# The Library of Parliament Today

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**INTRODUCTION**

To tell the tale of the Library of Parliament, one must speak of its creation and evolution, but also of the institution's beginnings in relation to the collections, clients, work tools, and the building itself.

**History**

The institution dates back to the 1790s with the creation of the legislative libraries of Upper and Lower Canada. These two separate legislative libraries, each with its own collections, operated until the Canadas united to form the Province of Canada in 1841. The unified collection was destined to accompany the Legislature of the Province of Canada, which travelled for more than a decade between Kingston and Montreal, and then between Toronto and Quebec. This voyage ended in 1857 when Queen Victoria selected the capital of the new Dominion of Canada; her choice, Ottawa, then also became the Library's permanent home.

The Library of Parliament as an institution was established at Confederation in 1867, and its legislative basis was set out in 1871 under the *Library of Parliament Act*. In the 1985 *Revised Statutes of Canada*, the *Library of Parliament Act* was consolidated into the *Parliament of Canada Act*. The legislative provisions have remained substantially unchanged over the years.

The Parliament Buildings, except for the Library, were ready in 1867. Construction work that began in 1859 had been suspended in 1861. The Library Building was eventually ready to open its doors in 1876. Architectural experts view the Library Building as a Gothic marvel. Modelled in part on the Reading Room of the British Museum, it is crowned by a circular lantern with distinctive circular structural features – a ring of 16 flying buttresses, pinnacles, decorative windows and ornamental ironwork which highlight the Library's jewel-like attributes. The Library's circular shape, and the use of galleries and alcoves, were the inspiration of the first Parliamentary Librarian, Alpheus Todd; its design in Gothic Revival style was the work of Thomas Fuller and Chilion Jones. The Library was also designed for practicality and safety. As an example, on the advice of Alpheus Todd, the Library was separated from the Centre Block by a corridor and an iron door built to protect it from fire; both features are still standing today.

The collections arrived in Ottawa in 1866, the year before the Parliament Buildings were ready. A total of 47,000 volumes (including several books donated to the Library by Queen Victoria in 1864) travelled to Ottawa from Quebec by barge. One hundred and twenty-five years later, in 2001, collections stand at 321,361 titles for more than 600,000 books and documents.

Over time, the collection was exposed, as was the Library Building, to major upheavals including fires, a few of which occurred in the pre-Confederation era. The

Parliament Buildings were not yet 50 years old when a disastrous fire struck the Centre Block in 1916; the fire destroyed most of the Centre Block, but the Library's iron doors isolated it from the blaze. The Library was left standing surrounded by rubble left by the burnt buildings until the new Parliament Buildings were ready four years later in 1920.

The Library continued to serve Parliamentarians and to carry on with the business of Parliament until 1952 when another fire caused great damage to the Library and its collection. The 1952 fire broke out in the cupola of the Library itself, causing extensive smoke and water damage. The Library's wood panelling had to be dismantled, sent to Montreal for cleaning and partial fireproofing, and reinstalled. A replica of the intricate parquet floor was re-laid in cherry, oak and walnut.

In addition to exchanges with other legislative libraries, the responsibility for legal deposit contributed, to a great extent, to the collections development of the Library until the mid-1950s. The Library of Parliament was the library designated to receive one copy of every book published in Canada, as per the *Copyright Act* of 1868 (Art. 7). The revised *Copyright Act* of 1895 required the applicants to submit three copies, one of which was placed in the Library of Parliament, and this obligation was maintained until it was transferred to the newly created National Library in 1952.

Major changes were made to the composition of the collection in 1952. It was agreed to use the opportunity of collection repair work to move hundreds of thousands of volumes to the National Library of Canada. These works were not specifically required by Parliamentarians, but they did fit the mandate of the new National Library. Thus, the 1952 fire provided an opportunity to redirect collection preservation work.

**Collections – Space and Content**

In its early years, the Library's collection was based on client needs at that time and consisted of works of a constitutional, historical and scientific nature. The current collection includes extensive government publications and trade titles in law, legislation, history, Canadian political and parliamentary process, political science, trade and international relations, social sciences, Canadiana, business and economy.

When the Library first opened its doors, the amount of storage space was already insufficient. As the Library's collection continued to grow, lack of space became even more obvious. Up to half of the Library's collection was to be stored off-site and that continues to this day. To counter the space problem, mobile shelving was installed in the early 1970s.

