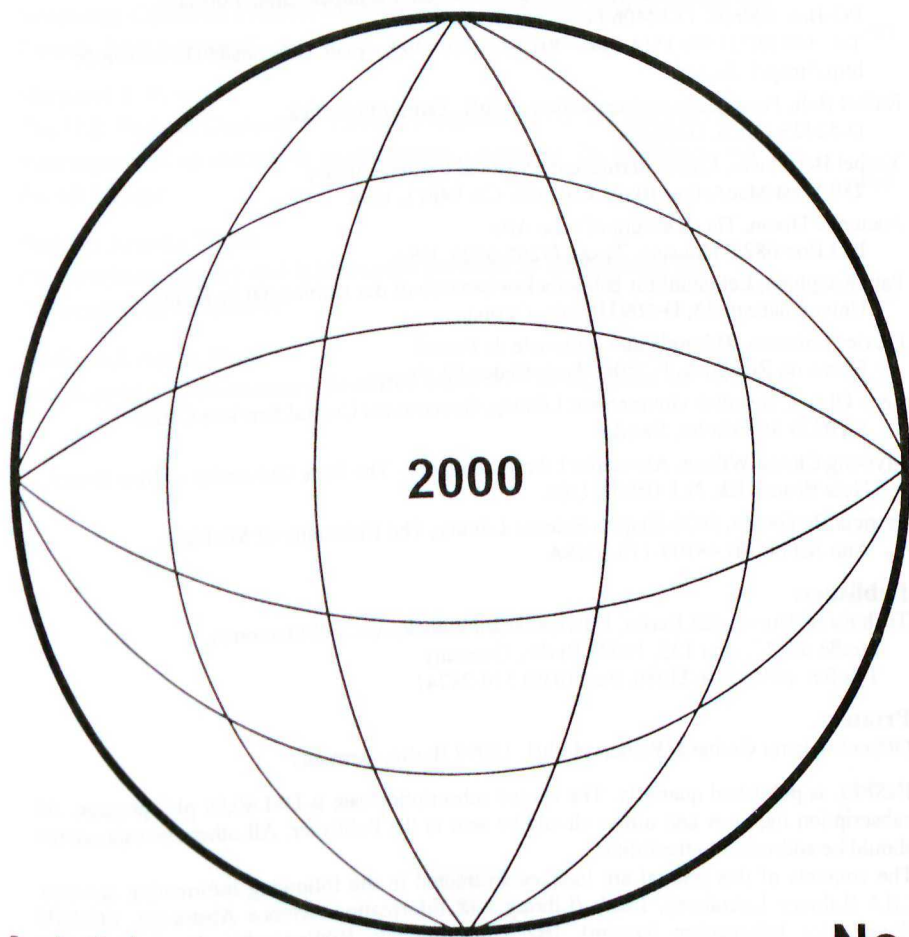


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# EVALUATION OF WEB-BASED LIBRARY INSTRUCTION PROGRAMS\*

By Tess Tobin & Martin Kesselman

## Purpose

The World Wide Web (WWW) is changing the way academic libraries teach and learn. Academic libraries have embraced the potential of the WWW developing innovative ways to meet the needs of users. One of these ways is to deliver automated bibliographic instruction in the form of web-based tutorials. This paper will review recommended guidelines for web-based instruction and will provide a framework for libraries worldwide in designing web-based instructional programs.

The stated purpose is to identify important design and evaluation criteria for web-based literacy/information instruction. Building on an initial investigation, the author examined library instruction literature to see what criteria was available for those wanting to create effective web-based training modules. The author also looked at non-library literature to find web-based training criteria, which was then compared to the criteria developed by library professionals. Over a two-year period, the author was able to note a progression and shift in the guidelines developed by library professionals, which reflects, not only, improvements in the technology itself, but a better understanding by librarians as to what elements are needed to structure an effective online bibliographic instruction program. The library guidelines were examined within the context of current research on bibliographic instruction to determine the usability or deficiency of the established criteria.

To date there are very few end-user studies in the library instruction literature regarding online tutorials. The last section of this paper will report on assessment and usability studies of web learning modules.

## Introduction

Computer scientists have been researching the principals behind effective interface design of computer applications since the 1940's. Stover and Zink report that with

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\* Paper presented at the 65th IFLA Council and General Conference Bangkok, Thailand, August 20-August 28, 1999. Workshop of the Section: Science and Technology Libraries: **Joint Meeting with:** User Education Library

the emergence of the World Wide Web in the early 1990's, organizations of all types are recognizing the importance of the World Wide Web as a tool, not only for gaining access to information, but also as a means of disseminating information about their activities, products, and services. <sup>1</sup>

Academic librarians have endorsed the possibilities of the WWW and first began to use web technology to create home pages, as starting points, or gateways for searching for information about the library. A home page reflects the institutional character of the university or college and is unique in that it gives the library the opportunity to express its own mission and philosophy.

With the growth of distance learning and the need to offer services to patrons off campus as well as in the library, the libraries needed to explore other ways to deliver library information skills. The WWW provides a dynamic environment for distributing information over a large network and web-based instruction is becoming the desired tool for these new users. In the web environment it doesn't matter if the user is connecting to library resources on the computer in the library, elsewhere on campus or from his/her home.

Developing an online module can be a challenge for many libraries. As librarians approach this task they should not overlook the groundwork laid by computer scientists in the field of computer interface design and computer/human interaction. The knowledge the instruction librarian brings to the task gathered from their classroom experiences and the findings from computer-assisted learning studies need to be considered when planning the design, content and evaluation of a web-based tutorial.

### **What is web-based instruction?**

Web-based training (WBT) is an innovative approach to distance learning in which computer-based training is transformed by the technologies and methodologies of the World Wide Web (WWW), the Internet, and Intranets.<sup>2</sup> It allows self-directed, self-paced instruction in any topic. WBT is media-rich training fully capable of evaluation, adaptation, and remediation that can provide the available tools to organize and deliver content into well-crafted teaching systems.

WBT has certain distinguishing characteristics, which makes it an ideal tool for bibliographic instruction. WBT is an interactive tool. It expands upon computer-

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<sup>1</sup> Stover, M. & Zink, S. World Wide Web Home Page Design Patterns and Anomalies in Higher Education Library Home Pages. RSR: Reference Services Review 24 (Fall1996). p. 8

<sup>2</sup> Web Information Center. <http://www.filename.com/wbt/pages/primer.htm>

based training with activities like discussion forums, mail lists and chat sessions. The user sets his/her pace and direction.

The library instruction literature points to active learning as the best means to deliver bibliographic instruction.<sup>3</sup> The interactivity component of WBT is a two-way interaction. The user inputs to the system and the system provides feedback that either reinforces the user or provides guidance for learning. This can be measured by having the user select the correct response and guide the user to continue if an incorrect response is made. WBT can also meet the needs of diverse populations and learning styles. The multi-media used with online training modules can help all types of learning styles - visual, verbal and aural.

Web-based training is not a collection of information pages. Presently, an examination of many library instruction pages shows that libraries have rushed to embrace this new technology and they are using it effectively. Some librarians have created multiple pages full of text with complete verbal explanations of the objectives of the desired library skills. These sites are uninteresting and do not involve the user. Creating a table of contents with links to full page documents is a misuse of the technology and not an interactive learning tool.

An interactive component such as a quiz or feedback form tests the user's knowledge and allows the librarian to determine the effectiveness of the learning. Without this component, the librarian cannot monitor the learning, and thus cannot adapt the module to best suit the learner. Assessing the modules and reviewing them to alleviate confusion and frustration will go a long way to help keep the learner motivated and more willing to work through the objectives and attain information literacy.

The content and objectives of the web-based tutorials examined for this study varies greatly. Some tutorials take the user through the physical layout of the library with maps and pictures. The next type of tutorial explains basic library skills and can offer a glossary of library terms. Another type of tutorial offers instruction on using the library's OPAC, and leads the user through the steps of locating books, magazines and other library materials. To be effective these tutorials should be learning modules that promote the institutional needs of the library and relate the information library skills the library wishes its users to achieve.

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<sup>3</sup> Designs for Active Learning: A sourcebook for Classroom Strategies for Information Education. Chicago: ALA. <http://www.bk.psu.edu/academic/library/istm/Designs.html>

The next level of tutorial presents the more conceptual aspects of information literacy. These are tutorials on the research process and evaluation of sources. Some of these tutorials review various library networked databases while explaining Boolean and keyword and subject searching techniques. Searching the Internet is a focus of many tutorials, along with interactive modules that offer guidelines on how to evaluate Internet sources. Each tutorial is different in design, content and instruction level, reflecting the personality and nature of each library.

### **Web Design and Evaluation Criteria by Library Professionals**

For librarians developing online instructional tutorials to supplement their bibliographic instruction programs, the web guidelines developed by the Library Instruction Round Table (LIRT)<sup>4</sup>, of the American Library Association should be considered. LIRT advocates library instruction as a means for developing competent library and information use as a part of lifelong learning. The LIRT homepage has links to the Top Ten Instruction Articles for the past three years, and links to Library Instruction Tutorials. In July, 1997 the LIRT Research Committee posted a page on Website Evaluation Criteria. At that time the three basic elements recommended by LIRT to include in a web page were access, design and content. This page has evolved and now is called Web Standards and Guidelines. The section on access is no longer an element since web browsers and servers have become quicker and more stable. The content and design elements are more brief and list technical points. The importance is on elements to avoid rather than offering standards on what makes up a good web page. The new addition to the page is "Procedural/Technical." This new element refers to HTML coding and resolution requirements and settings. The Web Standards and Guides are useful from a technical standpoint and instruction librarians should review them.

The *Instruction Section Teachings Methods Committee*,<sup>5</sup> a committee of the American Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) has also prepared web criteria for instruction. This committee is charged with providing a forum for librarians interested in both the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching methods. These guidelines are intended to help libraries' efforts in web-based instruction and are more pedagogical in nature and reflective of the committee's mission to have librarians be successful in their instructional endeavors. Since online instruction is a new format for many, the guidelines are thorough, and the design standards are in keeping with what constitutes a

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<sup>4</sup> American Library Association. Library Instruction Round Table. LIRT Library Instruction Tutorials: General Guides to Research. <http://diogenes.baylor.edu/Library/LIRT/lirtcrit.htm>

<sup>5</sup> American Library Association. ACRL. Teaching Methods Committee. <http://www.bk.psu.edu/academic/library/istm/index.html>

successful web-based training program. These guidelines, updated three times over the last two years, are keeping up with advances in the technology.

The original page included Access, Design and Layout, Content and Audience. Updates have been made and the standard on content now states that pages should be tight and concise - they convey 'just the facts' without excess verbiage. Many library tutorials are heavy on text. Web-based material should not read like a book. The presentation and delivery of online information have their own unique characteristics. Research indicates that the page will either capture the attention of the user or it will not.

The evaluation criteria for design is now divided into two parts. General Design and Layout covers some basic design elements to web page development. Large pages should be broken down into discrete pages. Graphics should help to convey information and not just be decorative; each page should have a clear title and includes headers and footers.

The newest standard, Design and Layout of Interactive Tutorial Material, incorporates interactivity into the tutorials. Exercises, which provide feedback and test whether the student has grasped the concepts, are needed. This supports the learning theory behind bibliographic instruction that the modules need to engage and promote active learning. Navigational mechanisms which allow learners to repeat or move around within the tutorial have proven to be more effective ways to present information so it is not only accessible, but it is retained.

Last but not least, the criteria considers the audience as a necessary element. The content and links should be suitable to the user. The site should address a particular facet of library instruction. This would mean that the page should clearly state the objectives and goals of the instruction unit being presented. It is important to note that the IS Teaching Methods Committee referred to the LIRT Web Standards along with the guidelines and evaluation criteria used by Argus Clearinghouse<sup>6</sup>, Cyberstacks<sup>7</sup> and the Reference Collection Development: A Manual<sup>8</sup> in selecting and revising their criteria.

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<sup>6</sup> Argus Clearinghouse Rating System. <http://www.clearinghouse.net/ratings.html>

<sup>7</sup> Cyberstacks. <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~CYBERSTACKS/signif.htm>

<sup>8</sup> American Library Association. RUSA. Reference Collection Development: A Manual. RASD Occasional Papers, Number 13 (1992.)



Another ACRL committee, the *Instruction Section Emerging Technology Committee*<sup>9</sup> has acted more as an information sharing vehicle and facilitator for librarians interested in sharing instructional materials that they have designed in a networked environment. One of the committee's projects is the ACRL/CNI Internet Education Project<sup>10</sup>, which has developed selection criteria used to review and evaluate instructional materials libraries wish to post on the web. The ten criteria statements require that the information is accurate, the material, content and language is clear, the material provides instruction using technology, the material makes effective use of good web design (graphics, examples, interactive elements) and the material enhances the learning experience. The committee has also created a Training Resources Bookmark<sup>11</sup> with links to numerous sites on web education, library instruction research and web design.

### **Web Design and Evaluation Criteria in Non-Library Sources**

Business organizations delivered instructional models via the web long before the library community. Large corporations, which have spent millions on training, have found more cost-effective and successful ways of teaching employees using this platform. Their experience and research in this arena is valuable to librarians planning web-based tutorials. There are many sites that cover web design for training, but there are two worth mentioning for this study.

Walt Howe has posted a series of articles called Web Page Quality<sup>12</sup> including Evaluating Quality, Producing Quality Web Page Content, and Creating Web Page Design which have been covered in the library guidelines. Test Your Pages is an important component that does not appear in any of the library guidelines up to now.

Another site useful for this study is the WBT Information Center<sup>13</sup>. The section Primer has rules for Good Web Design and The Development Process guides one through the essential steps for developing web-based training from user analysis, interface design, usability testing, instructional design, scripting and coding. The Center also has links to Web Style Guides, Discussion Groups and Articles and Position Papers on web-based training. This site is attractive and is one stop shopping for those interested in creating web instruction guidelines and materials.

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<sup>9</sup> American Library Association. ACRL. Emerging Technologies Home Page.  
<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~scholzcr/etech/>

<sup>10</sup> ACRL/CNI Internet Education Project. <http://www.cwru.edu/affil/cni/base/goals.html>

<sup>11</sup> Training Resources Bookmark. <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~scholzcr/etech/training.html>

<sup>12</sup> Web Quality Pages. <http://www.delphi.com/navnet/quality.html>

<sup>13</sup> Web Information Center. <http://www.filename.com/wbt/pages/primer.htm>

## **Assessment and Usability Studies**

Evaluating instructional programs is essential. This appears to be the step lacking from the library guidelines and is absent in 90% of the library tutorials examined. There is no one way to evaluate student learning, and librarians have struggled with this issue long before web-based instruction.

Assessment can take many forms. Librarians could do a pretest and a posttest. It could be an evaluation form distributed after the class or it could simply, be a question and answer session. These formats cannot be included in many web-based training programs due to constraints of the software.

