

CHINA (Taiwan)

THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION SYSTEM

BY: KARL MIN KU

Director of Library and Information Service
Legislative Yuan, Republic of China

for THE 1ST BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF
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ABSTRACT

In a modern democratic society, any issues will be discussed through parliamentary process for final public resolution. Information, therefore becomes a vital element for understanding, communication, or debate. This paper provides a description of the strategies for information system development, steps to establish the systems, current systems and achievements, and the prospective development of the Library and Information Service of the Legislative Yuan.

I. Preface

In 1981, Legislative Yuan began its internal administrative meetings for improving legislative functions at its 68th session, and since then the Legislators have kept expressed within those meetings, their strong wishes for a computer-based legislative information service in Legislative Yuan. Former President Ni of Legislative Yuan also continuously gave his instructions about the work, and in 1984, he directed the Library and Information Service (LIS) to formulate, according to the actual situation and needs, a concrete plan for the development of computerized information service.

To ensure the success of this computerization project, a Committee on the Computerized Information Management was then organized in January of 1984, presided by the Secretary General of Legislative Yuan, with LIS's director as the executive secretary. In addition, foreign computer information experts were invited to be the committee's advisors. On the other hand, a domestic AD HOC working group for The Development of the Information and Research Services were set up in September of 1985, and granted since then by the Asia Foundation; Mr. Karl Ku was appointed as the leader of this project.

Since no one had experiences in automation practices among the staffs of Legislative Yuan, and there were few precedents in parliamentary information service in the world, not to mention the large differences between countries, the systems to be developed in Legislative Yuan would be a totally new task.

Nevertheless, by the collaboration of the Committee members, the participation and consultation offered by the information experts, and the endeavor of the LIS staffs, the legislative information project of Legislative Yuan progressed rather well, and has completed its first stage development successfully. A computer center with several

Chinese information systems have already been enacted under this first stage development as the basis for the development of the legislative information system of Legislative Yuan.

Following is a brief report on the progresses, major performances, and services already having been provided.

II. STRATEGIES FOR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

In order to establish a national information system to manage properly and fully utilize the legislative records and documents, the Committee on the Computerized Information Management had gone through a very cautious planning process and had taken into considerations every component in setting up its fundamental principles for the development of the information systems as follows:

1. To Confirm Information Requests

To communicate with potential users within Legislative Yuan, including legislators, their assistants and the Yuan staffs, in order to understand their real needs in information services upon which the objectives and strategies of the computerization project may accordingly be decided step by step.

2. To Define Project Scope

After a preliminary study on users' demands and requirements, a Draft for the Computerized Information Work Project was composed in 1985 to clarify the scope of the project.

3. To Determine Project Priorities

In accordance with the technical aspects of Chinese data processing, and with Legislators' preference, the Legislators' Interpellation Information System and the Chinese Codes Information System were chosen to be the two pilot projects of the legislative information system development.

4. To Invite Legislators' Recommendations

In its developing process, the computerization project is kept open to the suggestions and advice from the Legislators. In order to explain the purpose and progress of the project to the legislators, as well as consult their opinions, the LIS had twice conducted special briefings for legislators in 1986 and 1988.

5. To Allocate Budgetary Support

With a budget of NT\$ 2 million, the computerization project was started in Fiscal 1986, and this amount has been gradually increased yearly in coping with the expansion of the work. The budget is up to NT\$ 42 million in fiscal 1990.

6. To Recruit Professional Personnel

Since a large amount of intensive brain work is needed in supporting system development, recruiting professional people then becomes very important. Starting from 1986, Legislative Yuan has held several public examinations to select qualified personnel for each technical position, meanwhile, LIS is seeking manpower inside the institute for further development of the project.

7. To Promote Information Consumption

To ensure an effective utilization of the Chinese information systems, the Law Information Center was founded in 1985 which incorporated an international information service, DIALOG, in the hope that through the experiences of a well-developed system, users might be accustomed to and appreciate the computerized information searching. On the other hand, a series of user's training programs were conducted by the center for establishing the new behavior on information consumption. At present, many terminal users can easily take the advantage of the Legislative Information system.

8. To Bring In New Technologies

Computer technique has made significant head ways in keeping with the development of science and technology. Knowing the importance of keeping pace with new technologies, colleagues of LIS are encouraged to improve their professional literacies and knowledge through attending training courses held abroad or domestically. These will bring in necessary technical inputs and keep a certain standard for the systems under developing.

The eight methods mentioned above have constituted a chain linking the managements of legislative information system development.

III. STEPS TO ESTABLISH THE SYSTEMS

After careful planning and preparation, the legislative information development project has been forwarded to a series of intensive work started from 1986; the process includes the following stages:

1. Request for Proposals

In January 1986, the Legislative Yuan announced its computerized information project to more than one hundred computer vendors to invite their proposals on the development of this project. Finally there were 20 vendors turned in the required proposals to the Legislative Yuan.

