

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

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of Asia and the Pacific”**

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I. Cultural Foundation

1.1 "Cultural", a working definition :

The Cultural impact to the Parliamentary Library in Taiwan, R.O.C., is dynamic and vital. The people on Taiwan inherit the long and vast Chinese tradition as well as the Chinese customs and practices since four hundred years ago, at least. In general, the modern cultural impact to the Parliamentary Library, the LIS of the Legislative Yuan, could be designated into two patterns -- the impact to democracy and the impact to information. Democratic movement and information technology are two major powers that lead the society of Taiwan into a much more open and free status. People enjoy living in a democratic and free society. Thus, the cultural impact to the democracy and information in Taiwan is not only apply to the LIS of the Legislative Yuan, but also apply to the whole society and different ethical groups throughout the island of Taiwan.

Discussion of this paper is concentrated on the developmental process of the Library & Information Service -- the LIS, of the Legislative Yuan in Taiwan, R.O.C., in conjunction with the political reform and democratization of the R.O.C. Government. The cultural impact defines as the impact of democracy and information to the services provided by the LIS. Its influence and related statistical results are also be described in this article.

1.2 Overview of the national culture of Taiwan, R.O.C. :

According to census figures based on household registration released in 1997 by the Ministry of the Interior, the population of the R.O.C. on Taiwan numbered over 21.5 million as of June 1997. The population density of the Taiwan area, at 598 persons per square kilometer, was the second highest in the world after Bangladesh. The Republic Government, created (set up) in 1912 and then moved to Taiwan in 1949, is the inheritor of a historical tradition stretching back continuously for thousands of years. According to the same Constitution but a little amendment, Taiwan has created a high level of economical prosperity and political democracy unprecedented in Chinese history. The R.O.C.'s efforts at democratization have borne fruit in recent years. All members in the Parliament have been chosen by direct popular election since 1991. And with the first direct popular presidential election

held on March 23, 1996, full-fledged democracy was achieved in Taiwan. Nowadays, public opinion is very easy to be accessed in the Parliament (Legislature), because each member of the Legislature has an office and six assistants (office staffs). The equipment in their offices includes a fax machine, a cable TV, two personal computers and five telephone cords.

1.3 Legal foundations of culture and the impact to information and democracy :

There are four main articles of the R.O.C. Constitution that deal with the culture preservation and development in the general. The Cultural Heritage Preservation Law, passed in 1982, gave more substance to the government's commitment to preserve and promote folk arts. In addition, trafficking in certain wildlife products in Taiwan is proscribed by the Cultural Heritage Preservation Law and the Wildlife Conservation Law. As to international and regional official/unofficial exchanges of cultural activities are continuously in process of development. Owing to the historical heritage of Chinese tradition, the conflicts between Chinese value and the value of western culture frequently exists in our society. In order to balance and eliminate the conflict and disorder in our Chinese society, Legislators have brought forth many proposed laws for related issues in the law-making and policy-making processes. They debate hotly in the Legislature about those issues. Consequently, Legislators heavily rely on adequate and current information from the public factor as well as the private factor to fulfill their law-making functions.

As society moves ahead, the transmission of information has become much more diversified. Starting in 1983, the LIS began offering information services ranging from printed matter to electronic media in various forms. The LEGISIS (LEGislative Information Systems), which was developed by the LIS step by step, contains eight sub-systems, including the Legislative Electronic Bulletin Board System, the Legislator's Interpellation Information System, the Chinese Code Information System, the Chinese Code Amendment Information System, the Legislative Literature Information System, the Legislative News Information System, the Legislative Record Information System and the Legislative Yuan Library OPAC (On-line Public Access Catalogue) System.

In the use of the LEGISIS network, the LIS completed the network construction

between the New Research Building of Legislators' Offices and the Legislative Yuan through the connection to the host computer. The homepage of the Legislative Yuan on the Internet was launched in February 1998. The WWW site is <http://www.ly.gov.tw/>. It is a bilingual Chinese/English version, containing the English briefing of the Legislative Yuan. Besides the introduction of the Legislative Yuan and its organizational structure, the WWW site contains a data base online section. It entitles "GAISWWW2", a package of search engine, including the resources of the site, the Law Information System, the Amendment Information System, the Pending Law Information System, the Legislative Record Information System and the Interpellation Information System. The data bases, which could be searched by key-word strings, are available for exact-matching or fuzzy-matching of full-text retrieval.