Usability studies are one way to make formal evaluations. Time, money and staffing are required. At the recent Association of College and Research Libraries Annual Conference in Detroit, Michigan in the presentation, "The User is the Expert,"<sup>14</sup> three librarians reported on their experience using usability studies to inform gateway and tutorial web designs. The design should be user-centered and the methods to achieve can include the more costly but accurate testing methods of formal usability testing, focus groups, group testing and survey. Less costly and less accurate means are design walk-throughs, heuristic evaluation, card sorting, matching test or icon intuitiveness evaluation and field tests. Some of the results indicate that students try to assign meaning to colors, navigation through frames is tricky, and links outside the tutorials are confusing.

### **The IFLA Study**

The IFLA Study and presentation includes a detailed examination of these criteria while highlighting worldwide library websites that demonstrate effective use of these design features. The presentation will also review the library use of new web-based courseware products now on the market such as WebCT.

The Web is not a static environment and so any guidelines drawn up for web-based instruction have to change with the technology. The fact that these guidelines are being updated is a healthy sign that librarians are sharing the successes and the mistakes they have encountered when developing a web-based library. This is one of the best forms of evaluation. This is a sound progression and it is important that the focus of library instruction remains developing life-long learners and technology is the means to achieve this end.

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<sup>14</sup> The User is the Expert. Presentation ACRL Annual Conference, Detroit, MI, April 1999. <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~jveldof/ACRL99/iserdesin.html>

### ***Addendum: Standards and Evaluation Criteria Outside the United States***

The following are some projects outside the United States that are involved with teaching and learning in a networked environment:

- The Higher Education community of the United Kingdom has an initiative called the The Electronic Libraries Programmes (eLib). (<http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/services/elib/>) They have posted standard guidelines and recommendations for the selection and use of standards in eLib projects. (<http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/services/elib/papers/other/standards/>)
- The Tavistock Institute, which undertakes evaluation studies, produced the document, Guidelines for eLib Project Evaluation. Prepared by John Kelleher, Elizabeth Sommerlad and Elliot Stern this document provides useful guidelines for developing and implementing evaluation in individual eLib projects. (<http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/services/elib/papers/tavistock/evaluation-guide/intro.html#defining.>)
- NetLinkS, a U.K. Training and Awareness project supported by the Joint Information Systems Committee of the Higher Education Funding Council of England. Initially funded for one year, from September 1995, the project received further funding until May 1998. The NetLinkS Research Report is a detailed study of network learning. A link to other eLib projects throughout the United Kingdom is available from their home page. (<http://netways.shef.ac.uk/about/overview.htm>)
- Academic partnership in NLS resource design: a European case study by Jo Pye is a case study of European partner institutions concerned with electronic learning. This is a user needs analysis report addressing networked learner support in European partner institutions and development of an online course for librarians. This article was presented at the 2nd International Symposium on Networked Learner Support held in Sheffield, England in June 1997. (<http://netways.shef.ac.uk/rbase/papers/pye.htm>)
- DEDICATE is a good site with information on the development of distance education in Eastern Europe. The aim of the DEDICATE project is to develop cost-effective distance education courses in information literacy. The universities involved in this project are four library sites in Technological Universities in Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania and at the International Center for Information Management, Systems, and Services, in Torun, Poland. (<http://educate.lib.chalmers.se/DEDICATE/dedindex.html>)
- The Multimedia Education Unit at the University of Melbourne provides assistance to major educational projects aimed at transforming units, subjects or

whole courses with the use of multimedia and educational technology. They are developing some distance education course. (<http://www.meu.unimelb.edu.au/>)

- A web-based library education project worth looking at in Finland is one created by Irma Pasanen-Toumainen at Helsinki University of Technology. (<http://www.hut.fi/Yksikot/Kirjasto/Palvelut/Koulutus/Informatiikka>)

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## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH AND END USER WORK ENVIRONMENTS 2010\*

By Wilda B. Newman

**Abstract:** Research in Knowledge Management and collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University, Digital Knowledge Center will allow focus on the future work environment of the University as a whole. The sharing of resources, perspectives, ideas, concepts, and work environments will create a synergy for developing profiles of end users and their Knowledge Management environments. It will look at the published information environment, as well as the overall "information" environment of end users. The research will review how end users currently access and use information and develop future scenarios of end user profiles and how these are structured, from a Knowledge Management perspective.

The definition of Knowledge Management as defined by the Gartner Group states that: "Knowledge Management promotes an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, retrieving, sharing, and evaluating an enterprises information assets. These information assets may include databases, documents, policies, procedures, as well as the uncaptured tacit expertise and experience stored in individual's heads" ([www.gartner.com](http://www.gartner.com)). It also includes content management, best illustrated in the "traditional or industrial age library," as well as process flows in automated environments. Knowledge Management is a very broad umbrella and includes by necessity many people of diverse educational and experiential backgrounds. Many of these people are outside the field of Computer Science and are playing an important role in defining and developing the overall understanding of Knowledge Management.

The Milton S. Eisenhower Library at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) has established an R&D arm that includes the Digital Knowledge Center (DKC) to assist with the transition of the information environment into the new millennium. The transition of this environment includes information that is both published and unpublished, as well as information that is internal and external to the organization.

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\* Paper presented at the 65th IFLA Council and General Conference, Bangkok, Thailand, August 20 - August 28, 1999 – Workshop of the section: Library Theory and Research

The DKC has two major activities: (1) Evaluation of technology and determining where it is going and the limitations of that technology, and (2) Building collaborative relationships with other areas of the University in general. The DKC focuses are electronic pedagogy, electronic scholarship publishing, and emerging technology. The work proposed will take advantage of these focal points and promote a collaborative approach between the JHU Applied Physics Laboratory and the University as a whole in Knowledge Management.

The use of technology is prevalent throughout our facilities; however, we have yet to leverage that technology in ways that the organization begins to reap more fully the benefits that technology can assist in data, information, and knowledge delivery. This may mean internally produced content or externally produced content and include not only text and graphics but also multi-media, such as streaming video, digitized audio and real time content creation. Knowledge Management also includes procedures and processes that are related and embedded in the functional operations supportive of the infrastructure in the work that occurs as part of all divisions and levels of the University. For example, how will the executive, scientist, researcher, faculty or engineer conduct his or her business, make decisions and manage? How will the administrative, business, or secretarial employees interact in the new environments? And, how will the Program Manager differ in how he or she manages the program environment? In other words, we need to think not just about what we do now, but rather what we do and how we would like to do it in the future. This will require new concepts, tools, and strategies. Basic to this are the building blocks that include knowledge processes, organizational culture, knowledge support, and information technology infrastructure, as noted by Richard N. Fletcher, Principal, Energy Futures Research Associates, Dallas, Texas.

"The future Eisenhower Library will carry forward the digital and network revolutions in the creation, distribution and use of scholarly information but will also integrate a more market-based, customized and entrepreneurial approach to the packaging and delivery of information. The MSEL will become a center for research and development in the application of technology; an aggregator and publisher, and not just a consumer of scholarly information; a campus hub for working with faculty on the integration of technology and electronic resources into teaching and research; a national center for lifelong learning opportunities for information professionals; and a provider of information services to broader academic, research and business communities.

"This vision for the Eisenhower Library predicts a significant moderation in the cost increases for knowledge acquisition as the traditional model of scholarly

communication is replaced, a redefinition of the MSEL as a virtual resource not limited by time and space and so dependent on buildings for the housing and use of information, and a positioning of the Library as a successful competitor in the information market, and for corporate, foundation and federal investment."

Knowledge Management has many definitions, but is generally acknowledged to be the next "age" or revolution, in businesses and organizations and is seen as a discipline. The concept behind Knowledge Management is applying an environment of management to the most valuable asset of an organization, its knowledge. The research proposed will pursue Knowledge Management as previously defined, that is, as an integrated approach to information assets. These may include databases, documents, policies, procedures, tacit expertise and experience, as well as content management. Collaboration with the Eisenhower Library's Digital Knowledge Center will allow focus on the future work environments of the University as a whole. Further, sharing resources, perspectives, ideas, concepts, and work environments will create a synergy for developing profiles of end users and their Knowledge Management environments. To accomplish this research the following tasks are identified.

### **Tasks**

- Task - 1 Research the field of Knowledge Management and arrive at a recommended definition for JHU/APL and the University as a whole.
- Task - 2 Interview end users relative to how they work now and how they would like or need to work in the future, with the support of automation, in order to develop end user profiles, current and future.
- Task - 3 Develop VISION 2010 scenarios for end users with the DKC, including the Executive Manager, the Faculty, the Program Manager, the Scientist, the Researcher, the Student, the Administrative Support, and others as perceived.
- Task - 4 Based on the research and work with the Eisenhower Library and the DKC recommend an approach/es for APL and the University for Knowledge Management 2010, including system development and application access.
- Task - 5 This task will be used to assess the research project on Knowledge Management for the Laboratory and the University overall.

An Advisory Group will be formed that includes staff from the University, as well as the APL, including the Director for Research and Exploratory Development. The Advisory Group will be given regular status reports on the work as it progresses and will be asked for feedback on the process.

The JHU/APL is committed to the field of Knowledge Management with the work of the Research and Technical Development Center and the establishment of an Information Operations Program Development Office, and is one of the Laboratory's strategic plan areas for increased focus in new business development

The DKC at the Eisenhower Library offers a significant opportunity for additional research and collaboration in Knowledge Management, with likely benefits of feeding the efforts of the Laboratory directly, as well as supporting the strategic initiative of APL in its goal to further benefit the government and commercial sectors, while directly supporting the University as a whole. This field is a broad discipline with multiple layers in both depth and breadth, and will require people from many different perspectives for an organization like the Johns Hopkins University to meet the challenge of this next information era.

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## **INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OF OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS\***

**By Johannes Metz**

**Abstract:** International exchange agreements potentially serve to facilitate the free access to official materials from abroad, similar to depository programs for national official publications collections and with corresponding issues of collecting and archiving electronic publications. In this connection, we have to distinguish between exchange relations of individual institutions and those of States intending to inform each other of their activities as expressed in government publications. Therefore, this report mainly aims to review the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention of 1958 Concerning the International Exchange of Official Publications and Government Documents between States, considering its most important statements and determinations as well as describing the practice of their implementation in Germany by the responsible Exchange Centre in the Berlin State Library.

### **Preliminary Note**

It is the object of this report to review the concept and the legal foundations of the international exchange of official publications, as well as to describe their implementation by the German Exchange Centre which is part of the Berlin State Library. With respect to the future of international exchanges, there are much the same questions and problems as regards national depository programs, and there are corresponding deliberations as to how they can be resolved.

As technology develops and world-wide networking increases, new methods are applied to the exchange of official information between states. It is all the more important therefore to provide free access to such information in electronic format, not only at home, but also in at least some central places abroad set up for that purpose. The central idea in international exchanges is that each participating country will obtain official material from its exchange partner in order to provide it directly to its own domestic users. At least, this will be the case when foreign publications remain in the library where the exchange centre is situated, instead of being distributed to various institutions around the country.

It will not do to have Internet access to foreign material if it remains uncertain how long documents will be retained on these databases. Even if long-term access is

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secured, it might still be preferable to collect foreign public documents in electronic formats in order to have an independent and continuous collection for future historical research. Governments and their political interests change, and authorities are established only to vanish again. Using electronic collections in national libraries, for example, requires that the libraries themselves receive and store everything and are able to guarantee permanent access under varying technical conditions. Moreover, it must be remembered that peaceful, friendly relations between nations are also subject to change. If this reality is fully appreciated in central government documents libraries, it means that texts available on the Internet should be downloaded, copied or printed out, and entered into the general or the special electronic publications collections. However, at present the exchange is still largely following traditional ways, with CD-ROMs and diskettes being distributed in the same manner as conventional printed material. In order to preserve them, they have to be recopied from time to time, like all other electronic formats. But there are additional problems of maintaining the respective software necessary for reading such publications (e.g. Adobe Acrobat Reader).

### **The 1958 UNESCO Conventions**

Let me now describe the current international legal basis of international exchanges the principles of which may also be valid for the future. At its tenth session, on 3 December 1958, the General Conference of the UNESCO in Paris adopted two conventions: the Convention Concerning the International Exchange of Publications, and the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Official Publications and Government Documents between States. It would take too long to enter into the preceding discussions and negotiations, above all of the conferences of experts organized by the Directorate-General of UNESCO in February 1956 and May/June 1958, as interesting as this might be. I want however to mention the following points.

Originally, a single Convention for the exchange of official and non-official publications had been scheduled. On the suggestion of France, it was finally decided to adopt two separate Conventions, thus emphasizing the distinction between "official" and general "scientific" exchanges. The second case applies to individual exchange relations between institutions (including official bodies) which are merely to be encouraged and facilitated by the Contracting States, whereas in the first case the Contracting States engage themselves (within the reservations following from the Convention) to enter into exchange relations in order to inform each other on their activities as expressed in government publications.

The new Conventions were destined to replace the earlier "Convention for the International Exchange of Official Documents, Scientific and Literary Publications", concluded in Brussels in 1886<sup>1</sup>, which had turned out to be inadequate. Its main defect was that the participating states were obliged to exchange all their official publications with each other, in consequence of which a number of important states, such as France, Germany, Great Britain, and the USSR, did not accede. Besides, the Brussels Convention was criticized for its vague and out-of-date definition of official exchange material which included apart from "official documents, parliamentary and administrative, which are published in the country of their origin" also all "works executed by the order and at the expense of the governments". This appeared to be problematic above all with regard to those countries where book production was largely financed with public funds. However, in the deliberations for the new Convention concerning official publications, the authors also refrained from attempting a more exact definition of this term.

Let us consider the most important statements and determinations of the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Official Publications and Government Documents between States<sup>2</sup>. This term alone expresses already that direct exchange relations between the Contracting States are concerned. The principles of these exchange relations are put down in Articles 1 to 3. In Article 1, "the Contracting States express their willingness to exchange their official publications and government documents, on a reciprocal basis, in accordance with the provisions of the present Convention". The formula "express their willingness" avoids the direct commitment of individual states to enter into exchange relations with all other Contracting States, circumventing the problem inherent in the Brussels Convention of 1886. Thus, the unanimous adoption of the Convention by the General Conference of UNESCO and its subsequent ratification or acceptance

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<sup>1</sup> On 15 March 1886 in Brussels, two international exchange conventions were concluded, the "Convention A for the International Exchange of Official Documents, Scientific and Literary Publications" which is treated here, and the "Convention B for the Immediate Exchange of Official Journals, Public Parliamentary Annals and Documents", in which the governments concerned engaged themselves besides to transmit one copy each of the publications mentioned as soon as published to the "legislative chambers of each Contracting State". Among the contracting states of both conventions in 1886 were Belgium, Brazil, Italy, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, the U.S.A., and (only signatory to Convention A) Switzerland. - For the text of the Conventions, cf. Handbook on the International Exchange of Publications. Manuel des échanges internationaux de publications. ... 3rd edition. Paris: UNESCO, 1964, pp.61-62 (English versions of the French original texts; Russian versions are on pp. 302-303).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the Law of 20 May 1969 on the Convention of 5 December 1958 Concerning the Exchange of Official Publications and Government Documents between States, in: Bundesgesetzblatt [Federal Law Journal], Part II, 1969, pp. 997-1011.

by the States implies nothing more, from a legal point of view, than informal assent to the reciprocal exchange of official publications. Still, it implies support for establishing and implementing such exchange relations with individual states. Accordingly, our Exchange Service in Berlin when establishing new exchange relations, in each case points out that the exchange is taking place in accordance with the definitions of this Convention, even when dealing with those states which have not yet acceded to the Convention. Relating to the "reciprocal basis", it should be noted that with all exchange relations the principle of balanced shipments is always maintained. This regulation guides the volume of exchanges. The individual state may contribute additional material, especially when they have an interest in maintaining a presence in the other country.

