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# Informing Democracy

Building capacity to meet parliamentarians' information and knowledge needs.

Geneva, 22 October 2008



**ASGP**  
ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES  
GENERAL OF PARLIAMENTS





REPORT FROM THE CONFERENCE

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Geneva, 22 October 2008

Inter-Parliamentary Union  
Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments  
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

2009





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**“To innovate, to meet members’ needs, libraries have to be able to manage change, to be flexible, to make good use of the knowledge of their staff, to have a culture in which collaboration is normal and creativity is welcome. These are all easy words to say, not so easy to do.”**

Mr. Iain Watt  
 Head of Client Services  
 Library of the European Parliament



# Acknowledgements

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Papers and presentations from the conference are available at:

[www.ipu.org/splz-e/asgp08.htm](http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/asgp08.htm)  
[www.archive.ifla.org/VII/s3/conf/geneva\\_16-10-2008.htm](http://www.archive.ifla.org/VII/s3/conf/geneva_16-10-2008.htm)

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## Foreword

**“Knowledge is power” runs the adage. During the conference, a participant completed it by adding “and we are trying to make very powerful MPs”.** We deeply share this aspiration, as it is fundamental to the quality of parliamentary performance and the quality of democracy itself.

The world’s parliamentarians need information to do their job. It is the lifeblood that they interpret through their personal political lens in order to be able to formulate positions and take decisions. The challenges faced by parliamentarians are enormous. While challenges may vary from country to country, all parliamentarians are confronted by a rapidly changing environment in which information is more widely available, more instantaneous and more difficult to verify than ever before.

Parliamentarians are supported in their task by a vast array of information providers, most of which have in common the desire to sensitive the parliamentarians to their particular way of thinking. Yet parliamentary library and research services are alone among information providers in that their mandate is to provide non-partisan information. This makes them a uniquely valuable resource that should be proudly recognized and supported.

This conference on 'Informing Democracy' aimed at enhancing dialogue, mutual understanding and good practices among three segments of the parliamentary community – parliamentarians, Secretaries General and parliamentary library and research officers. The report of the conference identifies some of the numerous information challenges faced by parliamentarians, and by parliamentary libraries and research services in meeting their needs. It also

points out ways in which parliaments are addressing these challenges, and sets out a path for greater international cooperation. It is our intention to continue to work together to build parliamentary capacity to deliver high-quality information services to parliamentarians around the world.



**Anders B. Johansson**  
Secretary General  
Inter-Parliamentary Union

**Hafnaoui Amrani**  
President  
Association of Secretaries General  
of Parliaments

**Claudia Lux**  
President  
International Federation of Library  
Associations and Institutions



# 1. Introduction

**A one-day conference, Informing Democracy: Building capacity to meet parliamentarians' information and knowledge needs, was held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 16 October 2008. Jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' (IFLA) Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section, this event brought together over 200 participants from more than 70 delegations, including parliamentarians, secretaries general and those responsible for library and research services.**

The purpose of the conference was to permit an exchange of perspectives on the challenges faced by parliamentarians seeking the information and knowledge they require to perform their duties effectively. To this end, it focused on the evolving information needs of parliamentarians and the important role that can be played by parliaments, secretaries general, and library and research services in meeting those needs.

This event was held just two months after the 24th Annual IFLA Pre-Conference of Library and Research Services for Parliaments, hosted by Canada in Ottawa. At that time, representatives from legislative libraries from around the world discussed how those libraries help their parliamentary clients to make the democratic process more effective.

The Ottawa event underscored the similarity in key challenges currently facing parliamentary organizations in many different countries.

These include:

- » technological advances, which have led to profound changes in the information needs and expectations of parliamentary clients;
- » limited resources and expertise, which sometimes hinder the provision of quality service;
- » a decline in requests for traditional library services and materials, accompanied by a growing demand for more complex and multi-faceted analysis; and
- » the need to work with partners from other jurisdictions to develop and implement successful, innovative strategies to address these challenges.

It was against this backdrop that the Informing Democracy conference was developed. The Ottawa Pre-Conference permitted representatives from IFLA's Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section to share ideas and experiences and to build connections among peers. The partnership among IFLA, the IPU and the ASGP made it possible to extend this dialogue to the broader parliamentary context, thereby affording a unique opportunity for parliamentarians, secretaries general and staff from parliamentary libraries and research services to collectively debate and explore shared challenges. As will be seen in this report, the process not only helped the event's co-sponsors to establish stronger connections, but also provided a roadmap for future collaborative initiatives and opportunities.

This report includes summaries of the organizing groups' opening remarks, and a synthesis of the four panel session presentations and plenary discussions. To set the context for these discussions, it opens with a reproduction of the Background Paper around which participants were asked to organize their presentations and discussion points. The report ends by presenting the main conclusions and recommendations of this conference.



## 2. Background Paper<sup>1</sup>

**Access to reliable, timely information is essential to the proper functioning of democratic legislatures. In their legislative role, parliamentarians need information as they monitor issues, develop policy solutions, predict consequences, and influence government decision-making. In their role of overseeing the executive, they need information in order to monitor the success of ongoing programs and to identify areas of weakness.**

Parliamentary libraries and research services are accountable for understanding the needs of their clients in order to provide them with the specialized information that will substantively assist parliamentarians who are working under great pressure and within demanding constraints of time. These services contribute to the effectiveness of parliament by providing authoritative, independent and non-partisan information. The unique value to parliamentarians of dedicated library and research services is growing. A growing volume of information can be found through search engines and other sources, but often the motives of those providing the information are about the promotion of a point of view or a specific course of action. Information from a trusted source carries an increasing premium.

Parliamentarians' need for independent information is probably even greater in developing democracies and economies, where government may be the gatekeeper of information relevant to policy-making and where few non-governmental alternatives exist. When government is the only source of information, or when available information is not transparent, parliamentarians are limited in their ability to hold governments to account, and an imbalance of power between the legislature and the executive may result.

Over the past quarter-century, there has been a growing demand from parliamentarians for more advanced information services, including expert analysis and synthesis of information. There has also been increasing competition from lobbyists and organizations offering their own version

of information assistance and briefing through intensive communication campaigns. Sifting through this "information overload" presents a major challenge for parliamentarians.

Historically, the role of parliamentary libraries has included collecting, cataloguing, conserving materials and providing an information service function. These services have in many places evolved greatly in recent decades, in parallel with new information and communications technologies that have fundamentally changed how parliaments manage knowledge and information.

Some parliamentary libraries and research services have adapted well to this new environment, creating practical, client-oriented information products and services that anticipate clients' needs as well as training programs to help parliamentarians access and use information. These services are often supplemented by other information and documentation functions, such as public outreach programs, digital archiving of parliamentary proceedings, and media monitoring.

Other library and research services have remained within a more traditional role as suppliers of books, journals and documentation and may lack the capacity, resources or institutional support to build an enhanced service model. Newer services in post-conflict states and in some developing democracies may have even more serious resource issues.