Automation – introduced in 1971 – provided access to several remote databases; by 1979, the Library had access to more than 100 databases. Today, staff and clients can search thousands of excellent databases. Significant dates in the automation process include:

◊ 1971: the first terminal to access remote databases was installed;
◊ 1979: the catalogue was automated;
◊ 1985: the card catalogue was closed and replaced by an automated system;
◊ 1987: CD-ROMs were added to the collection for the first time;
◊ 1988: LAN and personal computers were installed;
◊ 1991: the Library Integrated System was introduced and Library staff began using the Internet;
◊ 1992: CD-ROMs were networked within the Library and to a few clients;
◊ 1997: the Library's on-line catalogue became available on the Intranet site;
◊ 1998-2000: the press clippings collection was digitized.

By law, the Library's mandate evolved over the years so that the focus, vis-à-vis access to the collections, was gradually put on parliamentary clients; public access became more limited.

## Cataloguing

In the 1950s, two major changes were made to the cataloguing of the collections. Cataloguing data, which had originally been recorded in manuscript catalogues, was transferred to printed card catalogues and then subsequently, as technology was brought into the Library, incorporated into a database with a microfiche backup system. The 1960s also saw a complete overhaul to cataloguing methods based on the U.S. Library of Congress cataloguing system. That proved efficient but required the translation into French of all Library of Congress Subject Headings for the French catalogue. The Library of Parliament published its translation of the Headings in 1963.

The original manuscript catalogues are still kept in the Library archives for historical purposes. Among these are found a manuscript catalogue dated 1855, handwritten by Alpheus Todd. The archives also contain rare books such as *Architecture of the Heavens* (1851), and *Ouvrages relatifs à l'Amérique. Brochures et manuscrits* (1858).

## THE LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT TODAY

## Mandate and Services

The evolution of the Library's mandate benefited – and continues to benefit – from the advice of Parliamentary Library committees, Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Librarians, who acted as overseer to Library services and collections.

The present-day mandate of the Library is to provide – in an effective and efficient manner – bilingual services, products and programs that best serve the needs of

Parliamentarians and their staff, parliamentary committees, associations and delegations, authorized clients and the general public. The Library must have the resources that are needed to continue the delivery of excellent services. Library annual reports since 1876 reflect this objective, one that has always been at the heart of the Library's work. A description of the products and services and collections in today's Library continues to reflect that mandate.

The Library of Parliament has two service delivery branches:

- **Parliamentary Research Branch (PRB)**: Created in 1965, the PRB provides research, analysis and information services to Members of the Senate and the House of Commons as well as to parliamentary committees and associations. Topics covered include a wide range of legislative, policy, and constituency or regional issues. Parliamentarians use this service to develop their policy proposals, analyze government legislation and proposals from interest groups, prepare background material on Private Members' bills, interpret complex economic and legal data, and develop speech material.

  The PRB also provides specific support to committees including advice and assistance in selecting key issues and topics for study, choosing expert witnesses, preparing briefing papers, and drafting reports. Its publications, both print and electronic, range from *Legislative Summaries, Background Papers, Current Issue Reviews*, to *In Brief* documents; these materials answer specific questions and keep Library clients up-to-date on topical issues and developments.

- **Information and Documentation Branch (IDB)**: The IDB provides information, documentation and reference services to Parliamentarians, their staff and other authorized clients and the public. Its work includes everything related to selecting, acquiring, cataloguing, maintaining and preserving the Library's collections – and making them accessible to clients. The branch supports Parliamentarians' reference needs with information on any subject of interest. It anticipates client needs by alerting clients to sources of newly acquired information – including books, serials and periodicals, databases, news articles, microfilms, videocassettes and audiocassettes – through training sessions, presentations, publications and Web databases. The Branch also produces a variety of publications such as *Quorum*, *Articles*, *Recent Acquisitions*, *Bibliographies*, *Fact Sheets* and the *History of the Federal Electoral Ridings since 1867*. The Branch responds to the information needs of the general public with respect to information about Parliament and Parliamentarians by operating a telephone and TTY service in addition to posting detailed data on the Internet.

  The Library is also responsible for the Parliamentary Public Programs (PPP) that provide Educational Services, including the Teachers Institute on Parliamentary Democracy as well as Visitor Services such as guided tours and the interpretation of the Parliament Buildings and the Library.

The Human Resources and Finance and Materiel Management Divisions also provide a broad range of support to the two service delivery branches and to the Parliamentary Public Programs.