Article 2 presents a "Definition of Official Publications and Government Documents" without pretending to be exhaustive, giving a general idea of the objects of exchange. This is done by the enumeration of typical official publications, as eventually agreed upon in the preparatory expert talks, namely "parliamentary documents, reports and journals and other legislative papers; administrative publications and reports from central, federal and regional governmental bodies; national bibliographies, State handbooks, bodies of law, decisions of the Courts of Justice; and other publications as may be agreed". The expression "and other publications ..." encourages inclusion of any additional documents regarded as official in individual countries and therefore liable for exchange. At all events, the publications concerned have to be "executed by the order and at the expense of any national government authority". This narrow definition of official materials was taken almost word by word from the Brussels Convention of 1886, where it appeared however in another context. In the new Convention, it precedes all items listed as examples of "official" materials. In my opinion, this definition is highly problematic, as there may very well be official publications only partly or indirectly financed by public funds. The decisive question should be the official status of the issuing or ordering agency regardless of its financial involvement. In normal practice, this will hardly make a difference, as exchange partners will offer only such publications which pass for "official" in their own country. Anyway, according to Article 2.2, the Contracting States are generally "free to determine the official publications and government documents which shall constitute exchange material"; excluded however are "confidential documents, circulars and other items which have not been made public" (Article 2.3).

Special weight is carried by Article 3 which determines that "the Contracting States, whenever they deem it appropriate, shall enter into bilateral agreements for the purpose of implementing the present Convention and regulating matters of

common concern arising out of its application". This means "formal" inter-governmental agreements normally concluded by the exchange of notes. The alternative are direct "informal" arrangements or the conclusion of so-called "administrative agreements" between the exchange authorities. In any case, bilateral agreements - in whatever form - are necessary to set in motion the exchange between the individual Contracting States, especially since the Convention leaves the clarification of certain questions, like the publications due for exchange, to such agreements. In connection with Article 1, they are also required from the legal point of view, as only then is the "willingness" replaced by a commitment to the exchange of official publications. Informal arrangements are generally realized by an exchange of letters, one side proposing to establish exchange relations, and the other side accepting. Arrangements on available and requested material will then be effected by subsequent correspondence. It should be noted that for all practical purposes it has no effect on either volume or quality of exchange relations whether they have been established by government agreement or by informal arrangement. To be sure, an informal exchange arrangement may be terminated just as informally by either side, whereas a government agreement has normally to be cancelled through diplomatic channels. In some countries, exchange centres may prefer a government agreement in order to facilitate procuring publications for exchange purposes.

The following Articles are concerned with technical realization of the exchange. According to Article 4, "in each Contracting State, the national exchange service or, where no such service exists, the central authority or authorities designated for the purpose, shall carry out the functions of exchange". These "exchange authorities shall be responsible within each Contracting State for the implementation of the present Convention and of bilateral agreements as referred to in Article 3, whenever appropriate". For that purpose, they shall be given "the powers required to obtain the material to be exchanged and sufficient financial means to carry out the functions of exchange". The exchange centers must have the authority and resources, including access to copies, to fulfill their responsibilities. A clear set of national procedures is the prerequisite. These procedures may well provide funds for purchase of the exchange copies required. However, the primary intent of Convention is for national decrees to supply free copies for exchange purposes. At all events, I understand the text of the Article to the effect that it is obliging the Contracting States to provide "sufficient financial means" not in order to obtain exchange material, but primarily to maintain the functions of the exchange centre itself, inclusive shipping costs etc. The essential matter is that each side supply its own official publications (including parliamentary papers) as arranged. There are no regulations for handling received materials. Many exchange

offices in national or parliamentary libraries will retain them in their own collections but, of course, they are free to redirect any publications received on exchange terms to other domestic libraries or official bodies which, in such cases, should also make them available to the public and guarantee long-term preservation and access.

Article 5 states that "the List and number of official publications and government documents for exchange shall be agreed between the exchange authorities of the Contracting States", and that this list and the number of documents "may be modified by arrangements between such authorities". In practice, however, this usually means that each side lists current official periodicals and serials in an offer of exchange material, and that this list will be modified unilaterally if certain publications cease to be published or for any other reason are no more available for exchange, and also if additional publications are offered. I think this practice will likewise come to apply to electronic documents.

Articles 6 to 9 address questions of transmission and transport of exchange material. "Transmissions may be made directly to exchange authorities or to recipients named by them." The cost of transmission as far as destination shall be borne, as a rule, by the exchange authority concerned, "but for transport by sea, the cost of packing and carriage shall be paid only as far as the customs office of the port of arrival". In this connection, the Contracting States are obliged to "take all the necessary measures to ensure that the exchange authorities benefit from the most favourable existing rates and transport conditions, whatever the means of transport chosen: post, road, rail, inland or sea transport, airmail or air cargo". Furthermore, they shall "grant its exchange authorities exemption from customs duties for both imported and exported material under the provisions of the present Convention or under any agreement in implementation thereof and shall accord them the most favourable treatment as regards customs and other facilities".

The remaining Articles 10 to 22 of the Convention mainly refer to administrative or legal details. I should like to mention here only Articles 15.1 and 16: The Convention "shall be subject to ratification or acceptance by States members" of UNESCO, "in accordance with their respective constitutional procedures". It "shall be open for accession by all States not members of the Organization invited to do so by the Executive Board" of UNESCO.

As of 31 December 1993, 50 states have either ratified, accepted or acceded to this Convention, among them recently: Estonia (ratification in 1993), Lithuania

(acceptance in 1993), the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Georgia, and Tajikistan (notifications of succession in 1992 and 1993, respectively).<sup>3</sup>

### **International Exchange of Official Publications in Germany**

Finally, I should like to report briefly on the exchange of official publications as practiced in the Federal Republic of Germany. The central exchange authority responsible for the implementation of the UNESCO Convention is the Department Official Publications and International Exchanges (Abteilung Amtsdrukschriften und Internationaler Amtlicher Schriftentausch) of the Berlin State Library. The ratification of the Convention by the Federal Republic did not take place until 1969.<sup>4</sup> This comparatively late ratification is connected with the participation of the federal States in the ratification procedure, as provided by the federal system of government in Germany, since according to Article 2.1 of the Convention not only publications from central governmental bodies, but also those from "federal and regional" bodies are covered by the exchange.

For the exchange transactions of the Department, there are decrees of the Federal and most of the State governments regulating the delivery of free copies of their publications (whatever the mode of publication) for international exchange purposes to the Berlin State Library or to the Department concerned, allowing requests of up to 20 copies (in the Federal decree) or up to 10 copies (in the State decrees). Parliamentary papers (Federal Council, House of Parliament, State Parliaments), although not covered by the decrees of the "executive", are likewise supplied free for exchange purposes. All these regulations enable the Department to make up a List of Current Official Periodicals and Series of the Federal Republic of Germany which are available for Exchange. This List is revised from time to time when titles which ceased to be published or are no longer available for exchange are cancelled and eventually replaced by new, suitable ones. Quite recently, some problems arose when individual federal agencies were repeatedly reluctant to supply copies, especially when additional copies had to be requested due to new demands from exchange partners. In such cases, the Department usually points out that it can exercise the functions of the International Official Exchange for the Federal Republic of Germany only if supply of the publications of the federal institutions concerned is guaranteed in the quantity required. A loophole in these arrangements, contained both in the federal and state decrees, permits restriction in the supply of publications for budgetary reasons, in particular "unacceptable" or "unjustifiable" encumbrance of the budget. The federal decree

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO's Standard-Setting Instruments. V.1.A.2. Paris 1980, including suppl. 3 (1994).

<sup>4</sup> See note 2.

leaves undefined when an "unacceptable budget encumbrance" has to be considered. The state decrees are more specific, referring to the production costs of the individual item. We can suppose that the federal decree is also based on the same idea. In my opinion, an unacceptable budget encumbrance can be an excuse only if it concerns a very expensive publication, but not on account of the total quantity of exchange copies. Otherwise, the margin of up to 20 possible copies would not make any sense. In view of the restriction mentioned above, CD-ROMs or diskettes are still not offered in our official exchange list, even if they may partly be available for exchange purposes.

At present, exchange relations with thirty-eight states are maintained, with ten of these states based on bilateral agreements (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Israel, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.A.), with the others on informal arrangements or "administrative agreements" with the exchange centres concerned, frequently National Libraries (outside of Europe, among others: Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan). Until 1995 and 1998 respectively, we also had exchange relations with Australia and South Africa. Being informal agreements or arrangements, they could be cancelled by our partners without notice. The National Library of Australia (Canberra) gave as reason its new collecting priorities, which emphasize materials from the Asia Pacific region. The South African State Library (Pretoria) referred to a declining budget as well as a new collection policy and informed us that they had terminated all their exchange agreements for materials in languages other than English.

As I already mentioned, official publications received in exchange are as a rule not passed on to other German institutions, but are collected in the State Library and are here made available without restrictions to visiting users and by inter-library loan. Volume and contents of incoming foreign materials are determined by the exchange partner. This corresponds to the terms of the UNESCO Convention and to the practice in bilateral arrangements, irrespective of their form. For this reason, the exchange of official publications between states varies very much both in quality and quantity. Of primary importance are parliamentary papers, law gazettes, statistical reports and other publications of ministries and central state institutions. The selection of foreign publications is made by the Department by means of supply lists and national bibliographies, among other sources. From the United States, Canada, and Japan, the Department receives the "full set", which is to say a comprehensive set of publications from the respective country. With respect to Canada, the Berlin State Library has the status of a Full Depository Library. U.S. publications (from the Federal Government and the Congress only) since 1982 have been supplied 95% in the form of microfiche. Because of its volume, this collection is not catalogued, but stored in a body inside the



Department, arranged according to the "Superintendent of Documents classification number".

Objects of the exchange are chiefly current periodicals and series. As a rule, "print media" (paper editions and microforms) form the bulk of the material. In some cases, diskettes (partly as accompanying material) and CD-ROMs are received. Since 1996 the Library of Congress in Washington has been supplying U.S. official publications, including statistical and other materials from nearly all departments of the Federal Government, on CD-ROM. Although the number of items supplied and received should normally be approximately balanced, it is true that with those countries supplying a full set of publications, their publications considerably exceed those supplied by Germany. However, in the light of the rapid expansion of electronic publishing and Internet access the future of the full sets is uncertain. Similar to the United States, which is in transition to an electronic Depository Library Program, Canada is remodelling its Depository Services Program, introducing "resource" libraries with special responsibilities for electronic information.<sup>5</sup> At present, only Canadian institutions are concerned, so we do not yet know how it will affect foreign and exchange programs. A number of Canadian federal government publications are offered only on the Internet, among them "low demand titles" of Statistics Canada. On our request, the IP address of a PC in our Department has been added to the access file of the Depository Services Program (DSP) in order to have free web access to all the titles in the DSP's collection of electronic publications, including those of Statistics Canada.

An exchange of official publications with as many countries as possible is in practice prohibitive, for reasons of different interests, political systems, languages, and cultures, unless there are traditional relations to the countries concerned. The Department is above all anxious to conclude exchange treaties with those European countries with which as yet no exchange relations exist. The continuing difficulties have different reasons. For instance, in some National Libraries bottlenecks in their personnel and budget situation will not allow at present the implementation of exchanges, or it is impossible to procure sufficient free copies of official publications for exchange purposes. Problems may also develop when the Exchange of Publications between States and the "institutional" exchange of the State Library with central and east European national libraries overlap, as these libraries sometimes do not know how to separate the different kinds of exchange or else do not distinguish between official and non-official publications. Therefore,

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. the report of Vivienne Monty (Chair of the Depository Services Remodelling Committee): Proposal for a revised Model Depository System, June 2, 1998.

our Department is in close contact with the East European Department of our Library to find practical solutions for offers or requisitions for non-official publications.

The philosophy of the Exchange of Official Publications between States is "the free exchange of ideas and knowledge among the peoples of the world" (preamble of the Convention). From a practical point of view, the purpose of exchange programs is to insure that in participating countries there are designated, comprehensive collections of foreign official publications. Without these programs, such collections are unlikely to exist, due to decreasing budgets, the low priority of foreign official publications in collection plans, and sometimes inadequate bibliographic control. At any rate, the establishment of the International Exchange of Official Publications cannot serve its purpose if the states which joined in the Convention do not provide to their exchange authority the necessary number of free copies or corresponding funds for their procurement. This will apply as well to the exchange of government information in the electronic age. The methods may change, but not the obligations and purposes as laid down in the Convention.

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# ACCESSING CANADIAN FEDERAL INFORMATION: A DEPOSITORY PROGRAM FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY?\*

By Bruno Gnassi

## Introduction

Robert Hewison once remarked that the turn of a century raises expectations, but that the end of a millennium promises apocalypse as well as revelation.<sup>1</sup> It seems appropriate six months not only from the end of the decade and the century, but the millennium, that we look both backward to the past and forward to the future.

Two years into the new millennium, Canada's Depository Services Program (DSP) will celebrate its 75th anniversary. Three quarters of century of service and existence is no small feat. The life cycles of government programs are generally measured in days and years rather than decades and centuries.

The Depository Services Program (DSP) is probably one of the Canadian government's oldest programs. It makes some sense then to stop, and take stock of where it stands now that it is on the verge of the millennium.

The last two decades have dramatically altered the environment in which the Depository Services Program operates. The old familiar and comfortable paradigms on which it was based have disappeared. In their place, the DSP confronts both conceptual challenges and opportunities.

The fact of the matter may be that the time has come to consider whether Canada's Depository Services Program is moving into the autumn of its existence. This question needs to be faced not only because others are asking it, but also because its time has come.<sup>2</sup> The inescapable reality for the DSP is that the changing face of

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Andrews ed., *Cassell Dictionary of Contemporary Quotations*, London: Cassell, 1996, first published in paperback 1998, p.169, *Fin de siècle*, no. 3

<sup>2</sup> Prudence S. Adler, "Electronic Access to Government Information: evolving role of depository libraries", paper given at EBSCO subscription services' 10th Annual Executive Seminar, 1998: American Library Association Mid winter meeting, Birmingham, Alabama, in Birmingham, Alabama: EBSCO Subscription Services, *VANTAGE POINT SERIES*, Legislative and Institutional Changes - New approaches, n.d., p. 5

Government information and service delivery may well be issuing a final curtain call. Government funding remains scarce. Faced with conflicting demands, government may well feel that the DSP is no longer required, especially now that we are swiftly moving towards the first true full electronic era. What I propose to do in this paper is to examine the Program's position at the close of the decade and to reflect on its future. Should there, will there, be a DSP six months from today as we turn the page on the decade?

