SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY SERVICES: A STATUS REPORT

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ABSTRACT

Parliamentary libraries can play a significant role in the information behaviour of parliamentarians. With the exception of the Library of National Parliament, also known as the Library and Information Unit, in Cape Town, South Africa, the other nine South African parliamentary libraries are relatively new institutions that mostly resulted from the democratic processes that took place in the country in 1994. The Library of National Parliament services the National Assembly, while the other nine parliamentary libraries service the provincial legislatures. Initial status reports compiled in 2004 and 2007 indicated limited and very traditional services and sources in many of the parliamentary libraries. Five years later, an attempt was made to establish if improvements and innovations had been

implemented in the parliamentary libraries to serve parliamentarians optimally. A quantitative survey was carried out among all ten parliamentary libraries using a questionnaire. The major findings were that although most of the libraries were offering the same kind of services, very few innovative services had been introduced. A steady increase in online journals, newspapers and databases was observed, thereby indicating a shift towards incorporating digital content and making information available online. A few of the libraries had introduced technology to their services by way of a library portal, Facebook presence, or by using a library blog. Recommendations include: establishing a consortium among the parliamentary libraries to enable information sharing; extending services to a wider clientele; and establishing a platform through the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) where issues and challenges can be discussed.

Keywords: parliamentary libraries, South Africa, status report, library services

1.   INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the South African Legislative Sector has developed in all aspects pertaining to its core mandates. These changes have necessitated efforts to make effective use of all the services at the disposal of legislatures in order to effectively carry out their mandates of oversight, law making and ensuring that the public participates in legislature processes. Being familiar with the earlier study done by Mostert (2007), the researchers wanted to assess the current situation within the parliamentary libraries.

Each Provincial Legislature is unique and responds to the needs of its province and this dynamism influences its resources, approach, and so on. This in turn can influence the information and services required from the parliamentary libraries. Although not the major aim of this study, the researchers also wanted to establish if any of the parliamentary libraries had instituted innovations in meeting their users' demands.

2.   AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study was to determine the current status of the ten parliamentary libraries in South Africa and to compare the findings with those of Mostert's study carried out in 2007. The specific objectives included:

- To assess the changes with regard to the staff component of parliamentary libraries.
- To establish whether the client base and organisations served have changed.

- To identify the total number of parliamentarians and legislature staff served by the parliamentary libraries staff.

- To assess the changes, improvements or innovations in terms of library services and products offered.

- To identify the underlying reasons for both positive and negative changes identified in the study.

3.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The extant literature is very reticent about providing a definition of what constitutes a parliamentary library. The Australian parliamentary website defines a parliamentary library thus: 'The Parliamentary Library ... provides services to senators, members, their staff and the staff of committees' (http://www.aph.gov.au/library). Priano (in Galluzzi 2010, 550) defines it as: '… a specialised library from a point of view of the collection's coverage and the patron for whom it is intended as well'.

In view of parliament's oversight function, Mansura (2012) argues that parliamentary libraries are the most common source of independent information and that they are important instruments for the dissemination of information. This statement indicates the critical role that parliamentary libraries play in providing quality, value-added, factual, well-researched, analysed and balanced information (Simui 2010) to parliamentarians, and political and administrative staff.

Though many parliamentary libraries date back a few centuries, the majority of the current parliamentary libraries are closely related to the development of democratically elected parliaments. Galluzi (2010) reasons that the establishment of a parliamentary library reflects the parliamentary model adopted in a country. South Africa follows a parliamentary model of a central national government supported by nine provincial governments, referred to as legislatures. The Library of Parliament, established in 1854 (Taylor 1967), originally served all Members of Parliament (MPs), both on a national and provincial level. Since the advent of democracy in 1994, it now mainly serves the information needs of the MPs, Ministers and Parliament staff of the National Assembly which is seated in Cape Town, while the recently established libraries in the legislatures serve the information needs of Members of the Provincial Legislatures (MPLs) and the Legislature staff.