The challenge is to develop strategies to support the evolution of parliamentary libraries and research services so that they can provide more value for their clients. By adopting new methods and technologies in information management, these services can provide part of the solution to information overload and to issues of legislative quality and accountability. The goal, which some services are already attaining, is to build the capacity to deliver sustained support tailored to the specific information requirements of parliamentary clients.

<sup>1</sup> This paper was prepared by IFLA's Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section, in collaboration with the IPU and the ASGP.



## 3. Opening and Welcoming Remarks

### Mr. John Pullinger

Librarian and Director General, Information Services,  
House of Commons, United Kingdom

...in his capacity as conference moderator, opened the day by summarizing the task at hand: to better understand one another. He noted a universally relevant consideration – the increasingly complex knowledge needs of parliamentarians – and stressed that this trend has made it all the more important for legislative libraries and research services to adapt and work closely with their clients to better understand and meet their information and knowledge needs.

Following these opening remarks, representatives from the host organizations shared their expectations for the conference.

### The Honourable Theo-Ben Gurirab

President of the IPU

...noted that many national parliaments lack the capacity to access available information. He emphasized the importance of parliamentarians' being well informed as a basis for their decision-making, and wished the conference delegates well in their deliberations.

### Mr. Anders Johnsson

Secretary General of the IPU

...explained that this conference on the information and knowledge needs of parliamentarians was the third year that the IPU and the ASGP had jointly organized a conference following the IPU's fall Assembly in Geneva. Each conference has dealt with some aspect of information and parliament: the first, which was organized with the European Broadcasting Union, focused on parliaments' use of public broadcasting to communicate with citizens; the second, undertaken in collaboration with the Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Parliament, and with the United Nations, addressed the utility of ICT in parliaments.

Mr. Johnsson noted that in the early 1990s, IPU assistance to parliaments included support to build information and research service capacity for those parliaments that had

to rely upon their own nation's government departments and agencies for information. Although circumstances have improved for many, there are still unmet information needs. He suggested that this gathering become the basis of an enduring partnership, responsive to the needs of parliamentarians.

He invited participants to deliberate on the following points:

- » the information parliamentarians need to do their work;
- » the various ways in which parliamentary library and research services fit within the overall mission of the parliamentary secretariat;
- » how traditional libraries can and must transform themselves;
- » how libraries can maintain and improve relations with parliamentarians;
- » ways to strengthen parliamentary library and research services, through domestic and international support;
- » the challenges facing parliamentary libraries and research services in developed and developing countries; and
- » potential partnerships among the various stakeholders (the IPU, parliaments, the ASGP, IFLA) – which organization(s) should play a lead role?

### Mr. Anders Forsberg

Outgoing president of the ASGP

...opened his remarks with a discussion of the role of the information society as the successor to the industrial society. He explained that the information society is one in which the creation, distribution, use and integration of information is a significant activity in every sphere, whether economic, political, social or cultural. A closely related concept is that of the knowledge society, and even more closely related is democracy itself. For this reason, it is difficult to imagine





democracy without information or knowledge. Information is a cornerstone of democracy, making the theme of this conference particularly important and relevant.

He noted that over the past half-century, there has been a growing demand from parliamentarians for more advanced information services, expert analysis, and synthesis of information. Parliamentary libraries and research services have played an important role in meeting this demand. He expressed the hope that this conference would permit an effective discussion on the evolving needs of parliamentarians, and on the differences in needs in different parts of the world.

He also asserted that secretaries general of parliaments, officials responsible for library services, and the parliamentarians who use these services have a common responsibility to build the capacity of parliaments to meet information and knowledge needs. With this in mind, he

expressed the hope that the conference would lead to future meetings and activities, and encouraged participants to consider what they might want partners to do by way of follow-up.

#### **Ms. Claudia Lux**

President of IFLA

...outlined the role that legislative libraries and research services play in ensuring that parliamentarians have the information they need to promote sound democratic governance. IFLA's Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section brings together information specialists working within many legislatures. With members from over 120 parliamentary libraries at supranational, national and sub-national levels in more than 80 countries, the Section's mission is to promote the role of libraries and research services in helping parliamentarians carry out their legislative functions.





➔ What distinguishes legislative libraries and research services is their clientele. Parliamentarians have a number of demanding roles. They examine legislation, oversee government, and undertake committee studies. They also represent the interests of their constituents or regions, interact with fellow

parliamentarians from other countries, and perform functions within their political parties. In the process, parliamentarians make use of information provided by legislative libraries as well as the research and analysis provided by parliamentary research services.



Ms. Lux noted that parliamentary libraries are often called upon to help parliamentarians deal with their information overload; to adapt to ever-changing expectations about how best to deliver information to their clients; and to respond to increasingly challenging requests. Much of the value-added work done by libraries and research services is the non-partisan evaluation and condensation of the wide variety of information on a given topic.

As with other libraries, legislative libraries come in all shapes and sizes. Those represented in IFLA's Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section range from one-person libraries, to services with hundreds of staff. The libraries also range from traditional ones that offer books, journals and documentation, to those that rely upon the latest information technology to help their clients. For instance, some libraries offer their clients customized information products and encourage them to establish connections with other providers of knowledge. In many new democracies, legislative libraries do not have the resources to provide these enhanced services, even if they would like to.

Ms. Lux also reminded participants that delegates to the August 2008 conference of IFLA's Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section, held in Ottawa, stressed that legislative libraries must develop partnerships to meet the challenges posed by the digital transformation of information and by the changing needs and demands of parliamentary clients. To this end, she emphasized that we need to understand each other's needs and constraints if we are to make informed choices about the ways in which we approach the information needs of parliamentarians. She expressed the hope that the outcome of this meeting would serve as the basis for future meetings on legislative libraries and research services and the role they play in supporting parliaments and promoting democracy.



## 4. Session Proceedings

**As noted, a key objective of the conference was to encourage dialogue among those who use and are involved with parliamentary library and research services. It was hoped that better mutual understanding would facilitate networking among parliamentarians, secretaries general and library and research staff, and, by extension, assist those tasked with meeting the information needs of parliamentarians to create more useful and targeted products.**

This objective determined the order of the panel sessions. The first session was to hear first-hand from parliamentarians. The second was to look at how library and research services are valued within the parliamentary environment. The third was to assess ways to improve services in light of changes in technology and in the roles of parliamentarians; and the fourth addressed strategies to establish more effective inter-parliamentary partnerships.

### **I. Parliamentarians' evolving information and knowledge needs**

The parliamentarians who participated in this session were asked to organize their presentations around the following questions:

- » What are the information and knowledge needs of parliamentarians? To what extent do these needs and expectations vary among parliaments? How are the needs of parliamentarians evolving?
- » How do parliamentarians meet their information needs? What challenges do they face?
- » What expectations do parliamentarians have of their library and research services?

Canadian **Senator Dennis Dawson**, Member of the House of Representatives of Uruguay **Mr. Diego Cánepa**, and Second Vice-President of the Senate of Thailand **Mrs. Tassana Boontong** each spoke of how their respective parliamentary libraries have been essential to the performance of their

duties as parliamentarians. A recurring theme was the information overload facing parliamentarians and the need for the accurate, reliable and non-partisan information that can be provided by parliamentary libraries and research services.