### **The Depository Model - the challenge of change: a new paradigm**

The last twenty years have recast many, if not all, of the assumptions that have shaped the familiar world of government publishing. Information technology, the decentralisation of government authority, and the separation of government's information generation activities from the centralised procurement of information services have altered forever the environment in which Canada's Depository Services Program operates.

The Canadian federal Depository Program faces a publishing landscape that is far removed from the assumptions that founded it in 1927 when the depository model could count on the weight of the Crown's common printing service to ensure that it had access to the products needed to meet its mandate. Even in 1991, when the Treasury Board of Canada repatriated to federal departments and agencies responsibility for providing the DSP with priced information products, no one could have guessed at the siren call the Internet would exercise on departmental autonomy, publishing patterns, and operational visions. The almost total devolution of the production, printing and warehousing of government information to private sector interests, and federal departments, may have been prefigured, but it was still a full seven years away.

The big issues for the Depository Services Program during this period were the growing impact of data bases and cd-rom on depository access, the failure of certain departments to respond to depository requirements, the need to ensure its operational efficiency and to reconcile its requirements with the commercial ones of its host.<sup>3</sup> Today, devolution is a fait accompli. The Canada Communication Group, the official printer of the Canadian government, no longer exists. The Internet, the WEB, and electronic information are fundamental components of the

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<sup>3</sup> See Task Group on Depository Program Review, Partners in access: report of the Task Group on Depository Program Review, Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1991

federal government's information dissemination strategy, and government information has moved far beyond the limits of a single producer or player.<sup>4</sup>

### **Access and Preservation - the key**

The challenge of ensuring equitable access is no longer simply a question of positioning resources geographically and using the distribution principles of the depository model to achieve this. It is not uncommon now with the presence of entrenched community access points through federal initiatives such as Industry Canada's Community Access and Schoolnet programs to find libraries and users exploiting Canadian government information resources to which they would have had little or no access in the past.<sup>5</sup> By the end of decade virtually all of Canada's public libraries and schools will be linked to the Internet. Some thirty percent of Canadians are currently Internet enabled either through their work place, their home, or through library intermediaries, and the number is growing. Just recently, International Data Corp. (Canada), a Toronto based computer consulting firm, reported that its surveys suggest that fifty (50%) of Canadian households now have at least one person with Internet access this way.<sup>6</sup>

Information technology has both enhanced and complicated our ability to reach out and connect with government information. The joint Depository Services Program and Statistics Canada Electronic Publications Pilot study amply demonstrates that hardware, training, human resource issues, capacity, and even the suitability of the choice of electronic medium, continue to make reliance on government electronic information an interesting challenge for Canadian depositories and users alike.<sup>7</sup>

As more and more Canadian federal information migrates to electronic format only, it is critical that Canada's federal departments and agencies appreciate and understand the implications of this for Canadian libraries and users. The Dolan and Vaughan study of the state of readiness of Canadian depository libraries to use electronic information, and the DSP/Statistics Canada own joint Electronic Publications Pilot study, forcefully document the enthusiasm with which Canadian

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<sup>4</sup> Susan M. Ryan, "Square peg in a round hole: electronic information and the Federal Depository Library Program", *Journal of Government Information*, Vol. 24., no. 5, 1997, p. 362

<sup>5</sup> Bruno Gnassi., *Virtually yours: Canadian government information on the Internet*, International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), September 2, 1997, Government and Official Publications Section (GIOPS), paper no. 3, p.11

<sup>6</sup> See *LibraryNet Monthly* (May 1999), "Internet Milestone: 50% of Canadians connected", URL: <http://www.shcoolnet.ca/ln-rb/e/Inmonth/index.html>

<sup>7</sup> See Pamela Ramage, Kathryn Mowat and Fay Hjartarson, *Electronic Publications Pilot 1996/97: final report*, Ottawa: Statistics Canada and Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1999, catalogue no. 11-534-XPE

depositories generally support digital resources. However, they also confirm the need for Canadian federal departments and agencies to realise that electronic resources still compliment rather than replace traditional formats, and that electronic resources bring with them format limitations, demands for additional support, and concerns about their availability in the future that must not be ignored.<sup>8</sup>

Easily tracing, finding, and gaining access to electronic resources is no less important than bandwidth and the accessibility of computers in this equation.<sup>9</sup> Guaranteeing longevity is even more fundamental.

By its very nature the Internet is transient and transparent. Web sites evolve and change. They come and go. Content is up dated and discarded, and context is lost. Researchers who traditionally have relied on this information to build on previous knowledge increasingly find that it is not there. Inadequate indexing, the volume of information on the Internet, and the inefficiency of search engines compounds the problem and often makes it a challenge to locate the documents needed.<sup>10</sup> As the authors of the Electronic Publications Pilot report point out: "One hundred year old print products are accessible and readable, but will that be true for electronic publications in future?"<sup>11</sup>

Canada's federal departments and agencies clearly bear some responsibility for ensuring the preservation and archiving of their information. Canada's National Archives and National Library Acts as well as the Canadian federal government's own internal information management policies ensure this. Yet, to rely solely on the departments and agencies to achieve preservation of our digital documentation ignores that they are "about operations, about getting the word out to the populace and about interactions that occur as agencies form rules and do work".<sup>12</sup> Concerns about such things as preservation do rarely enter into this equation. Like many,

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<sup>8</sup> See *ibid.* Also Elizabeth Dolan and Liwen Vaughan, *Electronic Access to Canadian Federal Government Information: how prepared are the Depository libraries?*, Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1998

<sup>9</sup> Clifford Lynch, "Electronic Access to Government Information: evolving role of depository libraries", paper given at EBSCO subscription services' 10th Annual Executive Seminar, 1998: American Library Association Mid winter meeting, Birmingham, Alabama, in Birmingham, Alabama: EBSCO Subscription Services, VANTAGE POINT SERIES, Legislative and Institutional Changes - New approaches, n.d., p. 9-10

<sup>10</sup> Andrea Severson and Helen Sheehy, "The European Union on the internet: a vanishing record?", *European Information: the journal of the European Information Association*, issue 1, January, 1998, p. 8

<sup>11</sup> Pamela Ramage, Kathryn Mowat and Fay Hjartarson, *op. cit.*, p. 11

<sup>12</sup> Clifford Lynch, *op. cit.*, p. 10

Canadian federal departments and agencies look primarily to others to carry this burden.

As crucial as government information may be to success within the market place, in this environment, it tends to be discarded as soon as it is up dated or its immediate purpose is satisfied. Ultimately, only historians, economists, scholars, researchers and librarians have an interest in permanence. However, it is just as clear, that libraries can not be expected to carry the burden of preservation alone.<sup>13</sup>

Decisions about the permanence and accessibility of content must now be made before material is removed from a server. In addition, decisions about the value of preserving the artifact as well as its content must be tackled. Data redundancy to ensure against loss and the fair distribution of this role must also be considered.<sup>14</sup> A single institution may well be technically in a position to take on the full archiving and preservation role but is this practical, wise, or affordable? A partnership of both government institutions and the library community will likely be needed to resolve these questions effectively.

### **Other factors shaping the agenda - the Service Canada initiative**

Government departments and agencies may originally have conceived of information technology as a way to reduce costs only, but they are now looking beyond what Clifford Lynch labels "indulging in static publishing". Web pages, data bases and dynamic material do not easily or readily give themselves over to a framework some would qualify as paper based.<sup>15</sup> In Canada, the all too familiar refrain that "government should digitise all its paper, put it on the Internet, and so push off the cost of access and remote printing directly to intermediaries and end users" is gradually giving way to a new vision. Canadian federal departments and agencies now see information technology increasingly as a way to engage the citizen directly in a two-way discourse.<sup>16</sup>

Recent Canadian government studies indicate that Canadians have a much more ambiguous and remote relationship to their federal government than in the past. They are unhappy with the lack of coherence and integration amongst Canadian government services and programs. They are also frustrated with the difficulty they have in making use of them. 'Connecting with Canadians' has become a major

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<sup>13</sup> Clifford Lynch, *ibid.*, p.10. See also Pamela Ramage, Kathryn Mowat and Fay Hjartarson, *op. cit.*, p. 19-20

<sup>14</sup> Andrea Severson and Helen Sheehy, *op. cit.*, p. 9-10

<sup>15</sup> Clifford Lynch, *op. cit.*, p. 9-11

<sup>16</sup> Clifford Lynch, *ibid.*, p. 9

preoccupation of Canada's federal government as it struggles to find a cost-effective way to address these complaints.<sup>17</sup>

Information technology, and the services it supports, is the new cement and mortar that the Canadian government hopes will make it possible for it to be present, visible and immediate to its citizens. It is conceived as the backbone that will link departments and agencies seamlessly to provide timely, accurate, single window service and information. To achieve this, the Canadian federal government recently launched Service Canada with a mandate to create " a strong horizontal management structure". It is also to foster coordination, partnerships and alliances amongst federal departments and agencies, and to champion citizen centred integrated service delivery.<sup>18</sup> For example, it is set to launch a number of pilots with Canadian federal departments such as Human Resources Development Canada and the Canada Post Office which will establish a network of walk-in centres in rural, remote, and select urban communities across Canada. These centres will offer both self-service and personal assistance, and will rely on the Internet to enable citizens to access government programs, services and transactions in an integrated fashion. Each centre will also be tailored to local needs.<sup>19</sup> When fully implemented, the Service Canada network will have some 700 sites.

Canada's Department of Public Works and Government Services' Canada Site and the Government of Canada Enquiry Service (Reference Canada) are targeted to provide the infrastructure that will support the Service Canada network. Both the Canada Site and Reference Canada are currently being upgraded to offer a broader range of information and to handle some basic transactions as well as to provide referrals.

The Canada site is being redesigned to facilitate its role. It will carry expanded content, links and interactivity. Search and navigation have already been improved with the introduction of a new search engine. Functions such as electronic commerce and on-line forms will be added in the near future. In addition, the Canada site will acquire new capabilities to assist automated information

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<sup>17</sup> Service Canada Working Group, Service Canada Working Group Report on a new integrated approach to federal service delivery, Ottawa: draft unpublished report, November 1998, Executive Summary, p. 1

<sup>18</sup> Service Canada Working Group, *op. cit.*, Executive Summary, p. 2

<sup>19</sup> Service Canada Working Group, Service Canada Working Group Report on a new integrated approach to federal service delivery, Ottawa: draft unpublished report, November 1998, p. 17-18.



management across the Canadian federal government.<sup>20</sup> Reference Canada, the Canadian federal government's premier telephone referral service, is also being strengthened. Its data base of Programs and services is being enhanced and will be made Internet accessible. Federal departments and agencies will be encouraged to use its new toll free "1-800-0 CANADA service" as the public's telephone gateway into the federal government. In addition, more staff, greater visibility, and greater priority will be accorded to it. Services that resonate well with these models and approaches will likely do well.

### **Traditional media - still part of the equation**

Although there has been a steady increase in the amount of Canadian government information made available through the Internet, hard copy remains a popular medium that can not be overlooked. Where multiple formats exist, depository libraries confirm that many users continue to express a marked preference for it.<sup>21</sup>

The ongoing migration of Canadian government information to the Internet has not resulted in a significant reduction in traditional media. Whether or not publications are freely accessible on the Internet has made no difference to the number of copies requested from Canada's Depository Services Program. The DSP still distributes annually close to two (2) million copies even though major contributors of product such as the Canadian House of Commons have virtually eliminated this format from their publishing programs.

Print on demand is very much in evidence in the Canadian federal departmental publishing. Paper has become a value added offering capable of attracting premium prices. Canadian Government Publishing (CGP), the Canadian federal government's official publisher, estimates that it alone now has an inventory of some 7,000 titles that it makes available only in print on demand. There is no way to guess at the number of titles that federal departments and agencies have opted to make available through similar arrangements directly with other suppliers and printers.

The licensing of unpublished government information for conversion to cd-rom is also growing. The Crown copyright and licensing service of CGP estimates that it has witnessed close to a two hundred percent increase in the volume of co-publishing and licensing transactions it has overseen in the last four years. There

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<sup>20</sup> Public Access Programs Sector ( Communications Coordination Services Branch), The Canada Site Redesign, Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada, unpublished presentation, January, 29, 1999

<sup>21</sup> Pamela Ramage, Kathryn Mowat and Fay Hjartarson, op. cit., p. 14

have been similar, if somewhat more modest increases, in licensing and co-publishing initiatives for print formats as well.<sup>22</sup> Canadian Government Publishing is proposing a revised publication development model that will see much more material produced under license or through co-publishing arrangements.

Subsequent to the privatisation of the Canada Communication Group in 1997, the Treasury Board of Canada and the Department of Public Works and Government Services (PWGSC) undertook a functional review of the way the federal government as a whole approached communications issues that cut across the government. The Communications Coordination Services Branch (CCSB) of PWGSC emerged from these consultations, and was assigned the task of helping to coordinate communications issues for the Government of Canada, and to facilitate public access to Government of Canada information. Four new sectors were established to achieve this.

CCSB's Strategic Communications provides liaison with the central policy agents of the Canadian government such as the Privy Council Office, the Canada Information Office, and the Treasury Board of Canada. Its Client Services and Industry relations provide advice, strategic support, and project management related to government wide advertising, media communications, and public opinion research. CCSB's Procurement services facilitates the acquisition of communication services and products such as printing, audio-visual, multi-media, and public relations from the private sector, while its Branch Management provides the administrative and operational assistance required. The CCSB's Public Access Programs Sector facilitates public access to government information.<sup>23</sup> It regrouped the Canada Gazette, Canadian Government Publishing, the Depository Services Program, Reference Canada, and the Canada Site. As a result, there has been a major re-think of the role the Canadian federal government's official publisher, Canadian Government Publishing will play within the Canadian government's publishing strategy.

In future, CGP's primary role will not be to publish federal government information but to facilitate its creation and dissemination. It will no longer assume responsibility for product development, or recover sales revenues. These will revert to the author departments and their publishers. Instead, Canadian

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<sup>22</sup> Christiane Séguin, Inclusion of Licensed Government Information in the Depository Service Program (DSP) safety net, Ottawa: Communications Coordination Services Branch, Public Works and Government Services Canada, briefing note to the DSP, December 19, 1997

<sup>23</sup> Communications Coordination Services Branch, Communications Coordination Services Branch: serving Canadians Better, Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada, unpublished presentation, January 13, 1999

Government Publishing will concentrate on providing Canadian federal departments and agencies with the support and expertise they need to develop their products themselves. It will identify the most appropriate media for them, will assist departments and agencies to determine the commercial potential of their information and to gain access to the private sector publishers and producers who can assist them create and disseminate the information.