**Work in Progress: Toward the Electronic Parliamentary Library**[1]

A modern parliamentary library is not just a collection of books, products and services, but also a gateway to outside sources and to the world. In this respect, the Library of Parliament can already be considered an electronic parliamentary library in that today, much of the information its clients need is available on-line.

The Library's 21st century collection affords greater client access by being available 24 hours a day on the Intranet. Clients have received expert and non-expert training to help them find publications and understand the technology that makes them more available. Links to more than 36,000 electronic documents and sites were added to the on-line catalogue.

A growing number of the Library's publications and databases were made available to parliamentary clients through the Parliamentary Intranet. These information sources:
- were based on a growing use of the Internet around 1998-1999; and
- grew out of technological developments initiated in 1997, including conversion to electronic format of lists for research publications, *Recent Acquisitions*, *Articles* (the digest of periodical articles by subject), and many others, including the on-line catalogue.

The electronic Library of Parliament is laid out on the Library's institutional site in three segments: *Library Publications*; *Information Resources*; and *Parliamentary Finding Aids*. In the *Library Publications* segment, the *Research Publications* icon can be used to access hundreds of publications written by research staff as well as the Library's press clippings service, *Articles*, *Recent Acquisitions*, bibliographies and a cyber collection of documents from external sources.

**PARLCAT**

On the Intranet, an icon opens the door to PARLCAT, the Library's on-line catalogue; this is a long way from manuscript and card catalogues. The multilis Library Integrated System[2] – introduced in 1991 to support PARLCAT – integrates the functions

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[1] Sources for this section and concluding remarks include interviews conducted in May 2001 with Mike Graham, Director, Public Service Division, IDB; Lynn Brodie, Director, Collections Division, IDB; Kate Dunkley, Director, Law and Government Division, PRB; and Pierre-Vincent Galipeau, Acquisitions and Cataloguing Division, IDB.

[2] This Library Integrated System supports the MARC 21 (Machine-Readable Cataloguing) format, and the Répertoire des Vedettes-Matière; the Library of Congress Subject Headings have been loaded in the system.

of cataloguing, acquisitions, serials and circulation. It has allowed Library clients to search on-line since 1992. Clients can search by author, title, subject and keyword, etc., and even refine the search. The on-line catalogue includes books, periodicals, speeches, audio and videotapes as well as links to full text documents and tables of contents. Furthermore, since 1997, the WebOPAC offers the possibility of searching other library catalogues; the option of requesting a book on-line was introduced in 1999.

In 2002, PARLCAT will be supported by TAOS, a next-generation Library Integrated System that provides flexibility and power, hence better services to clients. TAOS is a Windows application, based on a client server model, using object-oriented databases. New features include:

- MARC Community information, which can record institutional events, searchable via the OPAC;
- integration of Z39.50 standard within the cataloguing module in order to locate source records for cataloguing;
- a new report generator for selective dissemination of information;
- electronic handling of overdue material;
- facility for users to view their own account status; and
- adoption of additional international standards, e.g., for electronic billing, serials holdings formats and Unicode.

**PARLREF**

The Library began looking for an automated request system in 1995. In 1996, it was decided that such a system – involving staff, management and Library clients – must be a bilingual, Intranet-based workflow and information management tool, complying with software and platform standards in place for the Library, the Senate and the House of Commons.

In the context of the client mediation process, or the one-on-one contact between a librarian and a client, where full and personalized service is provided to clients, PARLREF goes one step further and joins the client to a desktop service. Parliamentary clients are now able to submit their own research and reference requests from their desktops using the Intranet On-line Request Service or request documents using a link from the Library's Web catalogue PARLCAT; a catalogue link will transfer documents and client data directly into a PARLREF request form.

PARLREF is a request management tool and a knowledge management tool. As a request management tool, the request database can be queried, and requests tracked from creation to completion. Staff can access their requests by the status of request, or can search by client, keyword, date received, or combinations of various fields. The PARLREF management system has replaced the paper "blue sheets" used to record requests in the Reference Service.

Another feature of the management tool is a report generator, which allows the quick production of statistical reports and eliminates the need to spend time calculating data for monthly statistical reports.