Senator Dennis Dawson spoke of the evolving roles of parliamentarians in light of the possibilities and opportunities created by new technologies. He has been using the services of Canada's Library of Parliament for more than 30 years and has witnessed how it has adapted to changing technology and demands. Technology has led to the democratization of information, with both parliamentarians and the public having greater access to material on the work of parliament and parliamentarians. With greater access comes the need for more filtering and fact-checking. Senator Dawson pointed out that material on public information websites such as Wikipedia is often inaccurate. He relies heavily on parliamentary library and research services because he knows he will receive a response that is impartial, unbiased and analyzed by experts.

The other challenge, he stressed, was to provide information in a way that makes it usable. All the information may



**"In contrast to what is provided by various lobbies and political research bureaus, parliamentarians know that the information provided to us by parliamentary libraries and research services is impartial, non-partisan, and has been analyzed by experts...In other words, parliamentary libraries are a benefit for our work as legislators as they provide us with high-quality information."**

Senator Dennis Dawson  
Canada



→ be publicly available, but until a specialist has evaluated and synthesized it, the knowledge needed can remain elusive to parliamentarians and the public alike. As Senator Dawson explained: "It is not about who owns what...As parliamentarians, we just want access to information in a form that makes sense to us."

He concluded by emphasizing that parliamentarians play four distinct roles – in the chamber, in committees, in their constituencies or regions, and on the international stage. These roles cross the lines between parliamentary institutions, and it is essential for parliamentarians that procedural staff and library and research staff work closely together so that parliamentarians may carry out their democratic duties.

Mr. Cánepa focused his presentation on the role that parliamentary libraries can play in holding the executive to account. Parliaments, he said, came about to counter the power of the executive branch; however, there has consistently been an imbalance of power and funds between the executive and the legislative branches of government. Being a member of the opposition is very different from being a member of the government – opposition members have fewer resources, and the information they need is often less accessible. Parliamentary library and research services can help correct that imbalance.

He noted that there is very high turnover from one parliamentary session to the next in Uruguay, with up to 50-60% of the legislature being newly elected. This means that it is the parliamentary staff who hold the institutional knowledge. Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff have to work together closely to improve understanding. One of the major problems is getting access to relevant information: "The best way of not informing is over-informing," burying relevant information in irrelevant information. It takes time to discern what elements are important, and parliamentarians do not have a lot of time.

Mr. Cánepa added that a new model is needed in Uruguay, one where the library and research services provide

"With respect to timely information, online information is available...but what you need is to have people in a position to take advantage of this wealth of information. You need to have technical expertise so that information of use to parliamentarians can be made available to them. There is a great deal of technology available, clearly, but if you don't have the human resources available, if you don't have people trained to help you, then it is not much use to you."

Mr. Diego Cánepa  
*Member of the House of Representatives*  
Uruguay

assistance on an on-demand basis. Parliamentarians need comparative legislation, analysis of current situations, and information about issues expected to come before parliament. There needs to be a much closer relationship between parliamentarians and the legislative library and research services, so that information can be tailored to client needs in a changing parliamentary environment. He emphasized that it is important to remember that parliamentarians are not elected because they know how a parliament works; they are elected because they are better at understanding people. Voters do not necessarily elect people who know more, but people who will represent them better. Access to relevant information benefits all Members of Parliament, enabling them to promote ideas better and provide concrete responses to domestic and international challenges.

Mrs. Boontong discussed parliamentarians' need for good information to keep up with the many competing voices in society. Parliament has to answer to new national and global players, and there is closer scrutiny by a more









→ informed electorate and international media. Consequently, Mrs. Boontong stated, "How I use information in my job is paramount in how I test the quality of my leadership." To speak effectively in parliament requires credible, accurate, balanced, well-researched and independent information. The country is watching.

Mrs. Boontong was a nurse before entering parliament and is sometimes asked to use her health care expertise – for example, on the health committee; but more often she is asked to work on issues with which she is less familiar. Before deciding how to vote on a legislative proposal, much work must be done: reading the text of the legislation, reviewing the bill's history, and considering international comparisons. It is difficult to do all this without assistance, as there is so much information and some of it is irrelevant or misleading. There are also many different sources of information: political parties, lobbyists, stakeholders, the media, the Internet, and academic articles. She relies on her parliamentary library to find the accurate, relevant and objective information essential for decision-making.

The opening panel session elicited a wide range of comments. Several delegates emphasized the benefits of having representatives from the IPU, the ASGP and IFLA in attendance and called for future opportunities to discuss parliamentarians' information needs. Other points raised included the following:

**Mrs. Rosa Fuentes**, Director of Information at the Spanish Senate, noted that parliamentary libraries often provide information to the other institutions operating in parliament – the committees directorate, cabinet services or caucus research – which in turn provide a final product to parliamentarians. While the parliamentarians' information needs may be served, the role of library staff may not be adequately recognized, and this can be problematic when a library needs to request more resources.

**Mr. Fouad Al-Ansari**, Director of Research and Studies of the Council of Representatives, Bahrain, pointed out that parliamentarians need support to consider the potential

**"I am now covering issues that are different from questions with which I was involved before coming to parliament."**

Mrs. Tassana Boontong  
Second Vice-President  
Senate of Thailand

effects of legislation. Such information cannot be randomly collected over the Internet, but requires objective research.

**Mr. Constantin Tshisuaka Kabanda**, Secretary General of the National Assembly, Democratic Republic of the Congo, agreed that management of information and expertise is a pressing challenge for some, but reminded the conference that libraries in developing countries face fundamental issues such as a lack of the basic knowledge to build capacity. He noted that his library has just 1,000 volumes, but more than 7,000 visitors during a parliamentary session. He appealed to the conference to partner with him to strengthen capacity in his parliamentary library.

**Ms. Claudia Lux**, President of IFLA, underscored the importance of formalizing the relationship between IFLA, the IPU and the ASGP. To this end, she suggested the creation of a grant, which could be managed by IFLA's Action for development through Libraries Programme (ALP), to help build capacity for parliamentary library and research services, particularly in developing countries. She added that this was an area where IFLA could take a lead role, given that its members have the needed experience and expertise.



## II. The value of dedicated parliamentary library and research services

The second session of the day focused on the structures and products available within parliamentary institutions to assist parliamentarians. The panellists were asked to consider:

- » What are the potential benefits and outcomes of well-organized and resourced parliamentary library and research services?
- » What strategic priorities should guide the evolution of parliamentary libraries and research services? What challenges and risks are there in this evolution?
- » What changes in culture and in competencies are required by library and research services to provide better value for their parliamentary clients?

**Mrs. Doris Mwinga**, Clerk of the National Assembly of Zambia, **Mr. Xavier Roques**, Secretary General of the Questure of the National Assembly, France, and **Mr. Jan Keukens**, Deputy Head of Information Services, House of Representatives of the States General, The Netherlands, each explored the evolution of their institutions and how they fit into the broader parliamentary environment.

