

Association of Parliamentary Librarians of Asia and the Pacific (APLAP)

1996 Conference, 20-24 October

Working Paper for Discussion Groups

1. Purpose of the Conference

The **purpose** of the 1996 conference is to identify strategies for APLAP which will achieve a satisfactory level of inter-library cooperation and improved access to information resources and services for all parliamentarians in the region.

2. Expected Outcomes

The following **outcomes** have been suggested as targets for the 1996 conference:

- (i) To establish alliances with appropriate groups including the IPU, IFLA, and the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum in order to strengthen APLAP's capacity to achieve its goals.
- (ii) To consider whether a shared central resource for information support is an appropriate model for the small island nations of the South West Pacific and, if so, to determine the nature of such a service.
- (iii) To reach agreement that key information resources should be made accessible to other parliaments in electronic form, possibly via the Internet.
- (iv) To consider mechanisms for cooperative support for parliamentary libraries in Asia which do not have any immediate prospect of access to the Internet and electronic resources.
- (v) To improve communication between the region's parliamentary libraries through a monitored newsgroup on the Internet or by other means.
- (vi) To establish a stronger secretariat for APLAP, possibly within the regional office of IFLA in Bangkok.

Discussion Groups may wish to consider adding to the statement of purpose or expected outcomes.

3. Process

The Discussion Groups are expected to develop strategies for APLAP and for local application within each parliamentary library, and an action plan which may also include some local actions in addition to those to be addressed by APLAP.

In developing strategies and the action plan, Discussion Groups will be able to consider various models for cooperation and the potential offered by information technology, in particular the Internet.

Each Discussion Group will require a Leader and a Rapporteur. There will be opportunities for progress reports to be made during the conference and for general issues to be raised and clarified.

4. The initial views of participants

Participants have provided a brief outline of current needs in their library, the cooperative mechanisms which exist and their priorities for further inter-library cooperation within the umbrella of APLAP. These views are summarised in the following sections of this paper. Those marked .* are from a small island nation in the South West Pacific.

The comments are summarised below under each of the four questions in the survey form. They are presented anonymously, but participants may wish to identify their views within discussion groups.

1. In broad terms, what are the information and/or research needs of your members which are not being met adequately at present?

- . We have inadequate access to information from other countries, particularly relating to current and parliamentary affairs, apart from information accessible via the Internet.
- . Material on international law, statutes and treaties is unavailable.
- . Information about new technology and its implications for society is required.
- . We have difficulty in providing adequate information and research responses to questions relating to sensitive domestic, economic and political issues including an analysis of the government's budget and the analysis of other financial, economic, trade and development issues.
- . We require a capacity to provide a background paper on topical issues.
- . Current needs are being met, however, in the future there may be difficulties in maintaining both the quantity and quality of the services provided to members.
- . We need a mechanism for the prompt provision of information from overseas parliaments.
- . An online index to national and international newspapers is required.
- . Swift access to government and other source material related to major national projects is difficult.
- . We do not have adequate subject specialisation among our staff or sufficient staff to provide high quality services to all members in a timely manner.
- . Current information and/or research is required on every Bill, however, resources are inadequate and only about one fifth of all requests can be met.
- . Material in English is available on the Internet, etc. but its use is limited by the language skills of library staff.
- . Members have PC's but they do not have direct access to information databases or to the Internet.
- . Delivery of full text responses direct to member's PC's.
- * We lack periodicals, material on current affairs, cassettes, tapes, etc.
- * Some requests for information cannot be met because the library resources are very limited and there is little opportunity to recruit trained staff or to expand the library.
- * An efficient catalogue system is needed.

- . * Training in the analysis and evaluation of information by research officers is needed.
- . * The collections need to be brought up-to-date and a special effort made to improve the holdings of national official publications.
- . * An Internet link needs to be established.
- . * A guide to the library and its services would be helpful.
- . * We need to improve our systems for recording requests and for making sure material borrowed on interlibrary loan is available to meet subsequent requests which are similar.
- . * There is a need for current awareness services based upon a profile of each member's interests and for journal and newspaper articles to be abstracted.
- . * We need to be able to provide information briefs and background information on current issues and to translate these for some members.
- . * We need to improve our capacity to provide a legal information service.
- . * We need seating for at least four members in the library.
- . * We need to improve our holdings of government reports, Hansards, and constitutions from other countries.
- . * There is an urgent need for information at a local level, eg. government reports etc. which are not made available to the parliament automatically.

2. Outline the current level of cooperation between your library, other parliamentary libraries and other libraries in your country or region.