The aim of parliamentary library services is to 'support and facilitate parliamentary activities and make available all useful sources of information to the parliament' (Galuzzi 2010, 549). This statement is supported by Robinson (2003), who writes that most legislatures have implemented parliamentary libraries for the specific purpose of assisting them to obtain and use information pertaining to their deliberations. This implies that parliamentary librarians should be *au fait* with current parliamentary debates and legislative issues under discussion or in progress, as well as with topics of a general nature that might assist parliamentarians to participate in

the parliamentary processes. Bernier (2005) supports this and identifies the required documentary needs of parliamentarians as being closely related to the duties normally associated with them, such as legislation, monitoring of parliamentary activities and liaising between government and the citizens it represents. With this in mind, Diallo (2010) indicates that most parliaments have instituted at least minimum documentary structures and services. The documentary structures and the services they present differ from institution to institution, and are closely related to certain issues, such as the length of their existence, resources (staff and information sources), and funding available. Miller, Pelizzo and Stapenhurst (2004) correlate the size of the collection of a parliamentary library with that of its annual collection acquisitions and research staff and indicate that libraries with smaller collections are normally associated with developing countries. Common to all parliamentary library services, however, are the fact that parliamentarians need information constantly, and most of the time on a tight deadline. Additionally, these libraries serve a very specific clientele, namely, parliamentarians, parliamentary support staff, and the whole institution (Sandgrind 2010). The information services provided need to be tailored to the needs of each specific parliamentarian in order to be effective (Mostert 2004).

The introduction of information communications technologies (ICTs) has impacted on the services offered, and the way in which they are offered. The fact that users are more and more adopting a 'one-stop-shop' approach when searching for information, will affect what kind of services they would prefer and how these services should be delivered. Galluzi (2010) opines that the availability of a physical parliamentary library may become much less of an issue, and that access to a virtual network of digitised information sources via Internet access is putting the library and its services under pressure. A recent study by Missingham (2011) indicated that parliamentarians increasingly expect their parliamentary libraries to provide information to them in more innovative ways by utilising the electronic medium.

Galluzi (2010) observed that parliamentary library services in developed countries are in a state of flux, adapting to new needs and new ICTs. However, most parliamentary libraries in developing countries are recently developed institutions and are still very traditional in terms of the information sources, systems and services offered to their clients (Diallo 2010).

4.   SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY SERVICES

Within the South African governmental system, the National Assembly is the highest decision-making body, consisting of about 400 MPs. Their functions are to initiate, debate and promulgate Acts and policies governing the country. These functions are regulated by a Portfolio Committee system. Additionally, the National Council of

Provinces, consisting of 90 members, acts as a liaison body between the National Assembly and the provincial legislatures, and all legislative decisions on national and provincial level are referred to this house for debating and concurrence. All nine provinces have their own provincial legislatures taking legislative decisions for their own provinces. These structures are also following the Portfolio Committee system. Providing information support for informed decision-making are the ten parliamentary libraries.

A study of the information sources and services offered by the ten parliamentary libraries was done by Mostert in 2004. From the study findings it was clear that with the exception of the Library of National Parliament in Cape Town, all the libraries functioned with very small staff complements and resources, and that they served a very specific clientele. The kinds of products and services offered differed between the libraries, with some services, such as videotapes of speeches, only being provided on request. Information sources were mainly restricted to printed sources with user access to computers and the Internet provided by only five libraries. The availability of e-resources was also found to be virtually non-existent (Mostert 2007). In terms of service delivery, information services were found to be delivered by both the library and a research unit, which functioned either as two separate units or under one umbrella. Currently, in most of the legislatures, the library services operate as a separate function to the research services.

The parliamentary libraries play a critical role in providing much needed information to the parliamentarians and administrative staff to enable them to make informed decisions in executing their mandate. Following the establishment of legislatures in 1994, the Legislative Sector has developed tremendously, entrenching its role by developing and implementing oversight models and other tools and frameworks used to execute their mandate. The development of the Legislative Sector also led to the establishment of the South African Legislative Sector (SALS). Through the Speakers' Forum of South Africa, Parliament and the provincial legislatures resolved to organise as a sector and engage in efforts aimed at asserting the sector against potential threats to its independence. This has been done with due regard to the autonomous nature of the legislatures. As units servicing the legislatures, the information services (commonly known as parliamentary libraries) contribute to the sectoral growth by providing the MPs with the information required to fulfil their mandate. At present the Legislative Sector includes the National Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, as well as the provincial legislatures of Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West, and Western Cape.