2. Developing Test Project

In March 1986, the Legislative Yuan invited experts and scholars of Chinese information science to examine and evaluate those proposals submitted by the vendors. Since there was no single vendor who had the complete experience on similar system previously, five instead of one vendors were finally chosen to guarantee against any undesirable flaws in the pilot project. These five most qualified and willing vendors then signed a contract with the Legislative Yuan respectively to develop the pilot systems, and the Legislative Yuan

provided each vendor a grant of NT\$200,000 for the project. This pilot project was to establish a prototype of the system. The contract lasted for 6 months, and focused on developing the following two systems: Interpellation Information System and Chinese Codes Information System.

3. Evaluation & Demonstration

During the period of developing the pilot systems by those qualified vendors the staffs of the LIS assisted in confirming the functional requirements of the systems, and these system requirements were then set as the criteria of evaluation to be held later on. As the contract came to an end, the Legislative Yuan held an exhibition to demonstrate and evaluate the systems accomplished by those 5 vendors. The LIS invited legislators, government officials, information specialists, and scholars from academic communities to Legislative Yuan to attend the exhibitions and expressed their opinions on the system for further improvement.

4. Installing Systems

Finally, the Taiwan Digital Corp. was elected champion out of the 5 vendors, and won the contract for developing the remaining systems. In October 1987, the host computer and its peripheral devices were installed and in the next 2 months went through a series of intensive test. In January 1988, all of the primary technical transfer and staff training was completed. All of the equipment was accepted by that March, the system then began its normal operation.

5. Environment & Space Planning

While the pilot computerization project was in progress, new working space was also arranged to facilitate the operation of the computer systems; there were special electrical equipment, aircondition system, earthquake/flood/fire proofed system, 24 hrs. safeguard system, etc. which have been set up by a group of engineers

responsible for the construction of the computer center.

6. Organizing Computer Center

The Computer Center of the Legislative Yuan was formally founded in November 1987. It is in charge of the computerization project of the whole Legislative Yuan. The Computer Center can be divided into 5 functional units: computer room, briefing & training area, data processing area, programming area, and printer room. At present, it is equipped with a Digital's VAX 8530 as the host computer, and several peripheral devices.

IV. CURRENT SYSTEMS & ACHIEVEMENTS

By the end of March 1990, the legislative information development project had been forwarded in three different approaches, including the development of a large-scaled Chinese information system, the connection with international information network, and the development of microcomputer application systems. Right now the LEGISIS contains the following systems:

1. Legislators' Interpellation Information System

This system provides a computerized information retrieval with multiple access points. It contains the most updated as well as retrospective records in its database. The database can be searched by date, subject, people etc., more than 14 access points, and all the access points can be combined by Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) to get a narrower or broader result. The system also provides online statistics by person, subject, and category. Several kinds of statistical printouts are offered, and some of them have been distributed to the Legislators periodically.

2. Legislative Literature Information System

This system establishes a bibliographic database of periodical articles and research papers in law, politics, economics, financial,

public administration, and technical education, etc. It is designed with two versions of user interfaces, i.e., command-driven and menu-driven. The former is to be used by the experienced users to do interactive and quick searches, the latter is for the laymen to search the database by themselves. The system contains nine access points, including categories, subjects, keywords, authors, journals, etc. All of the access points can be combined by boolean operators.

3. Chinese Codes Information System

This system provides the complete contents of the ROC laws, including their titles, texts, associated articles, enacting dates, amending dates, subjects, and purposes etc. The system has several kinds of searching methods.

By using the titles, chapter, section names, or article numbers to conduct searching for the text of the codes. Or by using the Chinese keywordstring in context (Chinese KWIC), or important legal terms to find out relevant statutes.

4. Chinese Code Amendments Information System

This full-text information system contains all the codes amended by the Legislative Yuan since 1967, the year when the government promulgated the Central Codes Standard. The information in this system contains the main reason for the amendment, procedure of the amendment, and the text of the amended codes. It can offer legislators the option to compare and study different editions of the codes for the better understanding of their amendatory history.

5. Legislative News Information Index System

This is a computer-assisted system to edit and compile the legislative information extracted from daily newspapers on a PC basis, in order that the legislative News Information Index can be published more efficiently in keeping up with the timeliness of current news, and provide more timely and effective information

service on important events to the legislators.

6. International Legislative Information System

With computer and telecommunication network, this service connects to DIALOG and NEXIS which provide more than 500 databases. It is always equipped with fast, up-to-date, and comprehensive information just like an electronic encyclopedia. The system also provides DIAL ORDER, down loading and CD-ROM information retrieval service.

7. Congressional Diplomatic Information System

Using a computer-assisted information retrieval system, this system keeps the records of guests coming from all over the world to Legislative Yuan. The names of visitors, nationalities or political parties can be used as access points to find out visitors' background information. Using visiting dates, numbers of visitors, or nation's names to check out the activities of the visitors in Legislative Yuan.

