



International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
Fédération Internationale des Associations de Bibliothécaires et des Bibliothèques
Internationaler Verband der bibliothekarischen Vereine und Institutionen
Международная Федерация Библиотечных Ассоциаций и Учреждений
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الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات ومؤسسات المكتبات

About IFLA

www.ifla.org

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

IFLA provides information specialists throughout the world with a forum for exchanging ideas and promoting international cooperation, research, and development in all fields of library activity and information service. IFLA is one of the means through which libraries, information centres, and information professionals worldwide can formulate their goals, exert their influence as a group, protect their interests, and find solutions to global problems.

IFLA's aims, objectives, and professional programme can only be fulfilled with the co-operation and active involvement of its members and affiliates. Currently, approximately 1,600 associations, institutions and individuals, from widely divergent cultural backgrounds, are working together to further the goals of the Federation and to promote librarianship on a global level. Through its formal membership, IFLA directly or indirectly represents some 500,000 library and information professionals worldwide.

IFLA pursues its aims through a variety of channels, including the publication of a major journal, as well as guidelines, reports and monographs on a wide range of topics. IFLA organizes workshops and seminars around the world to enhance professional practice and increase awareness of the growing importance of libraries in the digital age. All this is done in collaboration with a number of other non-governmental organizations, funding bodies and international agencies such as UNESCO and WIPO. IFLANET, the Federation's website, is a prime source of information about IFLA, its policies and activities: www.ifla.org

Library and information professionals gather annually at the IFLA World Library and Information Congress, held in August each year in cities around the world.

IFLA was founded in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1927 at an international conference of national library directors. IFLA was registered in the Netherlands in 1971. The Koninklijke Bibliotheek (Royal Library), the national library of the Netherlands, in The Hague, generously provides the facilities for our headquarters. Regional offices are located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Pretoria, South Africa; and Singapore.

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Guidelines for Legislative Libraries

2nd, completely updated
and enlarged edition

Keith Cuninghame

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Preface

It had been clear for some time that, valuable as the first edition of these Guidelines has been, the rapid changes in the world of information provision in general and of parliamentary libraries in particular meant that a new edition was needed. Discussions during the IFLA conference in Seoul in 2006 led to an agreement to seek funding for this revised edition. At that time I was shortly to retire from my post in the United Kingdom House of Commons Library and I agreed to take on the responsibility for the work. In doing so I have been helped by many people. In particular, the advisory group who are listed in Chapter 1. Their input in commenting on early drafts has been very valuable and I would like to express my thanks to them for their wise comments and for giving up their time. I have also had the support of successive Chairs of the IFLA Section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments. Donna Scheeder, Director of Law Library Services at the Library of Congress was Chair when the initial decision was made to seek support for a new edition. Gro Sandgrind, Librarian of the Norwegian Parliamentary Library, was Chair while most of the work was being done. Moira Fraser, Librarian of the New Zealand Parliament, took over as Chair at the IFLA conference in Milan in 2009, as the work was entering its final stage. Thank you to all three of them. I have also been grateful for the support of many other colleagues from parliamentary libraries when I have quizzed them. In particular, when I attended the Conference of Library and Research Services for Parliaments in Rome in August 2009 and received useful feedback both at a conference session on the guidelines and in discussion with individuals. I should also like to remember Dermot Englefield, editor of the first edition of these guidelines. Sadly, he died in July 2007 before work started on the revised edition, so I was not able to discuss it with him, which would have been a pleasure. Finally, my thanks to my wife Julie for all her support while I have been engaged on this revision. I hope it will be as useful as the first edition has been.

Keith Cuninghame
November 2009

Foreword

The lifeblood of parliaments is information, so parliaments need information services to help them to manage the information flows that sustain democracy across the world. The report of the conference called *Informing Democracy*¹, which was a joint initiative of the Inter Parliamentary Union, the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments and IFLA in October 2008 had this to say about the importance of parliamentary libraries and research services to their legislatures:

“Access to reliable, timely information is essential to the proper functioning of democratic legislatures. Parliamentary libraries and research services contribute to the effectiveness of parliament by providing authoritative, independent, non-partisan and relevant information. These services have in many places evolved greatly in recent decades, in parallel with new information and communications technologies that have fundamentally changed how parliaments manage knowledge and information.”