A common theme among the presentations was the need to embrace changing technology. As Mr. Roques said, "Computerize, computerize, computerize. If you have limited resources, computerize!" It was emphasized during this session and throughout the day that traditional libraries can and must transform themselves into more modern services for providing information.

Mrs. Mwinga told delegates that "It is generally agreed by all librarians that there's a need to redefine their role. They have to be more proactive, and evolve from a tradition of being passive keepers of books on shelves to information activists who follow their users to provide relevant information services." She reported that, to this end, her library has been attempting to maximize the use of the latest available

"Before I got here one of our permanent secretaries came to me and said "Doris, your MPs are really getting too much. You know, the last time I appeared before the Public Accounts Committee, it was like a tribunal. What information are you giving them?" So I smiled and I said to her, "Very good. It means now you have to really prepare before you come to talk before our committees." It used to be normal for bureaucrats from government to come with very high-sounding words and knowledge on the assumption that our MPs had very little understanding of what they were saying. It is not the same any more. So our work in the library and in our research services is achieving results."

Mrs. Doris Mwinga  
Clerk of the National Assembly  
Zambia

technologies. Since 2001, the library has had a local area network and several computers, and it is currently working on linking the constituency offices to the library. It is digitizing relevant parliamentary documents and will have web-based solutions for information and knowledge management and library automation by the end of the year. It also has a regularly updated website.

Mrs. Mwinga added, however, that – due to notable resource constraints – Zambia's circumstances differ dramatically from those of developed countries, where each MP has a laptop and other portable communications devices. That said, she noted that the needs of parliamentarians in Zambia, across Africa and in other developing countries are much the same as in developed countries.









→ Echoing remarks made by Mr. Cánepa during the first session, Mrs. Mwinga talked about the challenges confronting Zambia's unicameral parliament when there was a 70% turnover of its membership following a recent general election. With the arrival of new members, her library faced not only the pressure of orienting them to parliamentary procedures and available library and research services, but also the reality that many of them needed to be trained to use a computer. Indeed, fewer than 1 million of Zambia's 12 million citizens are computer-literate. She underlined that, in developing nations, computer skills for parliamentarians and staff are a priority for capacity-building.

Mrs. Mwinga noted that, all told, the ultimate impact of an efficient library and research service is better-informed parliamentarians. "They say knowledge is power, and we are trying to make very powerful MPs." In closing she challenged the secretaries general, clerks and chief librarians from the Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Eastern and Southern Africa (APLESA) – many of whom were in attendance – to use this occasion to make plans to reactivate the Association after a three-year hiatus.

Mr. Roques hailed his library's creation of a centralized database network for France's National Assembly as the "victory of the library." He reported that centralizing the file system under the library had simplified workflow, thanks to the creation of a keyword taxonomy that provides all users with better access to previous research.

He explained that, over time, the National Assembly of France had developed many different and incompatible information systems for parliamentarians, parliamentary institutions and subject areas. The consequence was duplication, repetition and reliance on personal connections and individual initiatives to determine whether other sections had already worked on a subject. With centralized databases, parliamentarians and staff now find it easier to locate needed documentation and parliamentary information.

At the same time, there has been a trend towards more complex research requests of a global and comparative nature. In response to this development, the French parliament's studies department now prepares anticipatory research papers that are circulated electronically and on paper within the Assembly. This strategy has raised many questions, notably how to select topics for such papers and who should initiate them.

The question of anticipatory and strategic research was raised several times during the day. Participants generally agreed that in a world of unlimited resources, an anticipatory research agenda would be very helpful to parliamentarians. Having information prepared in anticipation of an emergency debate, or awareness of an issue in the media, reduces stress for parliamentary staff and helps ensure that parliamentarians have ready access to needed resources. Most library research services, however, lack the needed expertise and resources for a truly anticipatory research model and must focus instead on producing high-quality products in short turnaround times.

Mr. Keukens emphasized an issue identified by many participants: too much information, not enough time. He added that the modern parliamentary information provider is like "a sheep with five legs," with communication skills, an extroverted and flexible attitude, a cooperative approach, and well-developed information technology and networking abilities.

With regard to helping parliamentarians handle the pressures imposed by their workload, he underscored the fundamental utility of parliamentary library and research services as a one-stop shop for non-partisan information and knowledge, synthesized from different sources, and covering the full range of public policy and institutional memory.

He noted, however, that the core mission of most parliamentary libraries has expanded considerably due to innovations in technology and shifts in client expectations. For this reason, many parliamentary libraries are now struggling to accommodate:





- ➔ » the increased complexity of requests (dealing with a broader range of issues and often requiring international comparisons);
- » a growing diversity of information sources;
- » the proliferation of civil society interest groups; and
- » more frequent requests for tailored information.

Compounding these pressures has been a concomitant shift in the expectations of clients, whose deadlines are now shorter in the face of more frequent emergency debates and a 24-hour news cycle. These demands pose a serious challenge for parliamentary library and research staff, who are nevertheless expected to deliver timely, high-quality and relevant responses.

Given these issues, Mr. Keukens concluded that the parliamentary library may increasingly become a facilitator of information rather than the information provider per se. This requires finding ways to select, aggregate, and provide access to relevant sources. It also necessitates the provision of tools for self-service and a focus on training clientele.

In response to the presentations, Mr. Allel Haddad, Director of Documentation, Publishing and Archives for the Council of the Nation, Algeria, asked the panellists for advice to developing countries seeking to develop library and document management expertise and capacity. Mr. Keukens suggested twinning with another library and resource-sharing with outside institutions. By establishing bilateral partnerships with other libraries, a library can maximize resources and expertise. Basic resource-sharing agreements are very important to libraries with smaller collections and

limited access to technology. Establishing partnerships with state libraries or other local institutions can also expand a library's capacity significantly. Mrs. Mwinga suggested secondments to other parliamentary libraries and linkages to state and university libraries. She noted that the Zambian library has sent many of its researchers and librarians to other parliaments, and it was the lessons learned from these experiences that prompted the decision to merge Zambia's library and research services. For his part, Mr. Roques indicated that the best way to build capacity is to computerize.

### III. Innovative strategies to meet parliamentarians' evolving needs

IFLA's Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section has made a priority of innovation in library and research services, as evidenced by its recent pre-conferences in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2007 and in Ottawa, Canada, in 2008<sup>2</sup>. Building on those discussions, the day's third session addressed strategies to meet the evolving needs of parliamentarians.

The panel opened with the launch of the report on the 24th Annual IFLA Pre-Conference of Library and Research Services for Parliaments<sup>3</sup>. **Dr. William Young**, Parliamentary Librarian of Canada and 2008 Pre-Conference host, told the assembled delegates that the report sums up the challenges facing legislative libraries around the world and discusses initiatives and best practices that have been adopted to meet these challenges. He explained that the discussions and presentations in Ottawa focused on how legislative libraries work to assist parliamentary clients to make the democratic process more effective.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.ifla.org/VII/s3](http://www.ifla.org/VII/s3) for more information on IFLA's Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section and its conferences.

