

# **Information Technology and Environment Changes in the Parliament Library and within the Parliament of Vanuatu with Challenges Encountered.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The paper outlines the features and impact of information technology (IT) in our Vanuatu Parliament and the Library. It discusses the role played by IT in various Divisions of our Parliament and the library seen as a special library. The changes in the IT environment and relating it to the role of the special librarian in 21<sup>st</sup> century has been discussed. It discusses in detail the various library activities and services where Vanuatu Parliamentary Library and Parliament is making good use of IT to provide better and enhanced services to its clients.

This paper will discuss the Information Technology changes that has to be adapted due to the faster IT Environment that has to push us to a higher standard of collecting, storing, preserving, accessing and disseminating information to our Clients in an effective and efficient manner. Recently, our IT Officer, Mr Vira Josiah has negotiated an IT assistance with the Inter-Parliamentary Union which made it possible for a feasibility study be carried out to assist our Parliament in acquiring a more proper IT System through a constructive and proper IT master plan. Despite our financial constraints, lack of human resource personnel in both top level and middle management level, the IT and Library will always work closely to help provide better resources and information.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Parliament Library of Vanuatu exist since 1980 after we had our Independence on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 1980. The Library was first situated in the old Parliament Building within the Government Offices where the two previous Condominium (France and Britain) had been using. There was only one staff, Mrs Eileen Boe who minded that library matters and a collection of roughly 600 books with a tiny small working space to serve the old Members of Parliament with information that they requested. In 1993 when we had a bilateral Diplomatic Agreement with the Chinese Government and our new Parliament House was designed and build on a separate piece of land close to the heart of Port Vila town. As previous librarian left the library in 1996, the library then has another librarian Mrs Leiwia Moli in mid-1997. As the library extended its services we requested a special assistance from a developed country so we enquire for an Australian Volunteer, Ms Terri Mahe from Tasmania, Australia who worked with our library for almost four years (2004 – 2007) to properly organise our library, its physical settings and services.

## **2. FEATURES OF THE CURRENT PARLIAMENT LIBRARY**

The current Parliament Library has a collection of over 2,000 publications including journals both local and overseas such as from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Associations, the Assemblée Nationale and the Parlements de Francophonie. It holds hard copies of the proceedings of Vanuatu Parliamentary Debates of 1970s until 2017. While some of the soft copies of these proceedings have already been published in our Parliamentary Website, [www.parliament.gov.vu](http://www.parliament.gov.vu) The library also holds hard copies of the Acts and Orders of Vanuatu Laws since 1980s until today and some official gazettes of pre-Independence. Apart from these information we have a big collection of framed portraits of our past Leaders as the Prime Ministers, Speakers of Parliament, Head of States or Presidents and the Clerk of Parliament. Our photographs of Leaders also tells a lot to our clients and visitors as different patterns of terms in which each Prime Ministers held their offices. Some Prime Ministers terms range from two months to three years as it should be a four years term for Parliamentary Members. In our Parliamentary Website we also upload the section on Members where all biographical information for Parliament Members of its legislatures are published ranging from the 1<sup>st</sup> Parliament Legislature until the 11<sup>th</sup> Parliamentary Legislature as these information are very important to our researchers and other High Commissions such as Australia, New Zealand, European Union and Chinese Embassy.

## **3. IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN THE PARLIAMENT LIBRARY**

### ***(i) Changes of Environment in Library with different Innovations.***

Since the library operated in 1980 until middle of 1997, the library has been cataloguing books manually. From 1997 it started using manual typewriters to catalogue its books then computers are introduced and we started using DB-Text words to catalogue our books. Until recently 2017 we are now moving along with the KOHA online cataloguing system to catalogue our publications but since it is still a new programme we need to be trained to acquire the skills and knowledge in operating all of its functions to serve our Parliament Members and library users effectively. Once this cataloguing system is being successfully working the Parliamentarians will be informed through their 52 newly established desktops to get online searches for Library publications and information that are needed on various documents or laws to be accessed.

**(ii) Information Technology Involvement in the Library**

**(a) Computer Café**

The library has extended to establish and partition a small section of 6 new desktop computers as a Computer Café for Parliament Members and other library users. This section is mainly to be used for researches, work relating to Parliament, Politics and to provide also computer trainings to any Parliament Members, Parliament Staff and also to students who research on special functions of Parliament.

**(b) Fast dissemination of Acts in Principle and Amendment, Orders and Notices.**

The library has been receiving published Official Gazette from the State Law from 1980s up until 1999 in hard copies. During Parliament Sessions, requests for a particular principle and amendment of the acts are carried out in hard copies as the librarian has to photocopy these acts for the Parliament Members. However, since 2000 where we commenced receiving the soft copy of these Acts of Vanuatu including the Orders, our work is much easier because we just send the particular Act either it be principle or amended in soft copies to our Members by email.

Fortunately, this year we are working in a collaboration project with Paclii who scans our official gazette from 1980s to 1999 and will be working on the official gazettes from pre-Independence to upload on Paclii. The Acts, their amendments, Orders and Notices will be published and information will be easily accessed by all everyone. The library will be given a copy of this project for its record.

**(c) Digital Information (Photographs and other old unique documents)**

There was not any usage of digital equipment since 1980 by our local staff until early 2002 – 2004 where they started to introduce the idea of getting digitized pictures of Parliament Members for their biographical information. We stored up these digitized pictures and use them for educational awareness purposes.

Some old unique Parliament documents are on the process of scanning and preserving them in our Parliament records for research purposes.

**(d) Library Information System**

Since 1999 the Parliament of Vanuatu use DB Textwork as its Library Information System which is not web enable. That makes it complicated for the members to access online resources from the Parliament Library.

Recently in 2016 the Parliament of Vanuatu upgrade its Library Information system to Koha. With Koha it makes life easier as it is an integrated web-based library management system covering almost all functions of Library.

**(e) Live broadcasting through Internet**

The Vanuatu Parliament has established a diplomatic relations with the New Caledonia Government and received an assistance for upgrading our sound system in our Parliament Chamber. They also helped us to supply and install equipment to broadcast Parliament live through internet and can be accessible to our Government Institutions through Intranet. The ICT Section stored and saved all recordings in an e-archival system that can be made accessible. In the 1980s we use to record the Parliament Sessions in CDs, Cassette Tapes but we are so fortunate of this assistance that we can now save our recordings in

**(f) Library ICT future Plan**

1. Install security gate with CCTV camera – The Vanuatu Parliament Library is planning to get a security gate in the Library to ensure every library client exits the Library must check out their books.
2. Installation of bar code scanner for checking in/out of library books
3. Digitization and streamline of all the Hansard minutes (Hard copies)

**4. CONSTRAINTS**

Though Parliament face various constraints such as financial due to limited funds allocated to our Library and IT section regarding our annual budgets, limited qualified human resource personnel in our work places, the library vicinity has a small space to gather for further developments. The Parliament including Library and ICT section is trying best to negotiate assistance with other High Commissions such as Australian High Commission, Chinese Embassy, European Union, New Zealand High Commission, Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNDP in order to boost up our IT and Library standards to catch up with other Parliaments in the Asia Pacific Region.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion despite of all the challenges faced, we will continue to persuade our superiors and strive for more improvement and best recognition in Library and Information Technology in the Parliament of the Republic of Vanuatu.