CGP is currently in the early phases of realigning its direction. It has approached both Public Works and Government Services and the Treasury Board of Canada to secure funding necessary to eliminate its dependence on the sale of publications to cover its operating costs. It is also asking for the necessary policy adjustments to implement the new model and change its mandate.

### **The Depository Services Program - a changeling in sheep's clothing**

Canada's Depository Services Program has not remained impassive in the face of the changes occurring around it. It is perhaps too frequently overlooked that the DSP was amongst the earliest elements within the Canadian federal government to exploit the potential of the Internet.<sup>24</sup> Since 1991, the Depository Service has unobtrusively but steadily adjusted its role and vision. It recognised early on that the changes in Canada's federal publishing would establish new boundaries and opportunities even if it did not always appreciate the extent of these. At the same time, it continues to remain sensitive to its traditional mandate.

In the last several years, the Depository Services Program has placed increasing emphasis on two roles: providing to Canada's depositories an integrated locator service for government information, and providing support to the depository community. It is in this context that the DSP inaugurated the now annual practice of sponsoring workshops to sensitise federal departments and agencies to the position depositories can occupy in making digital resources accessible.<sup>25</sup> It is the basis on which it launched Infodep, its listserv. It is the basis too on which it partnered with the Canadian document community the publication of Canadian Government Information on the Internet (CGII), a comprehensive net based bibliographic resource to Canadian federal, provincial, and municipal government

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<sup>24</sup> Helen Sheehy and Andrea Severson, "A unique period of time: the Canadian Depository Services Program in transition", *Journal of Government Information*, Vol. 26, no. 2, p. 165-169, 1999

<sup>25</sup> For example, *Transforming Canadians' Access to Government Information*, a workshop sponsored by the Depository Services Program and held April 15, 1999. The workshop looked at the contribution depository libraries could make to digital access. It explored the issues and challenges in making digital content accessible to all. The session attracted over 160 participants from the federal government community.

web sites, that is accessible through the DSP's Web site. It is also the rationale which made possible the fully searchable Web accessible version of Info Source, the Canadian government's guide to unpublished Canadian federal information resources, now available because of its extensive collaboration with the Treasury Board of Canada's Info Source team. Canada's Depository Services Program is proposing to continue this with the integration of its Canadian federal government data bases product into the CGII package.

Canada's DSP is committed to upgrading and improving its WEB site. It is launching a complete review of the site and will make it fully compatible with the Canadian government's new directives on "common look and feel". These directives are intended to make Canadian federal WEB sites easier to identify and more consistent amongst each other, and to ensure that they adhere to the World Wide WEB Consortiums (W3C) priority 1 and 2 accessibility guidelines.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the Program is undertaking to replace its production data base so that it is in a better position to develop Internet based resources for finding federal information while continuing to support its traditional print products. This effort includes replacing its current WAIS based search engine.

Just recently, the Depository Services initiated a review and upgrade of its thesaurus. It will be integrating into the thesaurus the 10,000 indexing terms used by the Government of Canada's telephone inquiry service to provide access to information on federal programs and services. Depending on the outcome of its efforts to replace its production data base, and cost, the DSP intends to incorporate the new thesaurus directly into the search functionality of its renewed WEB site. It hopes, as well, to pilot the addition of abstracts to more of its bibliographic products, and to keep expanding the number of Internet resources that it identifies. The DSP will continue to extend as needed its protected site for priced Canadian federal Internet titles, and will negotiate arrangements with suppliers as quickly as it feasible.

The Program has tabled proposals with both the Treasury Board of Canada and Public Works and Government Services to broaden the products that it makes available to the depository community. This includes addressing the contentious issue of core materials in print-on-demand, cartographic, or other formats that remain unavailable to the depository network unless purchased directly from suppliers. Finally, it is exploring alternative models for supporting access to federal electronic information.

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<sup>26</sup> Federal Identity Program (Treasury Board Secretariat), Common Look and Feel for the Internet, Ottawa: 1994, p. 7-8

On April 15th 1999, Canada's DSP launched the SIGI/SIIG (System of Interactive Government Information / Système interactif d'information gouvernementale) Initiative. SIGI/SIIG will explore and test models and tools for ensuring permanent access to collections of digitized federal information using Canada's depository library network. It is the result of restructuring proposals approved by the Program's Library Advisory Committee, which recommended that the DSP establish an infrastructure within Canada's depository community to support permanent access to both free and priced federal government information in digitized form.<sup>27</sup>

The initiative brings together, in a cooperative pilot, both major Canadian academic institutions and a number of Canadian federal departments and agencies involved in Canada's Depository Program. The depositories involved include the libraries of Dalhousie University, the University of New Brunswick, McGill University, the University of Western Ontario, and the University of Alberta. In addition to the Library Advisory Committee of the DSP, there is Canadian Government Publishing, the National Library of Canada, the Canadian House of Commons, and elements of the Treasury Board of Canada.

SIGI/SIIG hopes to address experimentally depository concerns about the permanence and archiving of Canadian federal government information. It intends to develop a model gateway to support access to digital holdings and resources of federal information held by Canadian depository institutions. It also intends to establish model procedures, structures and policies to make digitized federal information resources accessible to, and available through, depositories via the DSP. Lastly, SIGI/SIIG hopes to implement model training activities and programs to facilitate and promote the more effective use of digitized federal information resources in depository institutions.

### **A Canadian Depository Services in the new millennium?**

Canada's Depository Services Program is frequently referred to as the "public's information safety net". The need to archive and preserve electronic government information as well as the continuing need to make hard copy government information accessible in an equitable fashion suggests that there is still a place for the DSP and the depository network in the new millennium. Access, archiving and preservation are elements that are just beginning to come into their own. The solutions required to make electronic government information easier to find,

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<sup>27</sup> See Vivienne Monty, Proposal for a revised Depository System: report of the Depository Services Remodeling Committee, Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada, June 2, 1998

retrieve and preserve are only starting to become issues within the Canadian federal government. The Depository Program and its network have a wealth of experience to draw upon to continue to play a role in addressing these concerns. To exercise this role, the DSP and its partners will need to rethink the emphasis we place on various elements of the depository model and to forge new partnerships within government. The Service Canada initiative, for example, offers new scope for assisting Canada's government to reach out to its citizens. Indexing, abstracting and reference expertise, facilitating access, and creating partnerships for the preservation of electronic information are all features of the depository model that would serve both it and the Canadian government well.

Ultimately, the issue at stake is not the number of distribution points or the method of distribution. It is whether Canada's Depository Services Program and depository programs in general, can succeed in making government recognise that the depository partnership is an opportunity rather than a costly liability. Depositories have expertise and capabilities that remain valid and valuable regardless of the nature of the information. Yet, this value-added frequently does not register with funding authorities.

Libraries are understood to be important channels to the Internet, and invaluable allies in extending the reach of this technology into the community. However, it is not as clear that government fully appreciates the extent to which depository institutions can be valuable partners in servicing the citizen's requirements for government information. Even though Canada's Depository Services Program is required to act as the Canadian public's informal route to access federal government information, its future is far from assured. It is not enough that the Canadian Depository Services Program and its network achieve their mandate well. It is just as essential that the Program's effectiveness and contributions to public access be highly visible to those in authority.

The Canadian federal DSP readily reinforces the purpose section of Canada's Access to Information Act in that it clearly enhances the means by which government information is "normally available to the general public". It is not inconceivable that the availability of government information through the Depository Services Program's network could be used as the litmus test in Canada for what constitutes "published" information under the Act. Such a legislative basis would go a long way towards assisting the Program acquire the profile needed to attract interest.

The Canadian Depository Services Program will continue to face interesting times as it moves closer to the new millennium. The next few months will prove crucial. As the Canadian government attempts once more to deal with conflicting demands

on its limited funding, Canada's Depository Services Program will inevitably come again under detailed scrutiny. The Canadian government will have to make up its mind as to what, if any, the DSP's strategic role within the Canadian government's communications practice should be. The report of its own Federal Task Force on Digitisation unambiguously recommended that Canada's DSP should be strengthened by legislation and expanded.<sup>28</sup> It remains to be seen whether this will come to pass, and whether there will still be a Canadian Depository Services Program to celebrate a 75th anniversary in the year 2002.

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<sup>28</sup> Federal Task Force on Digitization, Towards a learning nation: the digital contribution - recommendations proposed by the Federal Task Force on Digitization: final report, Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1999. See URL: <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/cooprogram/finalreport/eindex>

# THE U.S. FEDERAL DEPOSITORY LIBRARY PROGRAM AND U.S. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION IN AN ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT: ISSUES FOR THE TRANSITION AND THE MILLENNIUM\*

By Margaret S. Powell

**Abstract:** Since 1895 the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), administered by the United States Government Printing Office (GPO), has provided no-fee public access to information generated by the United States Government through a network of libraries. For two hundred years print-on-paper remained the dominant format. By 1978, publications were also distributed in microfiche; Compact Disc-Read Only Memory (CD-ROM) products followed in 1988, the development of the GPO Access web site for on-line publications in 1994, and other initiatives to harness government information on the Internet.

Opportunities to improve public access exist alongside obstacles to equitable distribution and access. Now over half-way through a five-year transition plan, GPO has defined and established an electronic depository library collection for the new millennium. Problems remain with reform of the underlying legislation, the enforcement of deposit compliance by government authors, and the guaranteed provision of permanent public access. Librarians struggle to keep up with sources, formats, and technology and to shape library services for both traditional and digital environments.

Recognizing that a democracy requires the free flow of information and that access to government information is a fundamental right of a free society, the United States (U.S.) government began, soon after the first Continental Congress in 1774, to form what we would identify in our time as information policy. By 1813, a regular pattern of free and geographically dispersed dissemination of government information to the public was already in place.<sup>1</sup> Foundation for a formalized system of deposit and a Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) within the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) was laid in a series of legislative acts and has remained relatively unchanged in principle and structure since 1895.<sup>2</sup> The last

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Sarah Jordan. "Producing Documents for Congress and the Nation: Government Printing in the United States, Past and Present, Part I." *Printing History* 11 (1989): 27-41; *ibid.*, 29.

<sup>2</sup> Title 44 "Public Printing and Documents." Chapter 19 "Depository Library Program." In Title 44 United States Code (U.S.C.) Section 1901 et sequentes (et seq.) (1994). Cited as 44 U.S.C. Sec. 1901 et seq. (1994).



three decades of this century have been dominated by efforts of the federal government bureaucracy to economize, reduce paperwork,<sup>3</sup> and "reinvent" itself to increase efficiency.<sup>4</sup> This climate has created legislative, operational, and service issues for the FDLP, GPO, and libraries. Current responses from GPO<sup>5</sup> and the library community to these issues and to the transition from paper to electronic publication and distribution will define not only the depository library program but also the provision of government information for the new century.<sup>6</sup>

At the brink of the new millennium, the FDLP consists of over 1350 designated libraries located in fifty states, the District of Columbia, and six territories. For over 100 years the FDLP, as administered by GPO, has provided equitable and dependable no-fee public access to the tremendous amount of publishing which the U.S. government generates. Agencies in each of the three branches of the federal government create, gather, and produce information in conjunction with their official missions. This information is paid for with public funds, is owned by the public, and must be made accessible to the public by law. The government holds the information in trust and is obligated to provide access to it and to guarantee its integrity and preservation.<sup>7</sup>

Working in partnership with federal agencies, GPO acquires materials, produces copies at congressional expense, catalogs, indexes, and distributes them to the network of depository libraries with an efficiency and cost effectiveness made possible by its centralized position in the government and its legally designated status. In turn, the libraries safeguard the public's right to know by collecting, organizing, maintaining, and preserving the publications, making them freely accessible to the general public in all formats without impediment or fees in an impartial environment and with professional assistance. Depository libraries are

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<sup>3</sup> "Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980," Public Law (P.L.) 96-511, 11 Dec. 1980. In *United States Statutes at Large* (Stat.), cited as 94 Stat. 2812, with subsequent revisions and amendments in 1986, 1989, and 1995.

<sup>4</sup> National Performance Review (U.S.). *From Red Tape to Results: Creating a Government That Works Better and Costs Less: Report of the National Performance Review*. Al Gore. (Washington, DC: Office of the Vice President; U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Study to Identify Measures Necessary for a Successful Transition to a More Electronic Federal Depository Library Program. As Required by Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1996. Public Law 104-53. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> This paper has its origin in the author's presentation with George D. Barnum and Mary Webb Prophet at the Harvard Conference March 30-31, 1996. "Elsewhere in the Forest: The Place of U.S. Government Information in Libraries of the Future." In *Finding Common Ground: Creating the Library of the Future Without Diminishing the Library of the Past*; edited by Cheryl LaGuardia and Barbara A. Mitchell. (New York, Neal-Schuman, c1998), 275-293.

<sup>7</sup> Fulfilling Madison's Vision; The Federal Depository Library Program. (Washington, DC: Depository Library Council, 1996), ix.

subject to periodic government inspection; provide storage, equipment, and space; and develop training tools, networks, and partnerships to facilitate and support public access. This has become an increasingly difficult task given the expanding array of information sources and the complex information choices.<sup>8</sup>

By the 1990s GPO had become as much a procurement agency as a printer, with the majority of non-congressional production being obtained under standing contracts negotiated by GPO with the private sector.<sup>9</sup> During this period, the long-standing problem of documents that qualify for the program but through agency oversight or noncompliance are not made available to GPO for distribution has been exacerbated. As valuable information continues to elude the net of depository distribution, the amount of publicly accessible government information decreases. Capturing this information has become more difficult for GPO as agencies have obtained their own desktop publishing software and high speed, high volume copiers, in addition to developing sites on the Internet. Libraries are forced to pursue this "fugitive" information from individual agencies and from private sector vendors in order to offer comprehensive collections to their users.

GPO began converting selected documents were converted from paper to microfiche format for distribution to depository libraries in 1977 in the first of several cost-cutting steps away from the dissemination of print-on-paper. Although the introduction of microfiche caused some consternation among librarians and users, this first shift in technology was relatively easily assimilated into the operation of the FDLP and depository libraries. In almost every respect, except its use by the reader, microfiche is produced, disseminated, and collected like printed matter, and despite its negative attributes, its distribution has achieved significant savings in cost for GPO and in storage space for libraries. The move to fiche did make librarians aware, however, that in an era of cost/benefit analysis, the FDLP was under scrutiny and that it was no longer possible to rely on the ideological goodwill of a benevolent Congress. Microfiche was but a harbinger.

Publishing and storage of electronic formats, which began with the development of computer mainframes in the late 1950s, was well underway in 1988 when the first Compact Disc-Read Only Memory (CD-ROM) product was distributed to depository libraries. Distribution of CD-ROM disks resembled the introduction of microfiche in that GPO was still shipping a physical object, an "information product", to libraries. Here, however, the similarities ended, and the conflicts for libraries and the FDLP began in earnest. As with the first fiche, many depository

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<sup>8</sup> Adapted from 44 U.S.C. Sec. 1901 et seq. (1994).