II. Parliamentary/Framework

2.1 Organizational structure of government :

The government of Taiwan, R.O.C., is divided into three main levels: central, provincial/municipal, and county/city, each of which has well-defined powers. The Central Government consists of the Office of the President, the National Assembly and five governing branches (called "Yuan"), namely, the Executive Yuan, the Legislative Yuan, the Judicial Yuan, the Examination Yuan, and the Control Yuan. (see Table 1)

The parliament of the R.O.C. is unicameral, and it is under the one house (one chamber) system. The Legislative Yuan (Legislature) is the highest legislative organ of the State, comprising popularly elected representatives who serve for three years and are eligible for re-election. The number of Legislators stands at 168, including the Legislators from the Kuo-Ming Tang (Chinese Nationalist Party), the Democracy Progress Party and the Chinese New Party. Next election for the Legislative Yuan will be held in December 1998. The number of Legislators will be increased to 225.

In accordance with the Constitution of R.O.C., the Legislative Yuan has the following functions and powers:

- General legislative power;
- Confirmation of emergency orders;

- Hearing reports on administration and revision of government policy;
- Examination on budgetary bills and audit reports;
- Right of consent;
- Amendment of the constitution
- Settlement of disputes concerning self-governance.

The Legislative Yuan holds two sessions each year, and now is in the third tenure. While in session, the whole Yuan (sittings) meets every Tuesday and Friday. There are ten Standing Committees and five Special Committees (see Table 2) in the Legislative Yuan.

2.2 Organizational structure of the Secretariat of the Legislature :

Supervised by the Secretary-General of the Legislative Yuan, the Library & Information Service (LIS) is subordinate to the Secretariat. In accordance with Article 18; 24 and 26 of the Organic Law of the legislative Yuan, the Secretariat, Accounting Office, Personnel Office and the Committee Offices make up the administration system of the Legislative Yuan. The Secretariat is composed of the Conference Department; Documentation Center; Administrative Department; Press Office; Library & Information Service (the LIS); Stenography Office and Security Detail (see Table 3). The present Director of the Secretariat, Mr. Karl Min Ku, is the former Director of the LIS.

Founded in 1989, the Legislative Research Service is an independent research unit. The unit undertakes the study, analysis, evaluation of draft law bills, concerning budgetary bills, and research for answers to inquiries as well as the translation of materials relating to legislation. It is composed of the Legislation Section, the Budget Section and the Translation & Compilation Section. In general, the business activities of the LIS are associated with the Legislative Research Service including information transmission, document delivery and other related matters. The Documentation Center that is in charge of the parliamentary archives is one part of the Secretariat.

2.3 Role of the LIS in the Secretariat :

The mission of the LIS, as stipulated in Article 4 of the Executive Regulations of

the Secretariat, the Legislative Yuan, 1953, is to acquire and manage legal and legislative documents, with the objectives of providing the necessary resources for the legislature through analysis, research, and reference services, in support of the legislator's representative and legislative functions.

In the past decade, the LIS has been reorganized into four functional units, that is, the Library, the Law Information Center, the Computer Center and the Newspaper Clipping Center (see Table 4) to support the research and law-making functions of Legislators, and provide current information to conform to the modern trends of our society. Each working units is as follows:

- (1) The Library is located in the first basement of the Chun-Hsien Building, where there is a large reading area.
- (2) The Law Information Center is located on the third floor of the Chun-Hsien Building, where reference desks and reference collections are located.
- (3) The Computer Center is located on the third floor of the Chun-Hsien Building. The computer equipment is installed in the computer room.
- (4) The Newspaper Clipping Center is located on the second floor of the Chun-Hsien Building, where the open-shelved newspaper clippings are held.

Besides, there is an information service area on the fifth floor of the New Research Building of the Legislators' Offices, where the reference and information access service is provided.

2.4 Information and primary research functions of the LIS :

An important feature of the LIS is that its collection is composed of many multimedia materials. Books on law and politics make up the core collection in conjunction with other related subject matters. Except the materials of manuscripts, the staffs also gather AV materials, CD-ROMs, computer diskettes, microfilms and multimedia materials, etc., in many different languages. The resources and publication chain provided by the LIS consists of twenty different kinds of publications. These publications, which are distributed to Legislators periodically, are the result of legislative analysis for bill tracking and readers' interests. As to the

information and primary research functions conducted by the LIS, regarding the system has been considered as the support unit for policy-making and legislation. The importance of the legislative information is evident in an open society, since it is the means of communication between the government and the general public.

