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ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES: HOW DO THEY INFLUENCE THE LIBRARY?

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Introduction

Eleven years ago, in 1992, the Section on Library and Research Services for Parliament conducted a survey entitled *The Place of the Library in the Administrative Structure of the Parliament / La place de la bibliothèque dans la structure administrative du Parlement*. The survey was the result of the work of Ernest Kohl, chair of the section and Ian Matheson from New Zealand as well as Erik Spicer from Canada. In the report, Erik J. Spicer indicated that:

“In two countries the Parliamentary Librarian is directly responsible to both the Speaker of the House and the Speaker / President of the Senate: in two other cases the Librarian is directly responsible to the Speaker. In all other cases the Librarian appears to be responsible to either some higher official or to a committee. In eight cases this is either the Clerk or the Secretary General. Other officials include the Director General of Legislative Services, Head Administrative Department, Director of Information Facilities, General Parliamentary Services, Administrative Director, the Committees named are the Library Committee, Joint Committee on the Library, the Library Sub-Committee of the Offices Committee.”

These reporting relationship models have not changed much over the last decade and the Parliamentary or the Legislative Librarian will continue to report to the Speakers, the Clerks or to another senior officer or manager of the Parliament or the Legislatures.

Information Technology

Information technology, however, has had a major impact on parliamentary and legislative operations and has affected the organizational structures of libraries.

Since the past survey, all parliamentary and legislative libraries have undergone much innovation, mutation and transition in the area of service providing. Perhaps you recall the buzz word (Slide 5) “re-engineering” popularized by the managers of the nineties. One effect of re-engineering was the realignment of structures in organizations including libraries. This new trend of re-alignment provoked and engendered the flattening of organizational structures. As Bloss and Lanier put it:

“Organizational changes in Library and information services includes a migration from a hierarchical to a matrix structure, through the flattening of the organization, the removal of management layers (particularly the now-redundant supervisory or middle management level), and the formation of committees, task forces, working groups and cross-divisional working groups.”

Access to Electronic Information

If the trend of the parliamentary and legislative libraries during the 1980s was to develop computerized catalogues and online databases; today the new trend is the use of the Internet and the World Wide Web (Web) to access and to disseminate electronic information to parliamentary clients. Many online catalogues have now evolved to a full-text database, including digitized publications and links to electronic documents.

Moreover, there is no doubt that information technology has affected, not only the libraries, but also parliamentary and legislative functions and activities and this has had a tremendous impact on organizational structures. Over the last five years, the concept of knowledge-based organization has appeared and emerged in Parliaments and Legislatures, and the Library is and will be instrumental in the application of this new concept.

As L.W.H. Tam and A.P. Robertson stated:

“In the changing organization, management is lead by teams, so that those staff most closely affected by the changes proposed, institute and evaluate decisions, as opposed to the previous situation, in which such activities were all carried out by top management.”

The future Virtual Parliamentary Library will include four main components, or pillars. These pillars will deal with electronic information, information systems, knowledge (staff and expertise) and finally printed material collections.

The e-information sector will continue to be dominated by the Internet and the Web and the number of digitized books and documents will grow exponentially.

The information systems and search engines are the instruments by which e-information is made accessible. One recent development is the technology of simplified interfaces, which provides access to various databases on the Internet through the use of a search engine. In the traditional libraries, the librarians, the research analysts and the technicians were instrumental in providing access to information. Their role will be more knowledge-based oriented, in the future, making for a seamless communication between Parliamentarians and the library staff. The team approach by subjects and domains will become the standard to ensure access to the most reliable sources of e-information. This approach will allow for the development of specific skills and expertise related to e-information. Library staff will become an intrinsic part of the knowledge-based institute that will constitute the Virtual Parliamentary Library.

Conservation/Preservation

While several futuristic thinkers believe that the virtual library will not need storage space for printed materials, I believe that there will be a large collection of books and other printed documents for at least the next twenty years. Although, it is true that the magnitude of the concrete Library collections will tend to diminish with the growth of the digitized collections and virtual libraries.

In parliamentary and legislative libraries, in particular, there will remain a need and a responsibility for conservation, preservation and archiving of original copies of parliamentary papers and other documents for many years if not for always.

These four components, or pillars, will impact and will be reflected more and more in the organizational structure of parliamentary and legislative libraries.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as information technology becomes more prominent and as library staff become more knowledge-based oriented, libraries will realign their organizational structure to better serve the management needs of their institution and best serve their parliamentary clientele.

To start the exchanges and discussions, I propose the following question:

- How do you perceive the future changes in your library?
- In what ways do you anticipate your library becoming a more knowledge-based institution?
- How will this affect your organizational structure?