



SECTION ON LIBRARY AND RESEARCH SERVICES FOR PARLIAMENTS



Members of parliament in every corner of the globe require information on a broad array of issues for their legislative, oversight and representational work. They are confronted with challenges in finding relevant, appropriate and authoritative information to support the decisions they make and the actions they take. Parliamentary libraries and research services support these parliamentarians and their legislatures. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Section on Library and Research Services of Parliament supports the work of these library, research, and information services to members and staff of parliaments.



Participants at the IFLA Library & Research Services for Parliaments 2015 Pre-Conference, Cape Town, South Africa

The challenges faced by parliamentary libraries and research services in serving parliamentarians and the staff of legislatures as well as the citizens served by them include:

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

Work of the Section

The section aims to assist IFLA members in meeting the challenges they face in their work in parliaments by focusing on these priorities:

- ◆ increase the effectiveness of parliamentary libraries and research services;
- ◆ develop and promote standards and best practices in providing information and knowledge to parliaments;

- ◆ exchange experience, knowledge and problem solving strategies, and promote networking amongst parliamentary libraries and research services as well as with others;
- ◆ provide a forum for addressing emerging issues related to legislative processes;
- ◆ promote the establishment of libraries and research services as a fundamental component in the development of democratic legislatures throughout the world; and,
- ◆ promote openness, transparency and the strengthening of democratic participation through the provision of information about legislation and parliaments to citizens.

Section membership

The Section's current membership brings together the leading professionals in over 80 parliamentary libraries at supranational, national and subnational levels in more than 50 countries. The institutions represent a range from one-person libraries to services with hundreds of staff members, some operating on very limited resources and others with more robust funding. Some are led from the most senior levels in their parliament, others have to struggle to make their voices heard. This Section provides an invaluable source of support and expertise to all its members, and has a particularly strong sense of mutual respect and friendship.



2013 Site Visit to the Singapore National Assembly library during the IFLA Section Preconference

In most of the regions of the world, there is an active association of parliamentary libraries and research services. These regional groups provide activities, knowledge sharing and mutual support to their members and are woven together into a global group by the IFLA section. A list of these regional associations can be found on our website. The Section membership is comprised of parliamentary libraries and research service institutions as well as some individual members with links to these regional networks.

Organization and Activities

The Section's work is guided by a Standing Committee of twenty individuals, each of whom is elected for 4 years. To ensure renewal, half of these positions terminate every second year and new representatives are elected. The Standing Committee members vote for a Chair and a Secretary in election years, for a 2 year term, who act as the Executive Committee. Membership of the Standing Committee is on a personal, rather than institutional basis, and members of the Standing Committee attend annual meetings of the Section.



2014 IFLA Lyon (France) Knowledge Café: Learning Challenges for Librarians & Library Managers

The annual IFLA conference and the Section's preconference which is usually hosted by the parliament of the host country for the IFLA conference are the main events for the Section. The preconference over several days provides a program specific to the parliamentary community, in addition to the open sessions during the main IFLA conference. The Section often organizes an interactive workshop during the course of the annual conference activities. Since 2009 the Section has also organized a Capacity Building Programme—usually in partnership with other organizations—focused on

one or more areas of professional development identified by the parliamentary community.

Being part of IFLA ensures that the Section maintains links with other types of libraries and keeps abreast of general library and information service developments. In addition, the Section is also aligned with organizations involved in parliamentary development activities and with the professional associations that link parliaments around the world. In recent years, this has included joint activities with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) and the Global Center for ICT (a joint initiative of the UN and the IPU) to organize events, to contribute to reports and collaborate on guidelines and standards. The Section has actively cooperated with these organizations to host conferences and workshops outside of the scheduled annual conferences.



2012 site visit to the Parliamentary Corner of the Gothenburg (Sweden) Public Library

Publications

The Section has also undertaken a robust publication effort. Recent publications include:

- ◆ Guidelines for Research Services for Parliaments (2015)
- ◆ Social Media Guidelines for Parliaments (2013)
- ◆ Handbook on Information and Communication Technologies in Parliamentary Libraries (2012)
- ◆ Library Trends 58 (4) Spring 2010: The Purpose, Present Situation and Future of the Parliamentary Library
- ◆ Guidelines for Legislative Libraries (2nd Edition, 2009)

The Section also publishes an electronic newsletter several times a year. All publications are available on the Section's website.



Further Information

The Section has a discussion list for information and knowledge sharing within the community. For details on how to subscribe to the discussion list, and for additional information about the Section, please go to our website at <http://www.ifla.org/services-for-parliaments>.