<sup>9</sup> Di Mario, Michael F. Prepared Statement Before the Committee on Rules and Administration, U.S. Senate, Thursday, February 3, 1994.

libraries were unprepared for electronic distribution. Users who had access to appropriate equipment were met with a medium that required a completely new sensibility for use and which carried with it little or no assistance in the way of documentation or instruction. And it was only the tip of a rapidly emerging iceberg.

Since the beginning of the Clinton Administration in 1992, the federal government has been pulled rapidly into the electronic age. Legislation in that year required GPO to disseminate government information products on-line, to maintain an on-line directory or locator of federal information sources in electronic format, and to address permanent public access by establishing a storage facility for electronic information files.<sup>10</sup> In response GPO unveiled its award-winning Internet information service site, GPO Access in 1994.<sup>11</sup> In the preceding decade, GPO had grappled with attempts by the Reagan and Bush administrations to privatize many of its functions. Integral to this struggle was the question of whether or not on-line information falls within the legislative parameters of Title 44--in effect whether there is some distinction between "information product" and "information service" when the definition hinges on the presence or absence of a physical object.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the administration sought to alter and consolidate a variety of administrative and regulatory practices that controlled public access to information, including revisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 and the issuance of Office of Management and Budget guidelines on information policy.<sup>13</sup> Since 1992 it has become more widely accepted that the distinction between product and service was largely artificial and served the commercial ends of private sector firms involved in marketing government information better than it served the public. Along with the proliferation of electronic resources, we have witnessed the growth of the notion that access to government information should not be ruled by the format or medium of that information.

Two strong ideological strains mark the current political climate in Washington, DC. The first is that government should, for a host of economic and ideological reasons, be made smaller and more efficient. The implications of this line of thinking for GPO have been serious. Although the actual functions of printing and the wide spectrum of information dissemination have grown apart rapidly, GPO

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<sup>10</sup> "Government Printing Office Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act." P.L.103-40, 8 June 1993. 107 Stat. 112 and 44 U.S.C. 4101-4104 (1994).

<sup>11</sup> <[http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/)>

<sup>12</sup> The oft used test ran that "information products" could be dropped in a mailbox while "information services" could not.

<sup>13</sup> P.L. 96-511, 11 Dec. 1980, with amendments and revisions in 1986, 1989, and 1995 and Office of Management and Budget Circular A -130.

has remained a primarily print-based operation despite tremendous progress in managing, handling, distributing and disseminating information in multiple formats. There have been repeated moves to shrink the GPO radically or eliminate it entirely in favor of individual agencies procuring their own printing services, with a depository library system administered by some other agency.<sup>14</sup> The second complementary strain, that has come into prominence since 1994, is the attempt to balance the federal budget by imposing stringent economizing measures upon all federal programs. In addition, Congress has a broad belief in the ability of technology to shrink costs in the bureaucracy and reform society simultaneously. Thus, the seven years since President Clinton took office have been highly uncertain for GPO generally and the FDLP in particular.

During this period of advancing uncertainty, librarians began to articulate their vision of a "reinvented" FDLP. The Chicago Conference Report of October 1993 reaffirmed the basic principles stated earlier that year by the Dupont Circle Group<sup>15</sup> and defined a framework for a model federal information program:

1. The FDLP would be characterized by timely, equitable, and no-fee provision of government information to the public with a cooperative network of information producing agencies, geographically dispersed participating libraries, and a central coordinating government authority.
2. The information would be made available in formats most appropriate to content, use, and audience and defining legislation would be broadly inclusive of all types of information in all formats and media.
3. Agency participation would be assured and the program should facilitate partnerships between its constituents.<sup>16</sup>

By 1995, debate in the House centered on GPO budgetary issues, cutting congressional funding for paper documents as an "incentive" for agencies to move to electronic dissemination. The Senate, however, insured a level budget for GPO in 1996 and directed the Public Printer to undertake a comprehensive study to

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<sup>14</sup> U.S. 103rd Congress. 1st Session. House Report 3400. To Provide a More Effective, Efficient, and Responsive Government. November 15, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> Dupont Circle Group. The Future of the Federal Depository Library Program. Washington, DC., April 16-18, 1993. <<http://www.arl.org/info/frn/gov/dupont.html>>

<sup>16</sup> "Chicago Conference on the Future of Federal Government Information, Chicago, October 29-31, 1993. Executive Summary [and] Report." Documents to the People 21 no. 4 (December 1993): 234-246. See also: <<http://www.arl.org/info/frn/gov/chicago.html>>

assist Congress in redefining a new and strengthened federal information dissemination policy and program.<sup>17</sup>

The Public Printer's study was prepared in two parts: the strategic Transition Plan for completing the move from print to electronic format by 1998, which was issued in December 1995 and revised in June 1996,<sup>18</sup> and the final full report of June 1996, which extended the transition time frame to a more reasonable 2001.<sup>19</sup> The current scene, just past mid-point in the Transition Plan, is the result of an almost unimaginably aggressive program of conversion to electronic formats both at the production level, where new products are created in a standardized format and at the distribution/dissemination level.

Although the FDLP cannot be characterized as completely electronic in 1999, considerable and remarkable change has taken place. For example, from Fiscal Year (FY) 1996 to FY1998, the percentage of paper products distributed to depository libraries dropped from 45% to 30%; microfiche dropped from 50% to 20%; while electronic products increased from 5% to 50%.<sup>20</sup> The amount of government information on CD-ROM and on the Internet continues to grow and is being absorbed into the electronic collection of the federal depository library. In FY1998, GPO distributed 40,000 tangible print, microfiche, or CD-ROM products, but more than 85,000 titles were made available on-line through GPO Access and more than 47,000 titles mounted on agency web sites were linked from GPO Access. The GPO Access service reached a monthly average of five million searches and ten to fifteen million document retrievals in FY 1998<sup>21</sup> with a total of 277.5 million documents retrieved by the public since it began operation in 1994.<sup>22</sup>

The transition from printed to electronic media has vastly increased the universe of information that should be within the scope of the program, but it has not obviated the need for the program to originate from a centralized point of collection and

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<sup>17</sup> See U.S. 104th Congress, 1st Session. House. Committee on Appropriations. House Report 104-14. Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, 1966. (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 1995) and see U.S. 104th Congress. 1st Session. Senate. Committee on Appropriations. Senate Report 104-114. Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, 1996. (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 1995) and see "Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1996." P.L. 104-53 19 November 1995. 109 Stat. 514.

<sup>18</sup> Federal Depository Library Program: Information Dissemination and Access Strategic Plan, F[iscal]Y[ear] 1996-F[iscal]Y[ear] 2001. 1996. [Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996.] Commonly called the Transition Plan.

<sup>19</sup> Study to Identify Measures for a Successful Transition.

<sup>20</sup> "Progress Report on the Transition to a More Electronic FDLP 1996-1999.", 3.

<sup>21</sup> Buckley, Francis J., Jr. "Superintendent of Documents Update. Remarks . . . Before the Government Documents Roundtable, American Library Association, Philadelphia, PA, January 30, 1999." Administrative Notes 20 no. 5 (February 25, 1999): 2.

<sup>22</sup> "GPO Chosen As a Top Technology Innovator by PC Week." News Release. March 25, 1999.

dissemination, nor the need for statutory "teeth" in accomplishing the mission of providing no-fee access to the citizenry. To ensure that both the challenges and the opportunities of the electronic environment can be met, GPO has outlined several strategic steps for legislative reform. First, a more expansive definition of government publication is critical to the continuance of the program in the electronic environment; any new legislation must encompass both traditional print materials and other information products or services regardless of form or format. A second critical factor in the success of any distributive program is the enforcement of deposit compliance in order to decrease the number of so-called "fugitive" documents. Finally, continuous and permanent public access to electronic government information must be guaranteed. Although these much-needed revisions to the program legislation in Title 44 have been proposed and debated, reform has not yet been achieved. The most recent reform bill, introduced in 1998, died in the Senate at the end of the 105th Congress.<sup>23</sup> It is unlikely that new legislation for a full-scale revision of Title 44 will be proposed during the final years of the Clinton Administration.

The recent assessment of a variety of government electronic information products conducted by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) cited the overall absence of government information policy and uniform standards and the general lack of planning and coordination necessary to guide electronic publishing, dissemination, permanent public access, and information life cycle management. Although it found some agencies ready to establish guidelines for web publishing, formats, and design, NCLIS noted that the problems of coping with multiple media and product formats, rapidly changing technology, and the development of cost-effective alternatives had not been widely addressed.<sup>24</sup>

While a critical core of materials will continue to be available in paper, thousands of traditional publications have simply disappeared or are now only available to the public electronically. Questions of intended audience, ultimate use, and appropriateness for electronic dissemination have largely been ignored. Tracking the location and/or availability of materials, particularly electronic materials, is an arduous task, which has been eased by a variety of finding tools posted on GPO Access. Some of these tools illustrate the cooperative or partnership arrangements

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<sup>23</sup> Senate 2288 "The Wendell H. Ford Government Publications Reform Act of 1998" was reported out of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, October 16, 1998, Senate Report 105-413, and placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar No. 719 under General Orders.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. Report on the Assessment of Electronic Government Information Products. 1999. See <<http://www.nclis.gov/news/news.html>> and see also GPO Access <[http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/nclisassessment/report.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/nclisassessment/report.html)>

between the program, GPO, and the private sector which must be forged in order to assure permanent access to FDLP electronic information.

GPO has also developed several guides to assist depository libraries in providing service for a wide variety of electronic products distributed with little or no technical documentation and issued without the benefit of most technical and software standards. First, recommended minimum technical guidelines for federal depository libraries have been issued by GPO since 1991; these became "specifications" in 1996 and are now updated annually.<sup>25</sup> In a related move in 1997, all depository libraries were required to have the capability to provide and support public access to government electronic information products. Second, a policy and planning document for managing the FDLP electronic collection was distributed in October 1998; in it components of the federal electronic collection are clearly defined:

1. Core legislative and regulatory GPO Access products which will reside permanently on GPO servers;
2. Other remotely accessible products managed by either GPO or by other institutions with which GPO has established formal agreements;
3. Remotely accessible electronic Government information products that GPO identifies, describes, and links to but which remain under the control of the originating agencies;
4. Tangible electronic Government information products distributed to Federal depository libraries.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, electronic service guidelines were published in 1998,<sup>27</sup> and early this year GPO distributed an Internet and on-line access policy statement defining a level of service for electronic media under the same principles and equal to that afforded traditional formats in depository libraries.<sup>28</sup>

As the government debates the reinvention of its role, libraries and librarians are also struggling to stay abreast of sources, software, and hardware, and to realign services to include both traditional and digital technology. The movement of information to electronic format is not a new phenomenon. Computer mainframes

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<sup>25</sup> "Recommended Specifications for Public Access Workstations in Depository Libraries" Administrative Notes 19 no. 8 (June 15, 1998): 3-8.

<sup>26</sup> *Managing the Federal Depository Library Collection: A Policy and Planning Document.* (Washington, DC: Library Programs Service, Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> "Depository Library Public Service Guidelines for Government Information in Electronic Formats." Administrative Notes 19 no. 11 (Sept. 15, 1998): 5-6.

<sup>28</sup> "FDLP Internet Use Policy Guidelines." Administrative Notes 20 no. 2 (Jan. 15, 1999): 1-2.

in the late 50s made possible the storage of massive amounts of data on tape. The On-line Computer Library Center (OCLC) bibliographic network and the first on-line public access catalogs were introduced in the 1970s, followed by on-line bibliographic databases such as ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) and MEDLINE (U.S. National Library of Medicine) and computerized search services such as DIALOG. By the time informational databases such as Cendata from the U.S. Census Bureau emerged in the 1980s, on-line services in general had been adopted by most libraries in the United States. During the past decade, access to government bulletin boards, the use of file transfer protocol for downloading electronic information, the provision of modem-accessible data direct from government agency computers and the proliferation of Gopher sites bloomed and faded before the sudden and incredible riches of the Internet.

Most libraries struggled through a gearing-up period while hardware and software were acquired and librarians became computer literate; but the pace of computerization in libraries has generally lagged behind the rate of technological advance. In an effort to organize and harness government information on the Internet, many libraries developed comprehensive organizational and content-based web sites, both individually, such as the University of Michigan Documents Center,<sup>29</sup> and in collaboration with government agencies, such as the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Network (DOSFAN) at the University of Illinois, Chicago, which provides Internet access to official documents and publications on U.S. foreign affairs.<sup>30</sup>

While supporting levels of technology and expertise are now present in most larger libraries, many small academic and public libraries have not yet acquired all the basic hardware or developed the necessary staff expertise to deal with the challenges posed by the electronic environment. Once sources or indexing are computerized, users will wait in line to use them despite the availability nearby of the printed version. For all too many users, history and a comprehensive literature search start with the beginning date of the on-line index, whether it is 1785 or 1980. Others may search only the Internet for their information needs without regard to origin, authenticity, or permanence of the source or its site location. Most readers still prefer to take the information found with them in print form, insuring that public demand for hard copy will continue to exist and along with it the costs for public printers, paper, toner, and service. Libraries will be forced to foot the bill or charge to recover costs, which may be considered a threat to the concept of no-fee public access.

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29 <<http://www.lib.umich.edu/libhome/Documents.center/>>

30 <<http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/>>



The library user and research behavior are also in transition, according to Bruce. Although the process of collecting citations, reading articles, and drafting papers is the same, our ability to manipulate technology in this process has changed dramatically. E-mail discussion lists and electronic bulletin boards may provide more relevant and accessible literature than traditional literature and tools; but features of printed resources: good subject bibliographies and indexing; the ability to browse; and convenient, fast, reliable access to materials are also essential in electronic resources. Residual resistance to technology and full text electronic sources may continue to fade but the problems of reading from computer screens, the difficulty of establishing source and authority, and the question of backfile availability with electronic sources remain.<sup>31</sup>

Another pressing issue which has been a major concern in libraries throughout history is the maintenance and preservation of collections to assure availability for future generations. Each format presents unique challenges and requires the invention and application of creative conservation methods and techniques. Electronic information is bound by twin problems: the longevity of digital storage media and the accelerating rate of technological obsolescence. Long-term preservation of digital information will require constant effort and expense to upgrade and transfer files in response to each new technological iteration.<sup>32</sup> Many predict that we are already at risk of losing all digitally stored records and are on the brink of a digital Dark Age.<sup>33</sup> Supercomputer designer Hillis believes that technological solutions already exist for such problems as digital degradation, but that we lack the habit of long-term thinking that supports preservation.<sup>34</sup> Others, like Basefsky, are convinced that collaboration among libraries is essential to the guarantee of future free access to government information. He calls for libraries to treat federal electronic information in the same way as traditional materials: collect, catalog (provide access to), archive, authenticate, and make available to the public. As with print materials, libraries must also repair (copy, update, upgrade), and occasionally replace individual items to ensure a useful vital collection. With electronic sources, the library will need to keep links and pointers (addresses) current as well as upgrade equipment and storage media.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Bruce, Norma J. "Looking in the Mirror, Not in the Reading Room: The Library User in Transition." *Serials Review* 24, no. 3/4 (fall 1998):33-39.