The South African parliamentary libraries are no longer merely places that stock books but have witnessed growth beyond that. Their services have grown to include services in a variety of formats, user specific services, such as Selective Dissemination of Information and Current Awareness Services, as well as specialised

services, such as the preparation of info-packs on specific topics (Mostert 2007). This growth and expansion in parliamentary information services is not limited to South Africa. Rugambwa (2010, 3) argues critically that African parliamentary libraries have moved away from being places that only buy and stock books and have become places that have witnessed tremendous growth in providing a specialised information and reference service. This is illustrated by the way in which the Ugandan Parliament, for example, is currently focusing on acquiring copies of government documents from government departments, state institutions supporting constitutional democracy, national archives, and civil society organisations as well as providing research and reference services.

5.   METHODOLOGY

The approach undertaken in the study was based on both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The data collected in the study by Mostert (2007) was used to design a questionnaire which was distributed to, and completed by, all the South African parliamentary libraries covered in the study. The data collected was then compared to the 2007 data to analyse the changes in the services provided by parliamentary libraries. Additionally, in order to identify further changes and to understand the underlying reasons for this trend, data was collected through onsite visits made to the Library of the National Parliament and that of the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Provincial Legislature. The visits took the form of unstructured interviews with library personnel to gain further insight into reasons for some of the changes. The sites were chosen on the following basis:

● They both have a higher number of parliamentarians.

● They provide a representation for the national and provincial parliaments.

● Despite the number of MPs MPLs each library uses a different approach. While the Library of the National Parliament operates as a separate business unit from Research Services, the KZN Provincial Legislature uses a combined approach.

● The two libraries have the biggest library collections.

Furthermore, the researchers gained additional information through informal discussions and information and knowledge exchange engagements with representatives from the ten parliamentary libraries, during the quarterly meetings of the SALS Knowledge Management Forums.

6.   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Staffing

Staffing is a critical component in any organisation as it influences whether, or in some cases what, services can be offered. As the 2007 study showed, most of the libraries had very limited staff available, thus it was important to establish if the staffing components had increased or remained stagnant. The results are shown in Table 1. In order to provide a clear picture of the staff complement, the table reflects the staff for both the library and the research function due to the different skills sets required for each.

Table 1:   Library staffing

Library	Library Staff 2007	Library Staff 2013	Research Staff 2007	Research Staff 2013
Parliament	44	47	30	75
Eastern Cape	3	6	2	18
Northern Cape	2	2	1	7
Western Cape	2	2	3	4
Free State	3	1	0	6
Gauteng	7	12	7	25
KwaZulu-Natal	4	2	4	12
Limpopo	4	4	5	10
Mpumalanga	1	2	1	13
North West	1	2	5	8
Total	71	80	58	178

Despite the fact that the table shows that there were still very few library staff members in most of the libraries, on average, there was an increase of 12 per cent of the parliamentary libraries' staff component over the past five years, with staff increasing from 71 to a total of 80. This translates to an average growth of 2.4 per cent per annum over the period. Of the ten libraries, five experienced an increase in library staff while two had staff reductions. The libraries of the National Parliament of South Africa, Eastern Cape, North West, Mpumalanga and Gauteng legislatures experienced staff component increases, whereas, the staff components of the libraries

of the Northern Cape, Western Cape and Limpopo legislatures remained unchanged. The Free State and KZN legislature libraries had their staff reduced. This is in line with Galuzzi's (2010) and Angeleschu's (2010) finding that many parliamentary libraries operate with very small staff components. The research staff increased from 58 in 2007 to 178 in 2013.

