

Library enters the second millennium

Roslynn Membrey, Commonwealth Parliamentary Library

The mission statement of the Department of the Parliamentary Library is: 'To support the parliamentary process by providing quality information services, research and policy advice.'

Our primary focus is clearly on the information and research needs of Senators and Members of the House of Representatives who rely on the Parliamentary Library for impartial advice covering all subject areas with the emphasis on being up-to-date, accurate and relevant.

The public face of the library

The 'front end' of the library, the Information and Research Services, is the public face for our clients. The Central Enquiry Point receives and channels requests. Requests which cannot be dealt with immediately, and which may require specialist expertise, are passed on to the information or research specialists in one of our subject groups: economics, commerce and industrial relations; foreign affairs defence and trade; law and bills digest; politics and public administration; science, technology, environment and resources; social policy; and statistics.

Because of the nature of many of our services, clients sometimes prefer to deal directly with relevant information and research specialists. As well as the central enquiry point, clients can come to the library for consultations, or telephone, fax or e-mail individual staff members using the internal communications systems within Parliament House, or from 250 electorate offices all over Australia.

The skills required by our staff include the ability to define clearly the questions being asked and then to pinpoint the likely source for the required information and finally to present that information to our clients. Among the key characteristics of a parliamentary library are pressure and the ability to meet deadlines. Publications are prepared on topical issues likely to be of interest to parliamentarians which anticipate and manage some of the expected pressure. Also individual oral or written briefs are prepared as required.

Developing collections of resources

Building and maintaining both information resources and the systems needed to access those resources is the responsibility of the Resource Development Services. Clients continue to have direct access to media tran-

scripts and electronic media monitoring services. However, the focus of the resource development section is to develop comprehensive collections of information resources. These include conventional monographs and serials but are expanding into electronic resources as well as ensuring that all resources collected are identified and organised in comprehensive data bases that will be accessible to all library staff and directly to clients through the Parliamentary network.

Because of the special needs of our clients we have developed several unique resources (for example, information files and Internet subject pages). These resources are constantly monitored for relevance and accuracy in order to provide the information and research specialists with reliable and meaningful data that can be confidently passed on to clients.

Corporate management

Corporate Management includes the Parliamentary Librarian's Office and Corporate Services Branch. Like any organisation, as well as needing an executive focussing on strategic direction, the Department of the Parliamentary Library relies on staff with expertise in personnel, finance, information systems, and general services to provide the support services which allow the professional staff to concentrate on client services without the distractions of worrying about fortnightly pay cheques, acquisition of new desks or photocopiers or ensuring that our serials accounts are paid.

Senior officers

Mr John Templeton, acting parliamentary librarian

Dr June Verrier, head, Information and Research Services

Ms Nola Adcock, acting deputy head, Information and Research Services

Roslynn Membrey, acting head, Resource Development Services

Rob Johnston, assistant secretary, Corporate Services

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Australian Library and Information Association

Library Technician of the Year ALIA

LIBRARY TECHNICIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

Nominations are now being called for the 1997 award

This award promotes the role of library technicians in library and information science, and the role and image of the library technician. Nominees must be a personal member of the Library Technician Section and hold a library technician qualification recognised by ALIA. Members should note that any nomination for the award must be made in strict confidence.

Entries should be sent to ALIA National Office, PO Box E441, Kingston ACT 2604
phone 06 285 1877, fax 06 282 2249
e-mail awards@alia.org.au
URL <http://www.alia.org.au/awards.html>

Nominations close 1 June 1997

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