<sup>32</sup> Brand, Stewart. "Escaping the Digital Dark Age." *Library Journal* 124 no. 2 (February 1, 1999):46-48.

<sup>33</sup> Sanders, Terry. "Into the Future." *Library Journal* 124 no. 2 (February 1, 1999): 48.

<sup>34</sup> Brand, "Escaping the Digital Dark Age.", 48.

<sup>35</sup> Basefsky, Stuart. "Special Library Collaboration with Government Agencies to Collect, Disseminate, and Archive Publications in Electronic Form: A Case Study in Privatization." Typescript.

While the evolution from print to bit has forced a reevaluation of traditional structures and methodologies in libraries, it has also provided exceptional opportunities to enhance and improve public access to government information as well as presenting challenges to accommodate a fast moving electronic target without compromising equitable distribution and access. Despite the astonishing number of personal computers in homes and schools, electronic formats continue to be the least accessible and egalitarian with respect to individual readers. Expansion of competition in the telecommunications industry will likely lead to increased commercialization of the Internet as well. Libraries must continue to provide a bridge between information and the ability to pay. GPO and the depository libraries must share the responsibility for long-term access, a concept which is reflected in the growing number of partnership agreements between GPO and other agencies and the libraries.

On the library side, attempts at resolving the tension between the existing depository program and the changing environment include the development of local and regional consortia, cooperative programs, networked resources, and guides to navigate and interpret the mass of government information available electronically. In the library community, as in the government, initiatives must be accomplished in the face of shrinking resources and complex technology. Cooperation among libraries is not a new idea. Interlibrary loan is perhaps the oldest form of resource sharing, a pragmatic recognition that no one library can be completely self-sufficient. Planning began in 1987 for what has become the largest shared library system in the nation, the Ohio Library and Information Network (OhioLINK), a consortium of 74 Ohio college and university libraries with merged on-line catalogs now containing seven million records and representing over 24 million library items. In addition to facilitating user-initiated lending supported by a daily delivery system, OhioLINK also provides access to 67 research and citation databases, including a variety of full-text resources.<sup>36</sup>

Because of the nature of the charge to depository libraries and the structure of government information in a large government bureaucracy, an unusually strong and supportive bond has developed among depository library staff. United by the same challenges and problems, we have created informal and formal support groups both independently and in collaboration with other national groups. These include the Depository Library Council to the Public Printer; the Government Documents Round Table of the American Library Association (ALA GODORT) as well as similar state and regional documents organizations; and the Internet

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<sup>36</sup> Data from the OhioLINK web site: <<http://www.ohiolink.edu/about/what-is-ol.html>> Last updated 9/4/98

discussion list, GOVDOC-L. These groups provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information, foster mentoring relationships among their participants, suggest answers to difficult reference questions, and share advice on diverse issues of depository library operation and policy.

From this perspective, it is clear that traditional U.S. federal depository collections will continue to be used by agencies, scholars, and the public in new and non-traditional ways. The increasing number of on-line government information sources, such as those available through GPO ACCESS; the growing amount of government information posted directly to the Internet by agencies or by agreements between libraries, educational institutions, private organizations, and commercial firms; and the large number of sources converted to CD-ROM or other electronic formats may lessen the demand for paper and microfiche documents but are unlikely to eliminate that demand in the near future. Librarians now promote the virtues of access over ownership, rename their educational programs and their institutions without benefit of the Latin liber, and embrace, instead, a slippery concept of information without regard to form or format. We speak confidently and hopefully of virtual libraries and libraries without walls, while the specter of distance education stalks both the university and its libraries and shakes their foundations. We continue to wrestle with the concepts of authority, citation, location, and permanence on a vast and shifting field of quicksand against a backdrop of amazing and captivating material just beyond the computer keyboard. Print is enveloped by color and sound and moving images; knowledge is hyperlinked from one idea to the next and the pathways and possibilities are infinite. By defining new roles and inserting them into traditional staff positions, librarians may become the trainers, facilitators, and interpreters of government information in the new millennium and remain at the center of the information puzzle.

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## **PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES AS INSTRUMENTS FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT\***

**By Patricio Aranda Torres**

**Abstract:** Democracy in many countries is currently undergoing a crisis due to the influence of powerful media interests, which disseminate views and comment which can, in turn, determine political outcomes. The explosion of media networks has given rise to a new form of interactive citizens' participation within the political system. This "network society" which incorporates the most dynamic social segments of the constituency, tends to exclude sectors which do not have the financial resources and technological skills necessary to access this new communication medium.

This paper formulates the means for an improved role for all citizens through a dynamic and interactive parliamentary library and information system. It illustrates the success of such a proposal to strengthen the legitimacy of parliaments by referring to the experience of the Congress of the Republic of Peru and explains what is being done to help Peruvian citizens who do not yet have personal access to electronic networks.

### **Introduction**

We are all acquainted with the results of the worldwide globalization process. It has involved, amongst other developments, the integration of financial markets, the increased significance of the Asia Pacific region, European unification, the transformation of the former Soviet block, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the voluntary association of cooperating third world economies into an interdependent system. The latter system works as a real time unit, that is, all changes taking place in one part of the world immediately affect other parts in a chain reaction, examples being the Asian and Brazilian Crises, and the "Tequila" effect. Globalization has also resulted, for many countries, in uneven development within society, specifically in relation to the less dynamic sectors and areas of particular societies. These sectors are at risk of turning into irrelevant participants in the democratic process, especially from the perspective of access to electronic information.

In this context, information units attached to legislatures can play an important role in social integration. They are able to mount interactive computer networks which disseminate important information to a broad cross-section of society as well as

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offering a direct line of communication with political representatives. The development of these technologies has created a new means of communication and has generated some important social changes in such varied areas as gender relations, environmental awareness and even political systems. Information technology has the capacity, where it can be made widely accessible, to impact most spheres of human activity, actually helping to shape the society of which it is a part.

### **Networks and the Media**

Within this context, the Internet has now become a rather social institution, which can currently enable the state not only to implement an accelerated process of technological modernization, but also to apply this and other means to interact with its people, and to have real (virtual) citizens' participation. The achievement of this purpose requires the employment of systems conducive to upgrading electronic mail to worldwide standards.

The major difference between audiovisual information and the electronic medium is the opportunity for interaction provided by the latter. Many authors already refer to the existence of the information society as a new way of development, where the technology is the source of productivity, generating knowledge, information processing and communication of symbols. The new "information society" is oriented towards the accumulation of knowledge and increasing degrees of sophistication in information processing, which allows data to be organized and readily communicated. Within this information society, networking logic allows libraries and information units to interrelate with users through a common digital language that prepares, saves, processes, retrieves and transmits information.

Parliaments and their libraries and information services can take the opportunity to contribute to the strengthening of democracy by providing information on the political process direct to citizens, meeting the demand in the society for transparency with respect to policy making. In this way, technology (understood as the use of scientific knowledge to enhance productivity or communication) is used to foster a greater participation. The legitimization of the parliamentary institution is fundamental to the democratic law-making process. This legitimacy relies upon the citizens' knowledge and acceptance of legislative activities, and it is vital that the parliament should develop mechanisms which allow the use of technology to transmit such information to the citizens.

Effective policy making is dependent upon communication. Political manifestos tend to be compared with the current realities facing a community, resulting in a judgment by the constituents on the likely success of the measures outlined, and

their impact on society as a whole and on discrete sections. To develop a relationship between the ruler and those ruled - there must be representation and communication. All political parties and groups should project their strategies through similar technological means if they want them to reach the people. This would ensure the support of an adequate number of citizens who, by utilizing the same medium, have access to the legislators.

Recent developments have shown how the television, newspaper and radio media can effectively control political communication and information through monopolistic growth or through media management. Fortunately this has in most cases fallen just short of political exclusion, which can adversely affect not only elections, but also the complete political organization, the decision-making process, and indeed the government itself. Those political parties which are still based on the organizational and political strategies of the industrial era observe the diminution of their autonomy due to the strong dependence on these information flows. In other words, the atomization of interests in societies allows the media to gain influence, since their clear messages provide a sense of identity for a huge conglomerate lacking common a common reference base. Those who are trained media practitioners have an advantage over those who do not have that communicative talent. The result of this can be notoriously seen in Latin America where it accounts for an average of 13 hours a day of turned on TV, and where politicians and parties become consumer goods instead of philosophers, educators or managers. This dependence can make a Government to collapse as in the Color de Mello case in Brazil where the TV network, radio and the press (O' Globo) no longer supported him and revealed the corruption charges on which he was subsequently impeached. This illustrates the need for decision makers to communicate. If they do not there may be a crisis in the democratic process in this information era, demonstrating the necessity for information to be generated within the parliamentary organization. Generators of information within the parliament, who are used to providing accurate and impartial information, are able to create the vital environment to introduce these new forms of direct communication with citizens, without the filtering commonly employed by the audiovisual media. This will aid both the nation-states and their citizens in the recovery of their autonomous status and independence, both of which have been undermined by the dynamics of global information flows led by rich and powerful transorganizational data networks. That undermining has frequently led to sectors of society ceasing to take an informed interest in their government and to a consequential fragmenting of the political system. The recovery or legitimization of democracy can be achieved through the opportunity provided by electronic communication to increase political participation generally and in particular horizontal

communication among citizens, reversing the fragmentation brought about by manipulative media interests.

### **The Peruvian Experience**

The information systems of the Congress of the Republic of Peru have been designed to achieve both of these ends. On the one hand, the purpose is to encourage participation by citizens, including direct involvement with MPs regarding their social needs. On the other, it is aimed at generating direct communication lines with the voters, circumventing any bias and misinterpretation from the audiovisual media, which often tend to undermine government policy.

This is exemplified by the Peruvian Virtual Parliament, created in 1996, a computerized network system through which the Congress of the Republic is made interactively available to citizens and institutions - both within Peru and abroad - with a view to encouraging their participation in the different activities conducted by the Congress. This form of participation enables citizens to directly interact with the legislative institution from any computer connected to the World Wide Web, and to propose by this means legislative proposals, demands, opinions or suggestions. In brief, this is a mechanism striving to consolidate the bases of the democratic system in Peru, since it is fundamentally structured on participation of each citizen and institution, making possible fluid political communication and an efficient decision making process within the legislative sphere.

Citizens are able to gain information, and make their views known on particular bills; submit direct petitions to their congressmen or the respective committee; participate in discussion forum, or propose to conduct them. Each citizen is previously registered and receives an access code in order to ensure reliability of his or her participation. Finally, it offers a friendship club where students have the opportunity to take part in civil culture and political knowledge contests from their school booths, witness the congressional sessions and visit the Congress, even if they come from the distant interior of the country.

Another information system developed by the Peruvian Congress is the Radio Program "Gathering center with the Congress" which broadcasts weekly the congressional activities and discusses specific issues one hour every week. It should be emphasized that this program has a regular audience, competing with other exclusively musical programs broadcast at the same time, suggesting that there exists an unsatisfied demand among the society with respect to Congressional information. This program can be obtained from the Internet in MP3 format, a digital audio and video format which, due the quality of the compression of audio data, is widely used to distribute audio (music) through the Internet and other

resources. Results from the parliament's electronic voting system are also reported on the Internet allowing citizens to have access to precise information about their representatives' performance and attendance.

Digital press systems have enabled the development of direct communication not only with citizens, but also with information chiefs of the mass media, so that greater accuracy in the information disseminated is achieved. To this end, the electronic gazette *El Herald* provides on-line information about congressmen's varied activities, agreements, discussions and statements. Likewise, *La Gaceta del Congreso* makes public the agenda of the committees and of the Plenary of Congress and is distributed electronically to those citizens interested in receiving a copy. Sessions of the Plenary and the Permanent Commission are transcribed and published on-line on the web through our Debate Journal. This text system is linked to another image system called Virtual Television through which a session, in a segment of video, can be retrieved via a certain type of search that can be made by main subject, date or congressman.

The Digital Archive System for Peruvian Legislation is available through the web and allows access to all laws, legislative resolutions, supreme decrees and other legal regulations through two blocks: laws numbered from year 1904 up to date; and non-numbered laws from 1821 to 1904. The archive employs PDF format and prints of the documents can be directly obtained.

Since 1995, our Bills System has enabled inquirers to refer to a status report of all those bills submitted which have been enacted, or been filed. The system, developed in Lotus Notes format, permits searching and recovery of information by date of presentation, number of bill, congressman submitting the bill, political party or parliamentary bench, and even committee empowered to judge. It is important to point out that each of the 27 committees has an individual web page, where not only approved bills or information on members composing the said committee can be referred to, but so also can the work presented by specialists invited to the sessions or to the extra-parliamentary hearings carried out in the interior of the country.

The web page also provides detailed information on Congressmen's travels abroad and we also have a word search system through which one may enter a word on the constitution web page and the system will retrieve all results concerning that word.

Finally, specific distribution lists relating to different areas of interest allow citizens with concerns on particular topics to receive specialized information on relevant subjects. The databases available include a list of laws including a complete text of every law that is passed; a list of bills, including a complete text



of every bill that is submitted; a list of Press News including all press notes released by the Congress; a list of photographs including JPEG images, about the main activities performed by the Congress, being those most frequently used by the media. The latter are distributed by e-mail to the information editors of the mass media.

Then we have information compiled by the Library (including information announcements providing citizens with the possibility of requesting free copies): links of interest on the World Wide Web; invitations to conferences of distinguished specialists in all subjects of national interest; and announcements of the latest books published by the Editorial Fund of the Congress, or working documents of the committees. This information is distributed by a mailing list that has more than 3000 members.

### **The Library of Congress**

The Library of the Peruvian Congress, was restructured in July 1997 and forms part of the collection of the former Public Library and Legislative Library, the latter being the collection, in its turn, of the earlier House of Deputies and the Senate of the Republic. Although there is not an exact date of the foundation of the two first libraries, we know that the first Congress legislators of 1822 already had a basic collection of doctrine books and law digests dating back to 'colonial laws' or the so-called 'Indian laws', the first compilation of which dates back to the late 17th century and is still conserved in the Library's research room.

The fundamental objective of the Library is to gather, classify and disseminate materials and services to assist the decision making process of the Congress. A major task in progress is the widening of electronic services, involving the development of internal resources, such as an automated search system for reference material, laws, bills, decisions, debate journals, as well as other types of information provided on an Intranet and on the web site of the Congress. In addition to the Reference and Consultation Room, the Newspapers and Periodicals Library and the various special collections of the Library, there is also an Electronic Information Center within the Library. This Center is equipped with 18 PCs from which users of the Library have free access to the Congressional Intranet databases and the Internet. The Library currently has more than 100,000 volumes including complete collections of newspapers such as "*El Comercio*" since 1839 and "*El Peruano*" since 1836, as well as our Debates Journal, which is a transcript of all words pronounced on the Floor by all Deputies and Senators from 1866 to date.