The reason for the increase can be attributed to various factors, such as: the variety and depth of the services provided; an increased reliance of parliamentarians on information; an increased focus of parliamentary libraries on primary client (parliamentarians) needs; an increased awareness by legislatures of the value of information; and an increased implementation of the oversight model, such as the Sector Oversight Model (SOM). This model is one of the tools that the South African legislatures use to monitor and scrutinise the performance of government departments in order to ensure that service delivery happens as planned and to hold those responsible accountable. The SOM is by nature highly dependent on information to be provided to the overseers, which can be Portfolio Committee members, and information driven, that is, information of a high quality should be made available by the information services in Parliament to the overseers so that efficient decision-making concerning the oversight process can be made.

Some of the library staff are also responsible for specialised functions in their respective libraries, such as cataloguing and journal management, and as such are not involved directly with information provision but are the backbone that ensures that an efficient information provision service is attained.

6.2. Primary client base

Even though the provincial legislatures perform exactly the same functions, there will always be unique complexities in each legislature that make it distinct from the others. The uniqueness manifests itself in various forms, such as how the libraries serve their primary clients, their client base, and so on. The total number of primary clients served by South African parliamentary libraries is 910. Primary clients are defined as parliamentarians of the National Parliament and those of the Provincial Legislature (MPs and MPLs). The total secondary client base of the parliamentary libraries, excluding the parliamentarians, has been established as being 4 409 (see Table 2). This number represents all staff members, including political support staff in the National Parliament and provincial legislatures. Both primary and secondary clients are served by a total of 80 library staff. Based on these findings, the ratio of library staff to primary clients (customised service) is on average 1 library staff per 11 parliamentarians, or 1 library staff per 54 secondary clients. The client base is reflected in Table 2.

Table 2:   Clients served by the parliamentary libraries

Library	Number of parliamentarians	Number of political and administrative staff
Parliament	490	2 390
Eastern Cape	63	354
Northern Cape	30	142
Western Cape	42	87
Free State	30	135
Gauteng	73	466
KwaZulu-Natal	80	330
Limpopo	49	166
Mpumalanga	19	165
North West	34	174
Total	910	4409

6.3. Library membership

The onus of deciding the membership of the libraries normally rests with the parliamentary librarian. As they serve a specialised group of clients, membership is normally restricted to users within their immediate work environment, but the library may in some cases decide to broaden its user base and then open its doors to external members. All the parliamentary libraries indicated similarities in the criteria for membership offered to their internal users and the external/wider population, although the differentiating factor between these two user groups was related to access to traditional library services and customised services aligned to the SOM.

Membership is primarily restricted to MPs, MPLs, political and administrative staff, including contract workers and intern students contracted by Parliament and the legislatures. It was established that the criteria for membership and utilisation of the South African parliamentary libraries is still the same as those in place in 2007, and given the nature of parliamentary libraries, the situation is unlikely to change in the near future. To qualify for membership to the parliamentary libraries, a person must be an MP/MPL or a staff member.

Table 3 indicates that no new categories of membership were established, nor were any new organisations incorporated as members of the parliamentary libraries. A trend established among some of the parliamentary libraries was hat they are becoming more and more accessible to the general public and organisations, though the public are only allowed to use the services on-site, and do not have

any borrowing privileges. In this respect the Provincial Legislature libraries of Mpumalanga and North West opened their doors to five additional categories of members each, Northern Cape opened five while Limpopo added two. Six out of the ten parliamentary libraries are now open to the public, though Limpopo has terminated their right to use the library. No reason was provided for this move.

Table 3 demonstrates an unmistakeable move among the parliamentary libraries to extend their user base, although no new categories of users were added. Eight of the ten libraries have increased their user base, but there are still large discrepancies among the libraries as to who they allow to make use of their services, apart from the primary clients and legislature staff served.

6.4. Products and services offered

The major function of any library is to provide information sources and services to their users, tailor-made to suit their information needs. As Mostert's study carried out in 2007 indicated a mainly traditional information service, the question aimed at establishing whether any new innovative services/sources were implemented or whether the status quo still existed. The current situation is shown in Table 4.