One of the stated goals of the IFLA section for Libraries and Research Services to Parliaments is “to develop and promote standards and best practices in providing information and knowledge to parliaments”. These guidelines are particularly useful for those working to establish library and research roles in developing parliaments. Both the Section and experienced section members have been asked to advise and support a number of these initiatives so a new edition of the Guidelines will be invaluable.

The attendance at IFLA Section for Libraries and Research Services events has expanded over recent years to include every continent and most countries of the world. The value of sharing knowledge and experiences with colleagues working in a similar environment, across cultural and language barriers, is borne out by this growth in attendance and membership. The smaller library and research services which are either newly established or have recently acquired an expanded mandate, are

¹ http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/inform_dem_en.pdf

likely to find the Guidelines particularly useful in helping to establish appropriate levels of service.

ICT developments over the years since the first edition of the Guidelines were published have ushered in huge changes in the way parliamentarians do their work, and therefore in the way parliamentary libraries and research services support the work of their parliaments. By using the new methods and technologies that are now available parliamentary library and research services can assist their parliaments in dealing with information overload and support parliamentary scrutiny and the development of quality legislation. This new edition of the guidelines updated and expanded to cover the new technologies will support this work.

Keith Cuninghame, formerly a senior manager in the UK House of Commons Library, and an enthusiastic contributor to Section meetings over the years, has largely rewritten these guidelines. He was assisted by an Advisory Group, drawn from across the world of parliamentary libraries and research services. Our grateful thanks are due to all of them, especially to Keith.

Moira Fraser
Chair, IFLA Section for Libraries and Research Services to Parliaments

Chapter 1

Setting the Scene

Background

The Original edition of the *Guidelines for Legislative Libraries*, edited by the late Dermot Englefield, was published in 1993². It has been a valuable source of guidance for people working in the field of providing research and information services for parliamentarians, and has been translated into several languages. Dermot was Librarian of the House of Commons from 1991 to 1993, having been Deputy Librarian from 1976 to 1991. He was involved with IFLA for over 20 years, serving the Section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments for four years as Secretary then four as Chairman. He was thus excellently placed to edit the original edition, which he did with a group of experienced colleagues. He and his fellow contributors were well aware of the pace of change as the guidelines were being produced; change that has escalated since then. In particular, though the 1993 volume dealt at some length with computerisation of libraries, including, for example, the development of online databases, it is significant that the accompanying glossary does not include 'email', 'internet' 'intranet' or 'website' among the terms explained. The centrality of these to any information service is one reason why an updated volume is needed. But the need for an updated Guidelines is not just driven by technological change. As discussions within the IFLA section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments have made clear, there is today an appetite for advice on a range of topics which were not covered (or not covered in detail) in the first edition of the Guidelines. These include, for example, the marketing of services and the educating of users in how to get the best out of those services.

This new edition has been written by Keith Cuninghame, a member of the senior management team in the House of Commons Library, United Kingdom, for 13 years until he retired in 2006, a regular attendee at

² *Guidelines for Legislative Libraries* Edited by Dermot Englefield. IFLA Publications 64. K.G. Saur, 1993

IFLA conferences and a participant in the work of the Section for eight years. He has been supported by an advisory group of seven people from around the world with a wide range of experience between them. They commented on early drafts of all the chapters. Janet Seaton wrote the first draft of Chapter 11. They are:

Innocent Rugambwa	Head of Library and Research, Parliament of Uganda
Donna Scheeder	Director, Law Library Services, Library of Congress, USA
Jarle Skjørestad	Head of Research, Parliament of Norway
Janet Seaton	Formerly Head of the Scottish Parliament Information Centre
Mary Seefried	Parliamentary Librarian, Queensland, Australia
Ellie Valentine	Has worked on USAID projects in Pakistan, Armenia, Ukraine, etc
William Young	Parliamentary Librarian, Canada

The text of the previous edition has been largely re-written rather than simply revised: a reflection of the rapid pace of change in the intervening 16 years. But general principles and advice and some of the original text survive. These general principles, as discussions within the Section have shown, are applicable to libraries of different size, resources, age and stage of development. When they meet, staff of parliamentary libraries are often struck by what they have in common, even though there may be great differences between the institutions they work for and their political contexts.