<sup>3</sup> The report on the 24th Annual IFLA Pre-Conference of Library and Research Services for Parliaments may be found at [www.preifla2008.ca/content/IFLAREport-e.pdf](http://www.preifla2008.ca/content/IFLAREport-e.pdf).



One of the Ottawa event's main themes was the experience of smaller libraries seeking innovative ways to offer a full range of services to their clients. The Pre-Conference highlighted the diversity of legislative libraries, characterized by their different histories, political contexts, mandates and levels of resources. At the same time, participants noted that legislative libraries around the world share the same purpose: to provide reliable, accurate information and research to parliamentary clients.

Discussions also demonstrated the notable similarity in the key challenges facing parliaments in the early 21st century. Dr. Young noted that legislative libraries must deal with the profound transformation of the information and knowledge environment in the digital age, and the equally profound changes in the needs and demands of 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 emerges at different speeds, in different contexts, relying on different tools.

For these reasons, libraries and research services must develop strong and effective partnerships with their parliamentary clients and with legislative libraries in other jurisdictions.

Dr. Young concluded by listing key recommendations from the Pre-Conference:

1. Technological advances, which have driven the 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.
2. While the number of simple information requests has decreased considerably, demand for more complex and multi-faceted analysis has grown. At the same time, the need for traditional library services and materials is declining, and there is a growing demand for electronic sources and formats.

3. Profound changes in client needs and expectations are forcing legislative libraries to modernize their working methods. 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.

In closing, Dr. Young observed that working with partners in other jurisdictions and through IFLA is an essential element in the development and implementation of successful, innovative strategies to address these challenges.

Following Dr. Young's remarks, **Mr. Iain Watt**, Head of Client Services, Library of the European Parliament, and **Ms. Gloria Insaído**, Parliamentary Librarian, Ghana, made their presentations. These panellists had been asked to consider the following questions:

- » What new services and technologies can library and research services use to support parliamentarians in holding the executive to account and improving the quality of legislation?
- » How can parliamentarians communicate their changing needs to their research and library services? How can library and research services keep in step with the changing needs and expectations of parliamentarians?
- » How can library and research services be organized to innovate as rapidly as the best information service providers?

Mr. Watt reminded conference participants that parliamentary libraries and research services are highly diverse: their resources and functions vary; their histories vary; they range from small operations to much larger ones; some have





→ very traditional library services, whereas others are much more sophisticated<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, what may seem like a basic service in one parliament could be an extraordinary innovation in another.

He added that the aim of any innovation should be to improve the quality and value of the service provided: to do the same things, but do them better. Mr. Watt noted that there are three main types of innovations in parliamentary libraries: entirely new services, new approaches to old services (e.g., finding ways to achieve better quality or increased efficiency), or new marketing approaches to old services.

For innovations to be useful, a clear understanding of client needs is essential. To this end, Mr. Watt reviewed the most common forms of feedback mechanisms used by parliamentary libraries around the world. These range from informal, one-on-one coffee meetings to gauge opinions and needs, to more formal methods, such as feedback forms, structured interviews, or market research firms hired to conduct surveys or focus groups. Mr. Watt urged all to remain mindful that each parliamentary context is both unique and diverse, making it essential that libraries and research services regularly evaluate and tailor their products and services to remain relevant to their clients.

Mr. Watt concluded his presentation with a discussion of some emerging trends in parliamentary libraries. Most notable was the growing convergence between parliamentary library and research services. Traditionally, the library and research functions were separate professional areas. In recent years, however, these two areas have started to work more collaboratively. Many library services now offer a wider range of value-added products; that is, summaries and overviews, rather than simple reference responses. At the same time, research services are phasing out lengthy, in-depth research papers in favor of more concise briefing materials.

**"To innovate, to meet members' needs, libraries have to be able to manage change, to be flexible, to make good use of the knowledge of their staff, to have a culture in which collaboration is normal and creativity is welcome. These are all easy words to say, not so easy to do."**

Mr. Iain Watt  
Head of Client Services  
Library of the European Parliament

In both services, the trend is toward subject-area specialization as the work of parliaments has become more focused, technical and challenging. Other emerging trends include: anticipatory research, integration of library services into work processes or legislative project teams, audio-visual services such as audio briefings and podcasts, and knowledge sharing and "OpenParl" tools that permit citizens to follow the legislative process more closely. In addition, some of the larger parliamentary libraries are experimenting with Web 2.0 social networking tools.

For her part, Ms. Insaadoo noted that circumstances differ vastly in developing nations such as Ghana, where most parliamentarians lack offices, personal staff, personal computers, and Internet access – all of which, by extension, amplifies their reliance on the library for their information needs. She observed that the needs in her setting were far simpler. For example, many members of Ghana's parliament were using the library for its newspapers. In response, the library developed a newspaper clipping service for a select

<sup>4</sup> Iain Watt's presentation was based on feedback received from members of IFLA's Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section.



"Some know what they need to be effective parliamentarians, but it is also up to the library to let parliamentarians know what the library can do for them."

Ms. Gloria Insaïdoo  
Parliamentary Librarian  
Ghana

group of parliamentarians. Over time, it was noted that the clippings were not being read. Rather than ending the service, the library redesigned it to provide members with more media reports on their activities, information about their constituency, as well as other articles of interest. To ensure its utility, the librarians followed up with parliamentarians to evaluate their satisfaction with the service. A simple lesson was learned: implementing a new service is not an end in itself; sometimes the service must be adapted to suit client needs. Thus, to innovate effectively, libraries need to manage change, offer more flexible services, encourage creativity and collaboration, and maximize the knowledge of their staff.

Computer literacy training was another issue raised by Ms. Insaïdoo. Library staff train MPs and their staff in the use of online databases and resources so that they can take advantage of other library resources such as an automated Hansard and a bill tracking service. Her library also teaches parliamentary staff and MPs how to find information themselves; for others, her staff provide information as requested.

In the final analysis, Ms. Insaïdoo underscored the importance of ensuring the value and utility of the products and services offered to parliamentarians. This, she noted, is all the more important when financial and human resources are limited. Achieving this end, she concluded, requires regular interaction with parliamentarians and an effective feedback mechanism.

During the question and answer session, **Ms. Nawal Al Shehhi**, Head of the Library and Information Sources Department, United Arab Emirates, asked the panellists to discuss the establishment of partnerships for contract research. Mr. Watt said one of the most important factors when hiring contract researchers is to be very clear on your research parameters. Dr. Young added that one needs to be "hard-headed" about partnerships. He recommended having a policy and guidelines in place to help maintain the library's mandate and values.