Table 3: Library membership categories: X = Existing; A = New additions

Library	Parliament		Western Cape		Eastern Cape		KwaZulu-Natal		Mpumalanga		Limpopo		Gauteng		North West		Northern Cape		Free State	
	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013
Parliamentarian	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Committee Members	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parliamentary Staff	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Other Legislatures in SA	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		A	X	X
Local Bodies / Organisations							X	X	X	X			X	X				A	X	X
Ministries	X	X															X	X	X	X
Academics	X	X					X	X		A		A				A		A	X	X
Researchers	X			A			X	X		A		A				A			X	X
International Bodies / Organisations / Parliaments	X	X					X	X											X	X
Other Libraries in SA					X	X	X	X		A						A		A	X	X
Provincial Government Departments								A		A				A		A		A		A
Ordinary Citizens							X	X	X	A	X			A		A		A	X	X
School Children										A									X	X

Table 4: Parliamentary library sources and services

Products/Services	Library of Parliament		Western Cape		Eastern Cape		KwaZulu-Natal		Mpumalanga		Limpopo		Gauteng		North West		Northern Cape		Free State	
	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R
Reference service	X	N	X		X		X		X		X		N		X		X		X	
News/reading room	X	N	X		X		X		X		X		N		X		X		X	
Newspaper clipping service	X	N	X				X		X		X	X	N		X		X		X	
Lending service	X	N	X		X		X		X		X		N		X		X		X	
Inter-library loan service	X	N	X		X		X		N		X		N		N		X		X	
Translations		N								X										
Compilations of bibliographies	X	N			X				N				N							
Publication of acquisitions lists	X	N	X		X		X		N		X		N		X		N		X	
Access to on-line databases/CD-ROMs	X	N	X	X	X		X		N		X		N		X		N		N	
Access to Internet	X	N	X		X		X		X	X	X	X	N		X	N	X		N	
Access to off-line CD-ROMs	X	N					X		X				N		N		X		X	
Access to audio materials	X	N									N						N		X	
Access to audio-visual materials	X	N			X		X		X	X	X				N		N		X	
Current awareness service	X	N	N		N		X		X		X	X	N		X		N		X	
Selective Dissemination of Information service	X	N	N		N		X		X				N		N	X	N		X	
Photocopy service	X	N	X		N	X	X		N		X		X		X		X		X	
Indexing of periodicals		N				X	X		N		X		X		X		N		X	
Info-packs on specific topics	X	N			X	X	X		X	X		N	X		N	N	X		X	

Information service	X	N	X	N	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Research studies on specific topics	X	X	N	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	N	N	X
Do public opinion polls					X								X	N		
Do surveys on specific topics		N	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	N	N	
Provision of information & analysis thereof	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	N		
Provision of comments on Bills	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X		N		N	X
Provision of expert opinions	X	X	N		X		X				X		N	N	N	X
Provision of background papers on specific topics	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X		X	N	N	N
Provision of reports on policy issues		X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	N	X
Overviews of issues discussed in Parliaments		X			X	N				X		X	X			X

L = Library; R = Research Unit; X = Existing services/sources; N = Nw services/sources

From the results it is clear that there has been a noticeable movement by parliamentary libraries towards the provision of the same types of services and products across all libraries. Only four services were recorded as removed, in contrast to 36 new services and products implemented in eight of the parliamentary libraries. The 36 services and products are not completely new to the parliamentary library sector, but are new to the implementing library. The four services and products were removed because they were obsolete products, such as access to offline CD-ROMs or because the streamlining of services between the Research Unit and libraries required their removal.

It is concerning that over the past five years, there has been no new service or product development, which shows a lack of innovation and the setting of new trends, normally associated with technology. For example, innovation could take the form of making available an online news-clipping service, a Facebook chat service, or a frequently asked questions (FAQ) service via a library website. Now that the library services and products in all the parliamentary libraries are gearing towards commonality and similarity, the need for innovation, creativity and the exploration of benchmarked services offered in parliamentary libraries globally is more prudent.