- . We exchange data with other libraries in our country, but not internationally, although we are willing to do so.
- . We receive publications from a number of important agencies and libraries within the country. We receive some published material from other parliamentary libraries but most are outside the region, eg. in Europe.
- . A strong network exists nationally with law libraries in particular.
- . Strong cooperative links exist with libraries within the country and with some national libraries internationally. Cooperation with parliamentary libraries in the region remains at a low level.
- . Extensive international publications exchange arrangements.
- . Legislation is provided in English via the Internet as part of the Global Legal Information Network (GLIN).
- . Staff exchange program.
- . Nationally, interlibrary loan services are provided and publications from the parliament are deposited in public libraries.
- . Publications are exchanged with a number of countries. The Internet is available, but not often used.
- . Strong links with the National Library and with public (municipal) libraries.
- . Support is received from a major European library and North American agency.
- . Sporadic contact with parliamentary libraries in the region.
- . We provide a reciprocal reference service to other parliamentary libraries and give a high priority to their requests.
- . We consult with colleagues in other parliamentary libraries concerning new developments and seek their opinions, etc.
- . We participate nationally in interlibrary loan services, provide mutual information services to other government libraries and act a library of last resort for non-government libraries in our areas of expertise.
- . Fax and e-mail is used to both send requests for information to other parliamentary libraries and to respond to requests where we can help.

. * We receive reference materials from a number of parliamentary libraries in other countries, also some staff secondment opportunities from time to time.

. * We receive some reference materials from other parliamentary libraries.

. * Limited local cooperation. The Internet would make a significant difference to international cooperation.

. * Some local cooperation to share ideas for library development and the shared use of cataloguing, etc.

. * Some exchange of publications , but locally there is some sharing of information services.

. * Gifts of reference books are received from a small number of other parliamentary libraries.

. * Reference materials and advice is provided by three overseas parliamentary libraries.

3. What are your priorities if interlibrary cooperation can be improved?

- (i) Human Resource Development opportunities
- (ii) Exchange of databases

- (i) Increase the level of exchange of publications within the region
- (ii) To exchange data on important current political, economic and social issues, eg. APEC, Aids, possibly by using electronic means
- (iii) To establish an online connection with APLAP members, preferably through the Internet, to make e-mail, etc. readily accessible
- (iv) Undertake comparative studies of member libraries as a source of ideas for improved services, supplemented by staff exchanges
- (v) Increased opportunities for training and participation in regional workshops and seminars.

- (i) To develop resource sharing.
- (ii) Exchange acquisition lists with other members and other publications concerning the library.

- (i) The mutual undertaking of reference services for other parliamentary libraries in the region.

This may be a practical initiative as each library may be able to respond to specific requests from existing budgets, whilst other actions, for example, the exchange of publications, or meeting the costs of traineeships, etc. may impose significant costs which are not easily funded.

Responding to specific requests for information would require a general agreement amongst members that 'This service will be rendered as far as is practical, subject to the understanding that it will not hinder services to our own members or otherwise reach beyond the resources available'.

- (i) To exchange information and news about national projects with other libraries in the region.
- (ii) To set up a staff exchange program.
- (iii) To produce and exchange CD ROM's of bibliographic and other information from member libraries.

- (i) Exchange of data bases in electronic form.
- (ii) A staff exchange program.
- (iii) Exchange of catalogues and reading lists.

- (i) Professional and financial support in further development of the library.
- (ii) Creation of a better understanding of the role of the parliamentary library in a democratic society.
- (iii) Development of a publishing program for the parliament, eg. the Debates.
- (iv) More efficient and effective use of information in electronic form, eg. via the Internet.

- (i) Electronic access to documentation from APLAP member countries.
- (ii) Staff exchanges where mutual benefits can be achieved.
- (iii) Selective exchange of publications between APLAP members.
- (iv) APLAP newsletter to notify changes in senior personnel, positions, contact number, etc.

(i) All member libraries to be linked by e-mail.

(i)* Secondment of a staff member from a developed parliamentary and visits by staff from such libraries.

(ii) Training for the staff of the library, including attachment to a more developed library.

(i)* Staff exchange opportunities to provide training, the exchange of ideas and the building of useful networks.

(ii) Mechanisms to enable information to be shared between parliamentary libraries.

(i)* Internet access.

(ii) APLAP members to circulate library handbooks to other members.

(iii) Interlibrary loan of expensive books between libraries.

(i)* Develop an active exchange program which might include the exchange of a useful service for publications or library materials.

(i)* Staff attachment especially in relation to automation and information retrieval systems.

(ii) The circulation of lists of parliamentary publications and material added to parliamentary library collections.

(iii) APLAP to establish a fax and photocopy service for requests between members.

(iv) APLAP to continue to assist in the exchange of ideas through inter-library meetings and seminars.

(i)* Training courses of 3-6 months is urgent.

(ii) Attachments to other libraries for staff would be very beneficial.

(iii) Funds and donor support.

(iv) Lists of relevant new publications.

(i)* Information on how other parliamentary libraries operate and how the parliaments are constituted.

(ii) To improve the flow of information about member countries within APLAP.