**Mr. Gunnars Fors**, Deputy Secretary, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Sweden, and **Ms. Siiri Sillajoe**, Deputy Head of the Department of Economic and Social Information, Estonia, both commented on the difficulty in obtaining useful feedback on their products and services. Ms. Sillajoe emphasized the value of meeting clients one on one and asked panellists to explain how they establish and retain personal connections in the electronic era. Mr. Watt listed a number of different feedback mechanisms, including contacting people who have not used the library recently, but he reiterated that different techniques are necessary in different cultures. Ms. Insaïdoo suggested targeted group meetings and one-on-one sessions with members at which time they are asked to fill out a questionnaire. Dr. Young spoke of a recent perception audit undertaken at the Canadian Library of Parliament. He hired a market research firm to talk to stakeholders and clients. In response to the results of the audit, the Library is reorganizing its services to confront some of the challenges in reaching its clients. Finally, Mr. Pullinger reminded participants that getting the information required is sometimes the easy part; deciding how to adapt services in response to feedback is the hard part.





➔ By way of wrap-up, Mr. Pullinger asked the panellists to identify the biggest change they had implemented in their libraries. For his part, Mr. Pullinger identified a program he adapted for the UK context that he borrowed from the Canadian Library of Parliament to train teachers in parliamentary procedure. This is a way to engage with the public, thereby helping a new generation of children to better understand what their parliament does for them. Ms. Insaideo identified work conducted by Ghana's legislative service, where they prepare background information on bills for MPs' reference. Mr. Watt described an integration project implemented at the European Parliament whereby subject specialists were brought together with library staff to work in four subject areas. The specialists helped guide the work and served as a bridge to the committees and committee officials. As a result, library staff became more engaged and interested in committee work, thereby developing more in-depth specialization. This has improved the overall quality of the output and was a notable success with both the committees and the library staff.

#### IV. Sharing good practices and building capacity: strategies to assist parliamentary institutions

The final session of the day focused on ways to share good practices among parliamentary library and research services.

**Ms. Anita Dudina**, Director of the Information Department of the Latvian Parliament, **Mr. Martin Chungong**, Director, Division for the Promotion of Democracy, IPU, and **Ms. Mireille Eza**, Director of the Inter-parliamentary Cooperation Program (Noria Program) of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF), considered the following questions:

- » How can good practices in parliamentary library and research services be shared effectively?
- » How can programs to help parliaments in less-developed countries build their library and research capacity be better coordinated? Are new programs needed?

- » What role can international and regional bodies play in strengthening the support offered to parliaments?

The panellists spoke of their experiences in developing new libraries as well as the challenge of coordinating assistance from external organizations. They stressed the importance of harmonizing assistance from various sources; of establishing multi-year plans to allow for development and implementation; and of ensuring that assistance is driven by the demands of newer libraries. Interventions focused on ways to support parliaments in less-developed countries in order to meet the information and knowledge needs of their parliamentarians.

The panellists also observed that a number of programs and organizations currently provide opportunities to exchange good practices in parliamentary library and research services at the international and regional levels. For example, a key objective of IFLA's Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section is:

To assist in the development of parliamentary libraries by providing assistance and support in accordance with the interest, requirements, and stage of development of parliaments in various regions of the world; to encourage bilateral assistance and development programmes; and to act as a clearing house in this regard.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, IFLA's ALP program furthers the library profession, library institutions and library and information services in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Other examples include parliamentary organizations such as the IPU and the APF, which have technical assistance programs that provide support to library and information services.

Mr. Chungong explained that parliaments in new democracies often lack the required experience, trained staff, information and material to serve their members effectively. ➔

<sup>5</sup> See IFLA, "Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section," – [www.ifla.org/VII/s3](http://www.ifla.org/VII/s3)







→ Through its technical assistance program, the IPU provides advice, guidance and support to parliaments. This includes helping parliaments to conduct a needs assessment and design a program of support to address those needs. The IPU can draw on the resources of its member parliaments, making it well placed to play a mediator role, both between member parliaments and with other organizations, such as IFLA. He added that almost all requests for support to parliaments received by the IPU have a library and research component.

For its part, the APF's Noria Program helps francophone parliaments in the Global South to build capacity for the production, management and dissemination of legislative information. Ms. Eza explained that Noria's support includes helping parliaments identify their needs; implementing action plans to meet those needs; and providing equipment and training. The training provided through Noria responds to requirements that are collectively identified by member parliaments.

It was noted that regional organizations such as the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) also facilitate the sharing of information. The ECPRD provides a forum for exchange between participating parliaments on issues such as the management of parliaments, the status of parliamentarians, legislation, and research and studies of a comparative nature. As the information generated by the Centre's members is extensive and specific items can be hard to locate, the ECPRD strives to assemble useful data and practices that will facilitate the exchange of ideas, the retrieval of data and the circulation of studies.

Ms. Dudina reminded participants that a parliament's strongest and most important asset is its intellectual capital. For this reason, parliamentary libraries and research units are by far the best positioned to build and cultivate a knowledge-sharing culture within parliaments. She added that IFLA's Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section serves as a door to new ideas and as a network to reach colleagues for consultation and advice.

**"There is a time to learn and time to teach,  
a time to receive and a time to give."**

Ms. Anita Dudina

*Director of the Information Department  
Latvian Parliament*

Countries that have recently developed legislative libraries are also well positioned to partner with developing libraries. She observed that countries such as Latvia can be good mediators between the needs of new libraries and the expertise of more established ones, thanks to very recent transition experiences. With this in mind, she suggested that multilateral programs should promote twinning to help transfer expertise between nations that have recently made changes to their parliamentary library and research services and those with libraries that are in the initial stages of development. As did many others, she emphasized the importance of learning from the experiences of other countries, while at the same time remaining aware of the unique needs of developing libraries.

With respect to the various organizations involved in parliamentary strengthening activities, all three panellists noted that coordination among these groups has been less than ideal. When numerous initiatives are under way, insufficient coordination is at times more detrimental than no assistance at all. On this point, Ms. Eza underscored the need to improve the exchange of information, the specialization of the various players, the harmonization of working tools



and methods, and the synergy between initiatives. She also encouraged all partners to adhere to the "reality principle": that is, to play close attention to the consistency and complementarity of actions, the proven effectiveness of new methods, and the incorporation of ongoing training for managers.

Ms. Eza added that partnerships need to be active and ongoing: a program should not be doing things for a developing library, but working with it to encourage sustainability. For this reason, the participation and responsibilities of all parties need to be clarified from the outset. All must work together, but make an individual contribution. This requires multi-year plans for development and implementation.

In the case of new programs, it is equally important that a parliament assess its needs. This allows the parties involved to take ownership of the implementation. For existing programs, it is important to recognize that things can be improved. The partners need to evaluate what could be done with new tools or methods. At the same time, they need to evaluate the human resources available, as well as what officials and parliamentarians can do.