In a corporate environment, staff also need tools to facilitate their work. Until the fall of 2000, reference staff at the Library of Parliament still looked for answers to similar or same questions that had already been answered, by checking paper trails and consulting other librarians. As such, this electronic request database is a valuable knowledge base. For complex reference or research requests, staff is encouraged to specify the resources that they used to respond to a question – using PARLREF to record resources consulted, and attaching electronic documents to the Sources/Documents form. This has great potential for reducing duplication of effort.

PARLREF Team Librarians provide ongoing support for the system, and an e-mail service account facilitates the communication of questions and problems. An extended PARLREF Team of librarians was identified and met the challenge of implementing the system in the large, complex reference environment.

Requests can be transferred or copied to diverse Library organizational units. PARLREF provides a link for requests shared among reference librarians, technicians and research officers, but can also coordinate internal requests to Collections staff for acquisition of a government document or new book.

This automated reference service provides an electronic way of seeing what other librarians have done and thus saves time, and builds on accuracy. The process is transparent and it builds on other people's experience. Another possibility in the medium term is that answers to substantive questions can become the basis of frequently asked questions that are prepared to meet client needs.

PARLREF technology is flexible and will continue to be fine-tuned to monitor for request tendencies, increase client access to their own profiles, and be used as a guide to populate the database. What lies ahead?
◊ more access to vetted answers;
◊ more access to information;
◊ scope for further development in the Parliamentary Research Branch staff using PARLREF for document production tracking;
◊ an increasingly distributed knowledge network providing insight and on-line corporate knowledge to all reference staff;
◊ enhanced knowledge of knowledge workers; and
◊ continued transparency and building on other people's experience.

**PARLCD**

Before the introduction of PARLCD (the Library's CD-ROM network), staff were able to access print indexes (which still exist). These databases and print indexes, which were only accessible to Library staff in the main Library and its branches, progressively went on-line. Today, PARLCD provides Library staff and clients with the ability to search indexes and full text documents at their convenience, from their workstations. Some of these documents are on the Web, but PARLCD often has more sophisticated search tools and more historical data.

PARLCD is organized by subject, and many users are from the legal and finance professions because a good selection of CDs is available in these areas. CD-ROMs will likely remain an efficient means of providing access to retrospective data and they can be more cost-effective than Web products.

**PARLMEDIA**

PARLMEDIA – the most-used electronic product on the Intranet – is the Library's news filtering system for the Parliamentary Precinct. Parliamentarians and Library staff are the clients for this system, which tracks the pulse of the nation and journalists' thoughts. Parliamentarians use it to find out what is being said about them as well as the subjects that interest them in newspapers. PARLMEDIA is separate from *Quorum* – the daily parliamentary press clippings publication that highlights the top stories across the country.

Recent client surveys have shown that most users still want access to the paper version of *Quorum*, which can be carried around with them into the chamber and the cafeteria; its users tend to find out more about subjects they might not have been following. On the other hand, users of PARLMEDIA are able to search for very specific news stories and details, but they have to know what they are looking for.

**EASY FIND**

The Internet Librarian manages this electronic product. Easy Find contains links to frequently requested websites that have been evaluated by Library staff and includes links to publications related to different topics such as Canada and Parliament, Business and Economy, and Foreign Governments. Its main purpose is to give clients an easy way to find good and useful sources when they want to search the Internet on their own.

Easy Find includes Hot Topics, which link to documents or information on issues that are popular in Parliament at a specific time. An example may be a particular report – and if it exists in electronic format, Hot Topics will give access to it. In fact, the electronic link is often available before the paper copy has been received.

The Hot Topics links to documents are usually posted on a temporary basis, but the most popular are archived. Time was certainly a motivating factor in the creation of this product because it is not always *easy to find* sites on the Internet. Not unlike Web directories (such as Yahoo, that are targeted to the public, vast in nature and not specifically for a parliamentary clientele), Easy Find is very client-oriented and ensures that the sites offered have been checked for reliability. Usage is high for Easy Find because it is basically the first step for a person pulling a limited number of things together in an easy-to-find way.

## PARLINFO

PARLINFO is an SQL database containing historical and current data on Parliament and its members. This Internet database has biographical information including photos of Members of the Senate and the House of Commons from 1867 to the present. If you want to know the number of female Parliamentarians, the average age of Senators, the oldest and the youngest Member of Parliament who was appointed by which Prime Minister, or what parliamentary committees they sat on, PARLINFO can retrieve the information. A wide variety of reports are available to the general public on the Internet while a subset is available to tourists on an interactive kiosk in the Visitor Welcome Centre.

