senator Senate of Canada
The Honourable Donald H. Oliver, Q.C., Senator, Senate of Canada
The Honourable Mauril Bélanger, M.P., P.C., Member of Parliament, House of Commons of Canada
Nathan Cullen, M.P., House of Commons of Canada
Nicole Demers, M.P., House of Commons of Canada
- p. 19 **Narendra Kumar**, Rajya Sabha Secretariat, Parliament of India
- p. 25 Facilitator: **Vicki Whitmell**, Executive Director, Ontario Legislative Library, Canada
- p. 27 From left to right:
Samuel Fonkam Azu'u, Assistant Secretary General, National Assembly, Cameroon
The Honourable Dr. Carolyn Bennett, P.C., M.P., House of Commons of Canada
Alim Garga, Director, Parliamentary Research Centre, Cameroon
Irén Horváth, Research Service of the Library of the Hungarian Parliament
Kevin Page, Parliamentary Budget Officer, Library of Parliament, Canada
Edward Wood, Director of Information Management, House of Commons, United Kingdom
Bushra Nazli, Manager, Parliamentarians' Resource Center, Parliament Lodges, Pakistan
- p. 31 From left to right:
Alessandro Palanza, Deputy Secretary General of the Italian Chamber of Deputies
Andy Richardson, Information Specialist, Inter-Parliamentary Union
Gro Sandgrind, Parliamentary Librarian, Norwegian Parliamentary Library
William R. Young, Parliamentary Librarian, Canada
Sonia L'Heureux, Assistant Parliamentary Librarian, Canada
- p. 32 Parliament of Canada