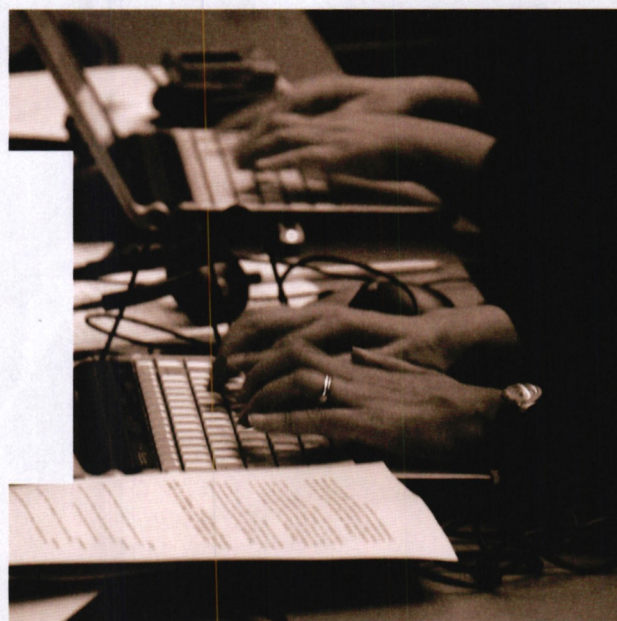
Ms. Eza stressed the need for specialized leadership development for research services and libraries. Professional development must be targeted towards the right staff and be provided by the best persons to give technical assistance. At times, effective professional development requires smaller groups and longer periods. For this reason, regional and sub-regional exchanges are often useful ways to share expertise.

For his part, Mr. Chungong reminded all participants that capacity-building projects require a range of options, as no single model fits all parliaments. For this reason, organizations like the IPU can best help parliaments by ensuring that they draw up and implement an individualized program of support based on assessed and agreed-upon needs. He noted that the parliamentary environment is unique and challenging and that it is necessary to take a politically sensitive approach. All political parties should

be engaged so that they understand the value behind the endeavour. It is useful, therefore, to have a core group of change champions, preferably across party lines.

Echoing Ms. Eza, Mr. Chungong emphasized the importance of local ownership of assistance projects. This can be accomplished by ensuring that support recipients are involved in all stages, including planning, organization, implementation and delivery. He stressed, however, that supporting parliaments is a long-term endeavour; one cannot "spend the money and run." It is equally important to prepare a careful exit strategy, preferably one that involves a commitment from the recipient parliament. For example, if new technology has been donated and set up, local stakeholders' support must be secured to ensure maintenance and sustainability.

Mr. Chungong also underlined the importance of adhering to the principles of the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, which calls for greater coherence in donor support and ensuring that assistance is demand-driven.







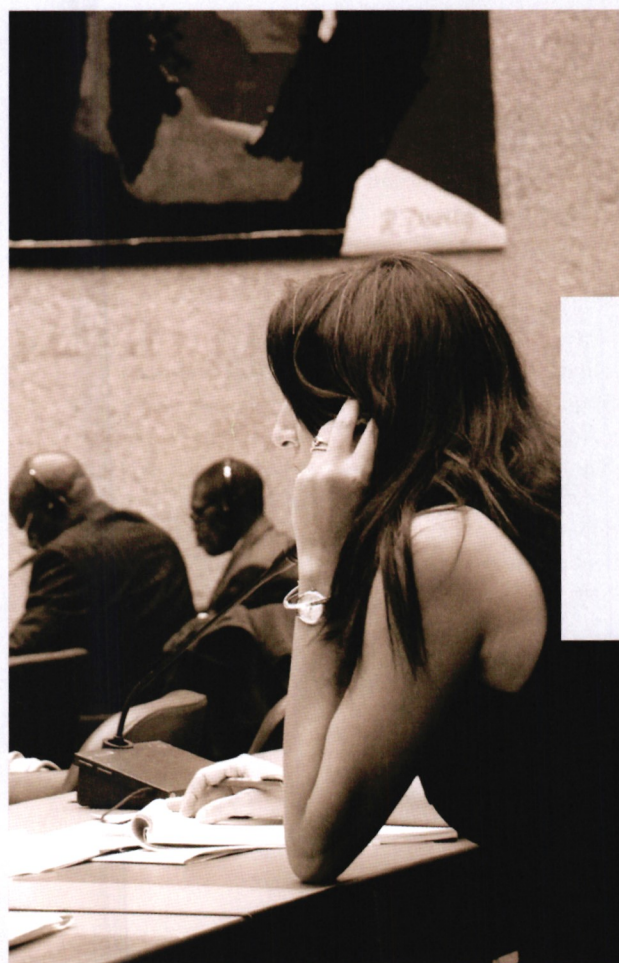


## 5. Closing Remarks

On behalf of the Secretary General of the IPU, **Mr. Martin Chungong** thanked the conference participants. He noted that the discussions had been enriching and rewarding, and that the collaboration among IFLA, the ASGP and the IPU is the kind of partnership that the IPU would like to promote in the future in support of stronger parliaments. He invited discussion on moving forward with the ideas, process and networking started at this conference, both by bringing ideas discussed back to parliaments and by pursuing future partnerships among the organizations.

The President of the ASGP, **Mr. Hafnaoui Amrani**, summarized the consensus of participants that it had been productive to bring together parliamentarians, secretaries general, and research and information services to discuss the issues on the agenda. He highlighted the essential role played by libraries and research services in the functioning of parliaments. He also noted that the conference had helped identify both the commonalities and the differences among parliamentary library and research services. As the discussion had made clear, these services continue to confront the challenges and opportunities created by rapid advances in technology and the proliferation of available information. Opportunities to share best practices in meeting these challenges are helpful for all.

Finally, **Ms. Gro Sandgrind**, Chair of IFLA's Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section, concluded that a strong and independent parliamentary information service can contribute to the democratic process by providing authoritative, independent and non-partisan background information and analysis to parliamentarians, who work in a high-pressure environment. Noting that feedback from parliamentary clients is essential to maintaining and improving services from parliamentary libraries, she drew attention to a survey undertaken by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, and published in the World e-Parliament Report 2008, which provides an excellent framework for looking at needs and at innovative strategies to meet them.<sup>6</sup>



She also drew attention to a publication to be released by IFLA next year that will help guide those who are setting up legislative libraries. The publication will be written not only for the library profession but also for those involved in setting up new information services for legislators. Its target audience includes administrators and those responsible for authorizing funds for this purpose.

<sup>6</sup> The World e-Parliament Report 2008 may be found at [www.ictparliament.org](http://www.ictparliament.org)



## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

**Informing Democracy: Building capacity to meet parliamentarians' information and knowledge needs was conceived as a means to facilitate the exchange of ideas among parliamentarians, secretaries general and parliamentary library and research staff. At the end of the day, participants agreed that the debate had come full circle with common understanding on several key points, notably the importance of working in collaboration – as partners – to build capacity.**

It was noted repeatedly that all parliamentarians – no matter their geographic, political or individual circumstances – are struggling to extract useful and reliable information from a growing range of sources. As a result, they are increasingly reliant on their library and research services to synthesize and analyze required information and knowledge in an accessible format and in a timely manner. This trend, however, is placing great pressure on parliamentary information providers to adapt their methods and practices to meet client needs.