4. Other comments or views on how APLAP may improve the level of cooperation between members.

- . APLAP should arrange:
 - . practical staff training and development opportunities,
 - . access to data, particularly legislative data and information, to be shared and accessible between members.
- . APLAP should establish a permanent secretariat to facilitate improved cooperation.
- . APLAP should foster the development and use of Internet links between the region's parliamentary libraries.
- . There is a continuing need for financial, technical and training assistance in many APLAP member libraries. The Association should work to achieve continuing support, particularly in the use of advanced information technology.
- . Establish a liaison office to coordinate resource-sharing (in either print or electronic formats) between APLAP members.
- . Prepare and maintain a current directory of contacts within each member library which can be used by APLAP members when assistance is required.
- . APLAP should debate relevant aspects of international copyright and seek to position parliamentary libraries favourably in terms of data reproduction.
- . Members should be motivated to participate in regional projects.
- . Member libraries should receive support from their governments to make library and legislative source material available on the Internet.
- . To seek to develop compatible computer systems.
- . Encourage members to participate in the GLIN project.
- . APLAP needs to facilitate the regular exchange of information about developments, etc. in member libraries. A quarterly publication may be the appropriate vehicle.
- . Smaller libraries in the region would benefit significantly if they could receive the support of a larger, more established regional partner, which could offer continuing support and advice, etc.
- . Descriptions of special services offered to members, with reasons, costs, etc. should be available to other members.
- . APLAP members should share experiences of re-engineering library services in response to change in, say, the composition of the parliament or the changing information culture.
- . Share ideas on the innovative use of technology.

- . Descriptions of information-sharing between the agencies within individual parliaments.
- . APLAP may be able to coordinate the provision of access to information about member countries and relevant intergovernmental agencies.
- . APLAP members should ensure that one copy of their country's legislation is sent to the National Library of Australia which could act as a Clearinghouse as it has agreed to do in relation to the South West Pacific countries.
- . * The APLAP newsletter is important for communication and the reports of its meetings should be prepared and circulated to all members, including those unable to attend the meeting.
- . * APLAP should have a special program to assist in the development of small parliamentary libraries. Staff training and the attachment of people with the appropriate skills to work locally are high priorities for the parliamentary libraries of small countries.
- . * Survey all small parliamentary libraries in the region to identify shortcomings in basic Information Technology, eg. PC, fax, printer, etc. and facilitate donations or funding to overcome these shortfalls.
- . * Keep members informed via a newsletter, etc.
- . * Provide training opportunities for the staff of small parliaments, including on-the-job training.
- . * Survey the libraries in small countries to identify needs and facilitate offers of assistance.
- . * Presiding Officers to be informed that APLAP has some week long courses available if numbers are sufficient. Topics could include indexing newspapers online and indexing techniques. Fees would be charged to cover costs.
- . * APLAP could provide more material on developments in parliamentary libraries.

APLAP Conference Committee
October, 1996

Association of Parliamentary Librarians of Asia and the Pacific

Discussion Groups - Suggestions from First Meetings

The following suggestions are listed in random order and are listed as a basis for further consideration.

1. Prepare a contemporary manual of practice suitable for application in a small parliamentary library, which is capable of application by non-professional staff.
2. Include the Association of Secretaries-General of the IPU amongst the organisations with which APLAP should form alliances.
3. Examine the feasibility, costs and benefits of locating the APLAP secretariat within the IFLA regional office in Bangkok.
4. Consider the establishment of 'twinning' or 'sister libraries' as a means by which more developed libraries may be able to provide continuing assistance to smaller parliamentary libraries in a variety of forms, including the provision of specific information services.
5. Urge that the parliamentary debates and statutes in each member parliament be published on the Internet.
6. To improve communication immediately provide all delegates with a list of parliamentary 'home pages' and delegates' e-mail addresses before they leave Canberra.
7. Encourage the setting up of a 'bulletin board' or newsgroup for APLAP members on the Internet, possibly in conjunction with the Parliamentary Libraries Section of IFLA in order to expand the value and impact of the communications.
8. APLAP to identify sources of funding in order to carry out some of its projects and programs.
9. A retired person from a parliamentary library may be able to assist in running an APLAP secretariat.
10. Consider joining IFLA and examine the costs and benefits involved.
11. Form alliances with groups of Members and Presiding Officers in order to win their support in fighting for parliamentary libraries.
12. Promote the use of GLIN by APLAP members.

13. Establish a Clearinghouse for key parliamentary and government publications for those APLAP members who do not have access to the Internet.

14. If key documentation is not available in English at least publish indexes to parliamentary papers, etc. in English on the Internet .

15. Include parliamentary procedures, standing orders and national constitutions on the Internet.

16. Include Research Papers and other suitable material prepared in a parliamentary library on the Internet.

17. Set deadlines for the APLAP Action Plan projects and report each six months on progress. Include reports of Clearinghouse activity if one is established.

18. APLAP should give a high priority to training in all aspects of parliamentary librarianship.

19. Smaller libraries should be assisted in acquiring some of the skills of marketing the library to members applied by some larger parliamentary libraries.

20. APLAP should develop a bilingual approach to the publication and dissemination of documentation in electronic form.

21. A multi-lingual thesaurus of parliamentary terms suitable for application in parliamentary libraries should be considered as a project.

22. Sources of funds such as the Asian Development Bank should be investigated by APLAP.

23. Look at other regional groupings, eg. the European Community for ideas which may be applied by APLAP.

As agreed further suggestions which emerge from Discussion Groups will be added to this list and the conference will then consider the priority matters to be included in the Action Plan, 1996-98. Responsibilities for follow up action will be allocated by the meeting and a summary of the conference outcomes included in the Conference Communique.