III. Professional preparation of parliamentary librarians

3.1 Relation with other law libraries/information in Taiwan :

Interlibrary cooperation is one of the objectives of the LIS. Ten years ago, the LIS started to establish a cooperative relation with other law libraries in Taiwan through the Chinese Law Information Association. Besides, the LEGISIS network has actively build up an extensive network system with more than a hundred user accounts from government agencies and research institutes around the island. This year, the Homepage on the Internet is open to the public. Generally, resource sharing is formally in operation.

3.2 Staffing and professional training :

As of 1998, the sixty-four staff members in the LIS are classified into two groups: twenty-three are authorized by the organized law (among them, ten are mechanics and four are office workers); forty-one are employed by contract. For the sake of introducing computer knowledge and information technology in the Legislative Yuan, the Computer Center regularly conducts seminars on computer training to the staff members of the legislative Yuan and Legislator's assistants. Besides, the on-the-job training for the staffs of LIS is focused on new information and communication fields.

The LIS has joined several prestigious library & information organizations, such as, IFLA, ASIS (American Society for Information Science) and APLAP. By attending the annual conference, we come to understand the worldwide trend for the development of the library & information profession and thus enhance our standard of parliamentary librarianship.

IV. Major statistical results of the LIS :

To accomplish the defined objectives in our modern society, the tasks of the LIS have been expanded since 1983 in conjunction with advanced technology and

automated systems. The service pattern is expanded from regular reading service to the pattern of computer-based reference and information services. The results of reference & information services from 1985 to 1997 provided by the LIS are shown on Table 5 to Table 10. Please note that these statistical results are excluding the results of WWW site retrieval.

It contains: Table 5 -- The Statistics of Reader's Groups for Legislative Reference Information Services (1985-1997). Table 6 -- The Statistics of Report Services for Legislative Reference Information Services (1985-1997). Table 7 -- The Statistics of Consultation Services for Legislative Reference Information Services, Part I & Part II (1985-1997). Table 8 -- The Statistical Chart of Legislative Information Services (1985-1997). Table 9 -- The Analysis and Comparison of Legislative Reference, Information & Research Bulletin Services (1985-1997). Table 10 -- The Analysis of Contents of Legislative Reference, Information & Research Bulletin Services (1985-1997).

V. Prospects

5.1 Recent trends :

General speaking, each parliament in the world has established its unique organizational structure, the same as each parliamentary library in the countries around the world. The growth of parliamentary libraries nowadays depends heavily upon the influence of nation's democratization, the operation of its cabinet government and the perfection of members' support system.

The interactive relationship between users and the LIS staffs provided the impetus for the LIS to serve the Legislators and their assistants. Therefore, we should stress the importance of the interactive user-librarian relationship for the purpose of satisfying the information requests received from the Legislators and their assistants. This interaction could be regarded as a trend of the LIS development and will expand from the Legislative Yuan through the network system to every network user to support their legislation work and, most important of all, to promote international cooperation among the parliamentary libraries of Asia and the Pacific region. The Association of Parliamentary Librarians of Asia and the Pacific (APLAP) has already become an organization for common legislative information development that is

supported by a variety of legislatures of Asia and the Pacific region.

5.2 Services to be reinforced :

In view of the future, the services provided by the LIS have to be oriented towards the political trends based on public opinion, that countries around the world are now actively emphasizing. Under such considerations, we should make sure that the six developmental information measures listed below are continuously and effectively exercised:

1. Actively collect all kinds of legislative data and resources.
2. Effectively improve information services and broaden its scope.
3. Improve the quality and contents of the report publications.
4. Promote computer-processing and telecommunication networks toward an integrated and environment-wide development including organizing a virtual-reality library.
5. Invite scholars and specialists to participate in research work.
6. Promote international information cooperation and communication.

5.3 Impacts effect to the LIS :

In this decade, the people on Taiwan have begun to play a more active role in our nation's legislation work. This, in turn, has had great consequences in promoting legislative role and its power. The LIS came into existence as people increasingly became aware of the importance of the quality of legislation and its effectiveness. As the facts shown the improvement of the LIS has gained unanimous support from both the ruling party and opposition parties, and has become an important blueprint for the development of our legislative information environment from now on. With the expanded information service that we provide and the ever-increasing number of users, we are dedicated to improving the legislative information system to provide a better quality service, as well as a more efficient service. We hope to support the Legislators with abundant legislative information and establish an objective and independent worldwide information supplying system to promote our national democracy to a higher level in the coming new century.