In many developed nations, efforts are being made to centralize parliamentary information repositories, eliminate duplication, and build clear paths of communication. There is also a growing recognition that parliamentary libraries and research services need to adapt their service models to reflect a shift from their traditional function as information providers to a new role as facilitators and synthesizers of knowledge and information. Accordingly, some parliamentary services are now developing anticipatory and strategic research services that not only respond to individual requests, but initiate research on key topics in anticipation of upcoming parliamentary issues or debates.

In developing nations and newer democracies, however, these same pressures are being compounded by an absence of needed resources and expertise. In these contexts, staff need to be trained on best practices and clients often require fundamental services such as computer and Internet training courses, newspaper clippings or briefing notes written in plain language. To cope with these realities, some parliaments are working closely with bilateral, regional and international partners such as the IPU or the Noria Program

to develop tailored services that are both compatible with available resources and sustainable over the longer term.

Several conference participants familiar with capacity-building programs for parliaments emphasized that recipient parliaments typically need guidance to identify their requirements. Equally important is the involvement of recipients at all stages – planning, organization, implementation and delivery – as well as a very clear understanding of client needs. This latter point was raised frequently, along with the point that parliamentary libraries and research services – whether small or large, well-funded or struggling with limited resources – need relevant and honest feedback to ensure that they are meeting the information needs of parliamentarians. With this in mind, it was urged that parliamentarians be regularly consulted with regard to their needs and interests.

The development of innovative products and services was another key theme throughout the day's deliberations.







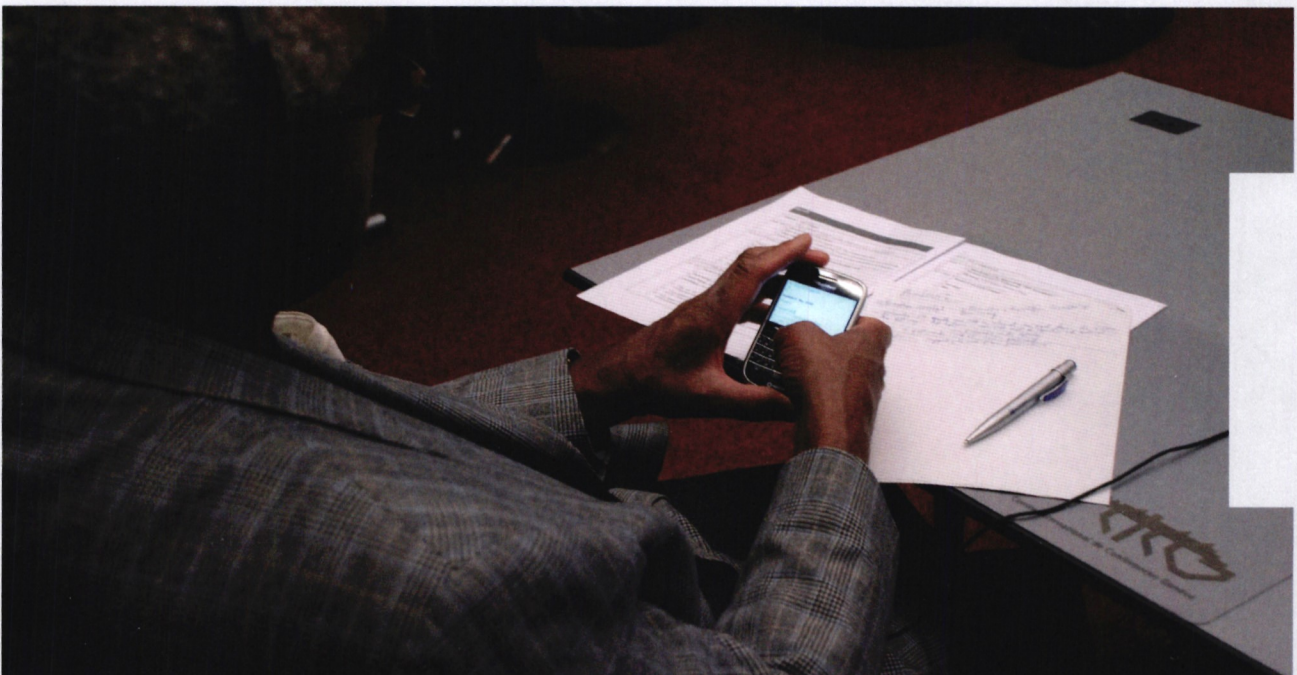


→ Several delegates noted that the aim of innovation should be to adapt to parliamentarians' needs; that said, the scale of such innovations depends entirely on an institution's capacity to manage and sustain the related initiatives. Indeed, as one delegate noted, small changes to current services and products can sometimes produce the most value.

All told, there was a broad consensus among delegates that the time has come to integrate the work of library and research services more closely. Parliamentarians – no matter their circumstances – require objective, non-partisan information and research to carry out their various and complex duties. These needs can best be provided by teams of well-trained and impartial information and research specialists working in collaboration to respond to the increasingly specialized needs of parliamentarians. In those instances where parliaments require assistance to build capacity and expertise, delegates urged that every effort be made to work through existing networks, partnerships and relevant funding sources to address such needs.

With these latter considerations in mind, two key recommendations emerged from the day's discussions:

1. The Informing Democracy conference must not be an end, but the beginning of an enduring engagement and partnership between the IPU, the ASGP, and IFLA's Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section. Participants suggested that these groups organize regional meetings to explore common challenges. They also called on them to formalize the sharing of information and best practices among parliaments by establishing a grant to be administered by IFLA's ALP program.
2. Several regional and international organizations provide various forms of support to parliaments and their library and research services. Enhanced coordination of initiatives undertaken by these groups would improve the sharing of best practices and resources as well as the quality and delivery of support.







## Inter-Parliamentary Union

Created in 1889, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the international organization of parliaments. The IPU is the focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and cooperation among peoples with a view to strengthening representative institutions.

The IPU promotes democracy, in particular by strengthening the institution of parliament. Over the years, it has helped to develop democratic principles of governance and international standards for free and fair elections, and has helped to strengthen parliamentary systems in more than 50 countries. It has developed guidelines for good practices in parliaments, and methods for assessing parliamentary performance.

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

## ASGP

### Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments

The Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP), constituted as a consultative body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, seeks to facilitate personal contacts between holders of the office of Secretary General in any parliamentary assembly, whether such assembly is a member of the IPU or not. ASGP membership is thus independent of the IPU.

It is the task of the Association to study the law, procedure, practice and working methods of different Parliaments and to propose measures for improving those methods and for securing co-operation between the services of different Parliaments. The Association also assists the Inter-Parliamentary Union, when asked to do so, on subjects within the scope of the Association. It functions in accordance with its own Rules and Working Methods.

[www.asgp.info](http://www.asgp.info)



### International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users. It is the global voice of the library and information profession.

#### The Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section

The parliamentary libraries of the world, as a distinct type of librarianship, form a Section of their own within IFLA. The purpose of the Section is to apply the general objectives of IFLA to the particular situation of legislative libraries and research services, the national legislatures in the case of unitary states and both national and second-tier legislatures in the case of federal countries.

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





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