8. LEGISIS Thesaurus System

This system provides the bilingual subject indexing terms used by all of the Legislative Information Systems for the purpose of improving the precision of database retrieval. It has three access methods: Chinese terms, English terms, and the code of the terms. In addition, the system also publishes a hard copy "LEGISIS Thesaurus" for the reference of end-users.

V. PROSPECTIVE DEVELOPMENT

Legislative Information System's (LEGISIS) primary structure has been established. Compared with other computerization projects, LEGISIS can be recognized as one of the most efficient plans that have ever been accomplished within a three-year term, however, it is still far from being perfect. So there is still much work to be done in the future.

The LIS has mapped out the long term plan of the LEGISIS develop-

ment to accomplish the following information systems within the next 10 years:

1. Legal Documents Full-text Information Group System.
2. Interpellation and Legislative Documents Information Group System.
3. International Legal Information Group System.
4. Office Automation Information Group System.
5. Bills Track and Administrative Management Information System.
6. Government Budget Information System.

Besides, the plan of setting up a local area network (LAN) for Legislative Yuan is being undertaken, and a nationwide network among legislators' local offices is also planning to be installed in the coming decade.

PRIMARY FEATURES OF LEGISLATIVE YUAN AND ITS
LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICE

The parliament of the Republic of China is unicameral, but it is composed of 3 bodies: the National Assembly, the Control Yuan, and the Legislative Yuan.

The functions of the National Assembly is as follows: 1. To elect the president and the vice president. 2. to recall the president and the vice president. 3. to amend the Constitution. 4. To vote in the exercise of its right of referendum on proposed constitutional amendments submitted by the Legislative Yuan.

The Control Yuan is the highest supervisory organ of the nation. It exercises the power of consent, impeachment, censure, and audit.

The third party, the Legislative Yuan, is the one we are working in. It is the highest law-making organ of the nation, and expands as a forum for policy debate. It is constituted of members elected by the people. Up to March 1990, there are 281 members, among them, 240 are men, and 41 women, 231 are Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) members, 21 Democratic Progress Party members, and 29 others. 11 members are from Mongolian, Tibet and other racial groups. Members serve a term of three years, and are eligible for re-election. The Legislative Yuan holds two sessions each year, and is now in its 85th session. While in session, the whole yuan meets every Tuesday and Friday.

The legislative Yuan has the following twelve standing committees: domestic affairs, foreign affairs, national defense, economics, finance, budget, education, communications, frontier affairs, overseas Chinese affairs, judiciary, and organic laws and statutes. In addition, there are the following five special

committees: Credentials, responsible for examining the credentials of members; Discipline, responsible for the decorum of members and for proposing disciplinary measures; Rules, responsible for the agenda; Audit, responsible for auditing the accounts of the Legislative Yuan; and Publications, responsible for editing, printing and publishing the official gazette of the Legislative Yuan and compiling laws.

In accordance with the stipulations of the Constitution and other laws, the Legislative Yuan exercises legislative power, hears administrative reports, requests policy changes, decides on bills relating to foreign affairs, finance, amnesty, martial law, and exercises the power of consent, proposes Constitutional amendments and handles other matters authorized by the Constitution.

The mission of the Library and Information Service, as stipulated in Article 4 of the Executive Regulations of Secretariat, the Legislative Yuan, 1953, is to conduct the acquisition and management of the legal and legislative documents, with the objective to provide necessary resources for the Legislature thru analysis, research and reference services, in support of Legislators' representative and legislative functions. To accomplish such objective, the tasks of the Library & Information Service, as defined in its principles of Task Performance, Jan. 1984, are as follows:

- to provide the Legislators with the information they need to communicate with the executive bodies and the general public in order to make appropriate public policies.
- to accumulate and disseminate information to the Legislators, including worldwide parliamentary documents, proceedings, interpellation records and all kinds of legal materials.
- to identify, collect, organize and distribute information to the

Legislators in support of their legislative and representative functions.

The LIS provides services to Legislators and their assistants, committees, and staffs of the Legislative Yuan. Parliamentary correspondents and government officials may also utilize its services. Services are provided on the following categories by orders:

- parliamentary documents and information .
- Government documents and information.
- Legal documents and information.
- Scholarly reference materials and information.
- Public affairs documents and information.
- General reading materials.

The collections of our library include: 70,000 Chinese books, 14,000 books in foreign languages, 600 kinds of journals and newspapers, over 100 kinds of microforms, and more than 50 audio-visual materials.

In 1990, there are 53 staff members in LIS, among them 58% are professionals in library, information and computer sciences. For the 1990 fiscal year, the budget for LIS is NT\$63,460,000 (US\$244,000), about 7.2% of the entire Legislative Yuan' budget.