## *TIPS*

The *Topical Information for Parliamentarians (TIPS) (Capsules d'information pour les parlementaires)* began as a pre-election project in 2000. Research Officers (ROs) and Librarians (LS) worked together to design and produce short electronic documents that could be used to brief new and returning Parliamentarians on policy issues. *TIPS* documents, composed of text, are accompanied by links to a wide variety of the Library's electronic documents and to a selection of other electronic and print documents.

By June 2001, a total of 75 TIPS documents were made available for the parliamentary clientele on Intraparl. *TIPS* cover a wide range of policy topics, including bulk water removals and NAFTA, reproductive technologies, persistent organic pollutants, whistle blowing, organized crime, and many more, including Parliament and legislative issues such as party discipline and free votes, and Senate reform. Using links and brief descriptive and analytical texts, *TIPS* cover social policy, economy, trade, international relations, Parliament and other topics. The documents are written and edited by professional staff, primarily from the Parliamentary Research Branch, in collaboration with information specialists of the Information and Documentation Branch, and produced by the technical staff of both branches. Paper versions of *TIPS* are also available.

*TIPS* are designed to provide quick, easy-to-read, non-partisan snapshots of an issue and are linked to related background papers, conference papers and other more in-depth publications. They are also linked to good external academic sources and Library products such as bibliographies. *TIPS* are a source of information to be considered along with other Parliamentary Research Branch publications such as legislative summaries. Based on the tradition of sound research and analysis, written with parliamentary clientele in mind, and offering the added feature of electronic sources of documentation built into the design and presentation of the material, *TIPS* are part of a new phase in the Library's publications.

## LEGISINFO

Currently only available to staff, the latest arrival on the Library's Intranet site provides information on federal legislation, including all stages of proposed bills as well as acts that have received Royal Assent. LEGISINFO already has the virtue of integrating information from the Senate, the House of Commons, Parliamentary Committees, the Justice Department, PARLMEDIA, PARLCAT and government press releases relating to each bill introduced.

## CONCLUSION

All on-line resources are available on a 24-7 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) basis. But when experts were asked for their opinion on the future of these electronic documents, most agreed that they could never completely replace paper copies or the expertise of information professionals. Not unlike what happens when people watch television or listen to the radio (i.e., they often go out and buy the newspaper, books and magazines), the library's electronic documents often seem to prompt people to want to read the paper version, which often goes into more detail than the electronic product.

Most agree that, in a larger established parliamentary library, the costs of maintaining software and computer upgrades are offset by the increasingly fast and efficient access to information, which is in fact linked to the library's value-added mandate. In a small legislative library, and depending on its funding and infrastructure, going electronic may not be feasible unless starting from scratch. There are significant equipment and people costs, and the product is never really finished. Adding new links, links to hot topics, etc., is an ongoing process.

Of course, because the whole of the Library's book collection is not digitized and experts in the field believe that it would be too costly to do so, Library of Parliament staff agree that the library as we know it is needed to carry out the work of a parliamentary library. Clients cannot be forced to use desktop services. Furthermore, parliamentary libraries are very based in history and in parliamentary procedure; there is a constant looking back into the past, to answer questions about the future. The Library's history collection, journals and debates – which date back to the 1850s and the 1870s, and are

needed to answer the constant requests for that type of information – do not exist electronically.

What is the future of electronic products?  The Library's plan is to integrate all these products, perhaps through the Easy Find site, so that the user does not have to choose a format.  At this point, even Library staff have to go to individual sites to find information.  In the future, these electronic tools could be a parliamentary portal organized to enable clients and staff to find information based on a client's subject needs (e.g., the environment) or format (e.g., newspaper article).  The user won't have to know the source.  That saves time, and time is money.

Canada's lawmakers are still the Library's major clients.  Over the years, the Library has increasingly made its mark as a working building for today's Parliamentarians – 105 Senators and 301 Members of the House of Commons – for whom it is a leading source of documentation, information, research and analysis.[4] Today, the Library Building is facing major renovation work and will be closed for three years, starting in late 2001, as work begins on a large-scale conservation, rehabilitation and upgrade project.  The Library Building, one of Canada's most impressive architectural treasures and a favourite destination for visitors to Parliament Hill, will re-open in 2004.  The challenge during the project period will be to maintain an excellent level of service to Parliamentarians and other clients and in its ongoing work and progress as an electronic parliamentary library.

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[4] At this point, not all Parliamentarians check the Library's institutional site.