The libraries of legislatures are institutions that, by the simplest definition are special libraries. They serve the particular and defined clientele of Members of Parliament, together with their personal staff. They also support the institution as a whole and may have additional roles for ex-

ample a curatorial one, or one providing information about parliament to the public and schools. If you were setting up a legislature from scratch you might wonder whether it needed a library at all. The word is still very much thought of in terms of buildings and of physical collections of material. For example the Chambers 21st Century Dictionary defines a library as ‘a room, rooms or building where books, films, records, videos etc are kept of study, reference or lending’ or as ‘a collection of books, films, records, videos etc for public or private use’. The Wikipedia definition has a more modern feel. It says a library is ‘a collection of information, sources, resources, and services: it is organized for use and maintained by a public body, an institution, or a private individual. In the more traditional sense, a library is a collection of books.’ This definition is more relevant, but you might still wonder if a newly created legislature would need one. The definition has a passive feel about it and does not really give an indication of the tempo and currency of the needs of parliamentarians in the 21st century.

The instant comment demanded of a parliamentarian at an airport or press conference; the wish to prove that your opponent is out of date with his or her statistics; the need to contribute to public debate on the television or radio; the need to ask questions which will penetrate the defensiveness or evasiveness of the executive branch of government. These all demand a currency and accuracy of information which does not necessarily emerge from the definitions of a library. It also implies the need for access to staff who have specialist skills and knowledge, such as skills in quickly searching for information; in assessing what information is accurate and what is not; in having specialist knowledge of the wide range of subjects potentially of interest to the parliamentarian, both generally and in a legislative context.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union has recently produced ‘good practice’ guidelines for parliaments.³ These note that a well resourced parliament will have, among other things, a ‘comprehensive library and information service’. And the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association’s *Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures* lists among the rec-

³ *Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-First Century: a guide to good practice*. Inter-Parliamentary Union 2006. <http://www.ipu.org/english/handbks.htm#democracy>

ommendations on parliamentary staff that ‘Members and staff of the Legislature shall have access to sufficient research, library, and ICT facilities.’⁴

Those guidelines, both the result of widespread consultation, demonstrate a general acceptance that a modern democratic parliament and modern parliamentarians need library services, research and information services, call them what you will, if they are going to be effective.

The first edition of the guidelines was published at a time of growth in interest in how democracy works, following the symbolic dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989. It was translated into Russian and disseminated to practitioners in the newly independent states. This process, however, was certainly not confined to those parliaments which were able to develop following the collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, but was a world-wide one. Within that process there was a general realisation that an ‘emerging democracy’ needed an effective parliament and that those parliaments needed an effective research and information service if they were to do their jobs properly. But the desire to think seriously and in a fresh way about how legislative libraries can best meet the needs of parliamentarians, and indeed about how parliaments should function, was not confined to these so-called ‘emerging democracies’. Countries with long established parliamentary libraries have been confronted by the need for rapid change if they are to keep up with the increasing demands and expectations of their clients, with the huge amount of information (both accurate and suspect) which the Internet has made available at the touch of a button and the ways in which technology has changed how information can be supplied to clients.

If they work in accordance with the IPU and CPA Guidelines, staff working in legislative libraries (as opposed to those who work for individual parliamentarians), will be working for the parliament, not for the executive. There is, however, one distinctive aspect of the work of these

⁴ *Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures*. A Study Group Report Published by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. December 2006. http://www.cpahq.org/uploadedFiles/Information_Services/Publications/CPA_Electronic_Publications/Recommended%20Benchmarks%20for%20Democratic%20Legislatures.pdf