The Library's electronic catalogue gives on-line access to the 12,000 bibliographic entries corresponding to more than 30,000 volumes, with searching by author, title or subject from any Internet access point. The loan system is electronically controlled and the internal users of the Library reserve books from their office.

The total staff of the Library is 20, including 8 research and subject analyst staff, 7 professional librarians, 2 translators and 1 legal expert. The Library's electronic services are constantly updated by our staff, and these and other staff provide the specialized computer search services. The role of the Library in relation to the Congress web site is to be the physical threshold to all these services for the citizens and to provide the guiding system for the internal services developed in the Congress of the Republic, together with the Department of Special Projects which is charged with preparing the data for Web purposes.

### **Participation for all**

The exclusion of certain sectors of society from networked information is unavoidable at present, since not all of them have the facilities required for access. The question is: "How do we generate the sort of participation described above in social sectors which are not connected to the network?" This is one of the Congress's main concerns: it is the reason for the establishment of free public booths, and constant encouragement by the Executive to connect educational centers throughout the country. Currently around 10% of Peruvian state schools is connected through a system implemented by the Ministry of Education. This year's goal is to extend the figure to 15%. As well as this, the Congress has a special program entitled "*Itinerant Parliament*". This has involved the establishment of a special public service environment which provides information about the organization and functions of the Congress and a variety of participatory access points which the legislature has put at the citizens' disposal, including publicly available Internet booths, so that citizens may have open access to this service, free of charge.

As this accounts shows, parliamentary libraries and congressional information services can encourage more participation and understanding from the general public concerning the activities of their congressional representatives, who finally represent the population's feelings. That is why the Library has an active interaction with citizens through technological events, and multi-interest events, such as the *Feria del Hogar* (which is a fair at which many companies offer a variety of products and recreational activities) and the *Feria del Libro* (a fair offering a wide variety of books), and we provide training in the use of electronic resources to any visitors to these fairs who request it. We have a visits program that is fully scheduled until July of this year with more than 700 people and we are

able to provide courses on management of electronic resources which may also be offered to visitors.

These activities also lead to a greater strengthening of democracy, since all electoral systems are part of a market where voters will give their vote for those who best comply with their function as representatives of specific groups of electors, and such facilities open communication channels to permit them to exercise a better degree of choice and control.

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## **DEVELOPING A PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCH SERVICE THE EGYPTIAN EXPERIENCE\***

**By Wafaa Ali Abdel Elah**

**Abstract:** There is almost a general consensus that to perform its role effectively, the legislature requires a research service that provides the information and analyses necessary to make informed decisions. However, creating a parliamentary research capacity raises crucial questions concerning its pattern of organization, style of operation, and its services and products.

Although research units in different parliaments offer a variety of successful models to choose from, reading one's own environment and responding to its needs and characteristics will always remain the key elements in finding the right answers to the previous questions. In this context, the Egyptian experience in developing a parliamentary research unit might be of interest and value to parliaments which are also considering creating a research service.

### **Introduction and Road Map for the Paper**

Since the mid 1970's, Egyptian society has been experiencing gradual but important transformation both in the economic and political fields. Starting with the adoption of the open door policy, the Egyptian economy began to change from a planned economy to a private sector-led one. The steps in this direction accelerated in the late 1980's, and in 1991 Egypt embarked upon a comprehensive economic reform and structural adjustment program, the core of which was liberalization and privatization. These developments were coupled with major steps in the process of democratization, at the forefront of which came the re-introduction of party politics for the first time since 1952. The democratization process entailed also a greater freedom of expression and freedom of the media, a less stringent control over the activity of civil society organizations, and more transparency of government behaviour.

The interaction of these economic and political factors created a new social and cultural environment in Egypt. This environment fostered the democratization process within a favorable international climate witnessing a rising tide of democracy in many parts of the world.

The first part of this paper investigates the impact of these developments on the Egyptian parliament (the People's Assembly). The second part deals with how the

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establishment of a parliamentary research service responded to the needs and characteristics of the Egyptian environment in a way that could enhance the decision-making capabilities of the legislature. The third part of the paper explains how this new unit started to function and describes some of its early endeavors. The fourth part sheds lights on the services and products provided by this research service. The last part discusses present challenges and future prospects.

### **The Impact of the New Environment on the Egyptian Parliament**

The restructuring of the political, economic, social and cultural aspects of Egyptian society directly affected the Parliament in many ways:

- The opposition parties together with a number of independents gained representation in the People's Assembly (PA) starting from the 1979 election. Consequently - and despite an overwhelming majority by the ruling party - parliamentary debates became more vigorous and lively reflecting different points of views, not only those supporting the regime as it was the case under the one party system. Moreover the opposition tried to compensate for its limited numbers by using strong rhetoric depending, in most cases, on good analysis of the issue concerned.
- The majority party showed increased tolerance for alternative points of views expressed by its members inside the Parliament without regarding their attitudes as violating the party line or discipline.
- Public opinion began to demand more knowledge and information about Parliament. This reflected a new perceived role of the legislature in the governance of the nation, especially regarding control over the government, together with formulating laws and policies that guaranteed an effective economic transformation, minimized its negative implications, and safeguarded social welfare.
- The media started to show unprecedented interest in monitoring deliberations conducted in Parliament and the performance of its members. The TV began broadcasting parliamentary sittings, while national and opposition press devoted whole pages to inform people about what was going on inside the Parliament.

### **Developing a Research Service in the Egyptian Parliament**

These changes in Parliament became more profound and evident towards the end of the 1980's. With the restructuring of the general secretariat of the People's Assembly following the advent of a new and energetic Secretary General in 1989, the time seemed right to establish a new unit that could cope with such changes.

The *main goal* of the new unit was to make available objective studies and balanced analysis relating not only to different topics discussed by the PA, but also to important issues and developments at the local, regional and international levels. *Another task* assigned to the new research service was to provide the institutional memory of the PA. This in fact responded to a serious need to secure an easy and organized access to trace any subject discussed by the PA in the past years, and to provide a brief review of the procedures, debates, and the final decision adopted regarding each issue.

As for the *location* of the research service; it was decided from the beginning that it was not to be based in the library or to be part of it. The reason behind the decision was the clear cut definition of the word "research" in the Egyptian language and culture, and hence an obvious distinction between the work of a librarian and that of a researcher. Probably that is why one can hardly find an institution in Egypt where the research unit is part of its library. It was also argued that locating the new unit in the old and complicated organizational hierarchy of the library might hinder the desired independence of the unit and undermine the enthusiasm and creativity of its staff. However, considering the necessary cooperation and coordination between the library and the research service, it seemed appropriate that both of them should be part of a broader organizational framework, one of the four main divisions of the general secretariat of the PA. This situation changed in the beginning of 1998 when both the library and the research service became directly attached to the Secretary General.

The third question that had to be tackled was to decide *whether research and analysis responsibilities should be performed solely by the new unit*. A thorough examination of the organizational structure of the PA in 1989 revealed that each of the 18 standing committees had between 15 and 20 researchers among its staff. Most of the efforts of those researchers were devoted to preparing committee reports based on the discussions conducted inside committee meetings, and investigating some specific points relevant to those reports. There was also the Department of Parliamentary Conferences, which received careful consideration during the restructuring of the general secretariat, reflecting the marked increase in the activities of parliamentary diplomacy. Consequently, it was decided to provide this department with a group of researchers whose efforts would be devoted entirely to preparing the studies and papers necessary to participate in various parliamentary forums and to exchange parliamentary visits. Given that situation, it seemed appropriate to adopt a combination of a centralized and dispersed research service. This meant that committee staff would continue to research specific points, while the new research service would provide what was lacking, in particular background papers and comparative studies. As for the Department of

Parliamentary Conference, the research service was to provide help whenever that was needed.

Regarding *the scale* of new unit and *the skills* of its staff, it started off with six researchers specializing in law, economics, and political sciences. The unit now has 36 researchers specializing mainly in the three previous fields plus others like agriculture, history, and sociology.

### **How to Function**

Apart from monitoring important developments at the local, regional, and international levels and preparing issue briefs relating to them, another important matter remained to be settled and that was how the research service would function. I have mentioned that the new unit was not a part of the library and that librarians did not constitute part of its staff. Therefore the receipt of inquiries concerning data or basic descriptive information requiring reference activity - and which represent high percentage of the inquiries received by many other parliamentary research units - was not to be part of the unit's responsibility.

As for requests for analysis and in-depth research, reading one's own environment was again a determining factor. Taking into account the long and heavy legacy of the one party system, and the educational status and political culture of a large number of the PA members, we realized that we had to work hard to generate demand for our services and products. In other words, we had to create the need for information and the awareness of its importance. So, we took the strategic decision to offer some of our products, rather than just waiting for requests.

It might be of interest here to mention some of our *early endeavors*. We thought that it was best to start our activity with one service which the PA really lacked, and thereby make a strong impact. The ad-hoc committee for the reply to the Government Policy Statement seemed a suitable target. This committee, which is chaired by the Deputy Speaker, is formed every session after the Prime Minister delivers his statement and, consists of a large number of MPs (eg 45 this session) representing all parties in the PA including the independents. Since it is an ad-hoc committee, it does not have regular staff but to perform its work effectively it needs be provided with a series of policy papers - containing policy analysis and policy evaluation - amounting to 40 papers on average. In 1991 - when we had only 8 researchers - we provided this committee with some six papers on different topics. This was enough for the committee members to realize that their current state of knowledge was less than that needed to deal with the other topics. So in 1992 we were asked to supply the committee with as many policy papers as possible. The research service prepared 18 policy papers that year, and when the committee finalized its report we were asked by the Speaker of the PA to issue a comparative study between this report and the Government Policy Statement. As

from 1993, every session the research service now supplies the ad-hoc committee with all the required policy analysis, and prepares the above-mentioned comparative study.

Another early endeavor is note worthy. The PA debates on the Government Policy Statement (GPS) each session is the most important parliamentary occasion, when the largest number of MPs (e.g. 287 out of 454 last session) take the floor to express their views and demands regarding various policy matters. These debates also continue over a long period covering more than 25 sittings full of interventions and comments from the Government representatives. We thought that we should not miss this valuable opportunity to offer one of the research service products. So, based on close monitoring of these discussions and content analysis of what was said during them, we published a brief analytical study at the end of the debates of 1992, before the Prime Minister delivered his final comment on them. This study summarised the main points of view raised on different topics, points of agreement and disagreement between different parties, comments and promises made by the Government representatives, and new issues brought to light that were not included either in the GPS or the committee report. The study also contained quantitative analysis indicating the relative weight accorded to each issue and the share of local demands vis-à-vis national ones (a controversial subject in Egyptian society). The study had a wide impact and became one of the research service's regular products. It is now also sent to the Prime Minister before he delivers his final comments on the (GPS) debates each session, and is a basic document when preparing policy papers for the ad hoc committee of the next session.

### **Services and Products**

The research service in the Egyptian Parliament offers a wide range of products. As mentioned, it prepares policy papers, background papers, and issue briefs. It also publishes fact sheets and conducts basic research if necessary. A large part of its work is devoted to making comparative studies. Of particular interest are the comparative studies on parliamentary procedures in the different parliaments of the world. Not only does this kind of study enhance the political and parliamentary culture of the members of PA, but it also fills a substantial gap in this field in the Arabic literature.

Another product, which other research services may not be familiar with, is the documentary and analytical report on the PA work, which is prepared for each session and each legislative term. This is the report that traces back each issue discussed in the PA and gives a brief review of its debates and procedures. For example, if one is tracing a certain bill, the report will include the following: the aim of this bill, date of its referral to the standing committee concerned, main



points of the committee report, amendments introduced by the committee, date of submitting the report to the plenary sitting, number of MPs participating in the debate, main points raised by different parties, amendments approved by the house, government comments, final decision by the house, and any special procedures that were followed. The report also includes quantitative analysis - a statistical and graphical summary showing the volume of parliamentary workload.

The research service publishes various booklets and brochures aimed at educating the public about the Parliament, its structure, function, and history. It also responds to requests from local and foreign organizations regarding these matters.

### **Present Challenges and Future Prospects**

The satisfaction in our achievements to date does not mask the fact that there are serious difficulties and challenges that still have to be tackled. *Recruiting staff* is a major difficulty. Apart from the problem which is familiar to other parliamentary research units of finding the qualified researcher who is able to conduct the kind of research the legislature needs, we also have problems specific to the PA.

When the research service was established, the PA had already excess staff especially in its 18 standing committees. Accordingly, it was only prepared to hire a limited number of new employees. We thought that we could recruit some of our staff from committee researchers, as they at least had the advantage of knowing how the legislature operates, and in that way the PA could make the best use of its human resources. Unfortunately, this solution proved to be a failure. Committee staff were so used to a certain kind of work that it was hard to teach them the new methodology and techniques required for preparing the different and new products of the research service. We realized that we were better off with the fresh graduates who joined the new unit and went through intensive 'on the job' training. However the PA was not offering the competitive salaries necessary to hire and keep researchers. Not only did we have to take the second best researchers after the universities had their pick, but there was always the danger of losing them to other research centers offering better salaries. On the other hand, we failed in our attempt to create a new corps or category of staff to accommodate the new researchers. Thus we were faced by another difficult situation inside the PA with the new researchers getting the same salaries as committee staff although they were working longer hours and doing extra work.

We tried to compensate weak salaries by giving cash incentives and bonuses, but again this did not work very well as the PA has a very rigid and tight system of incentives. We are relying now on non-cash incentives like flexible working hours, priority in taking free English language courses and other training courses, and priority in attending seminars and various conferences in Egypt.

*Information technology* represents quite a challenge to us. The PA established an IT department in 1994, but there is a huge gap between what this department is doing on the one hand and the users' needs on the other. We have not yet benefited from the different applications of IT in the research field, and we are also suffering from the slow pace of the automation process in the library. We think the best solution of this problem is to have IT officers among the staff of the research service and the library as well, but unfortunately so far that has not been feasible.

Our plan for creating a parliamentary research service had many experimental features, and hence involved a degree of trial and error. We did not *market our services* properly neither among the PA staff nor its members. The relationship with the committee staff is not yet fully understood: to some we have to explain that our job is to help and not to compete; to others we have to say that it is not our responsibility to do their work for them. As for PA members, some of them are not aware of many of our products, while others do not even know the location of the research service in the parliament building.

Much of our future prospects depends on solving these problems, but a great deal also relies on enhancing democracy in Egypt. The legislature does not operate in a vacuum, but performs its role in the context of the cultural, political and socio-economic environment. In this environment democracy should not be treated in dichotomous terms of either being there or not, but rather as a continuous variable that may attain different levels at different times. Taking more steps on the hard road of building a democratic society in Egypt will undoubtedly have its direct and strong impact on the research service of the Egyptian Parliament. Suffice to mention here that if democratization means - amongst other things - free dissemination and flow of information, stronger political parties, and a higher representation of the opposition in parliament, then this will enhance the importance of parliamentary debates based on the objective analysis of alternative points of views, as policy decisions of the government will be largely influenced by the outcome of these debates.

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