It is anticipated by the researchers that the growing trend towards providing common services may eventually result in the establishment of minimum standards for the South African Parliamentary Library services through the Knowledge Management Forum of SALS. A move like this would benefit all the library users as it provides fertile grounds for interaction between library staff, resource sharing by the parliamentary libraries and provides a platform for developing solutions to similar challenges. Also important to note is that when all libraries are on the same level of service delivery, engagements to develop new services collectively will be more meaningful and fruitful. This level of convergence also creates a need for creativity and innovation in staying relevant and responsive to the users' changing information needs.

It is interesting to note that in most of the provincial legislature library services, there seems to be improved cooperation between the library and research services. This is also evident through the Knowledge Management Forum of the SALS which caters for Research services, Library services and Knowledge Management services in the sector.

6.5. Information sources

- **Books:** Books still represent the major form of information sources available in the parliamentary libraries.. From Table 5, it is clear that overall the parliamentary libraries' book collections increased, and in some cases decreased, due to various reasons unique to each library. Despite the number of decreasing book collections, the majority of the

Table 5:   Information sources available in the parliamentary libraries

Information products	Library of Parliament		Western Cape		Eastern Cape		KwaZulu-Natal		Mpuma-langa		Limpopo		Gauteng		North West		Northern Cape		Free State	
	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013
Books	26 500	90 000+	4 000	2 500	4 000	2 000	20 000	25 000	3 000	600	1 700	1 123	1 860	6 237	3 500	4 300	2 000	3 020	2 000	2 400
Newspaper Subscriptions	56	190	8	9	12	8	10	12	9	3	5	14	11	15	7	17	16	22	12	13
Journal / Serial Subscriptions	191	209	31	29		2	12	15	8		14	6	59	26	32	38	4	10	40	0
Electronic Journal Subscriptions		74		1	1			4	1	1	1		1	49		1		1		
Online Databases Subscribed to	5	14		5		6	1	5		1	8	5	5	9	3	4	6	6	2	2
Databases on Diskette / CD ROMs		13	2	0	1		2											1		
CD Rom Collection	36	60					2				30	17	8	8			4	5		
Newspaper Clippings Services			1	1			1	1	3	1					1	1		3	1	1
Pamphlets																			50	60
Videos					15							25			1			20	70	70
Cassettes					20										15				5	0
CDs			50	250	9	8														
Legal Deposit Journals	3000																			
Magazines	75																19	25		
Others (maps)	700+																	5		

libraries showed some increase, as in the case of the Library of Parliament, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, Free State and North West provincial legislature libraries, a significant increase was noticed (see Table 6). The huge increase in Library of Parliament was due to the purchase of new books and successful compliance with the Legal Deposit Act. This act compels publishers to provide copies of the all the information materials published to the five legal deposit libraries in South Africa. Noticeable also was the introduction of e-books through subscription to databases. The Gauteng Provincial Legislature Library increased its collection during the past five years due to the recognition of its role in parliamentary business and the model it uses to provide information support to House Committees. This resulted in an increased focus on information support and books are central in this case.

The decreases were not as noteworthy as the increase, but still significant, especially in the case of the Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and Western Cape provincial parliamentary libraries. The decline is mainly attributed to weeding processes. As the legislatures mature after 20 years of democracy, so do the information collections used to support parliamentarians. The increased focus on the management of books by the auditor general assisted in ensuring verification of book collections in libraries in general.

Table 6:   Book collection increases/decreases

	Percentage increase/decrease
Parliament of South Africa	200% decrease
Eastern Cape	50% decrease
Northern Cape	50% increase
Western Cape	40% decrease
Free State	24% increase
Gauteng	235% increase
KwaZulu-Natal	25% increase
Limpopo	10% decrease
Mpumalanga	80% decline
North West	23% increase

- **Newspapers and print journal subscriptions:** Compared to 2007, an increase in the number of newspapers that parliamentary libraries are subscribing to has been detected. As reflected in Table 7, seven of the ten libraries increased the number of newspaper subscriptions while three other libraries either decreased or retained the same number of subscriptions. The biggest increase has been noticed in the Library of Parliament. Worth noticing is the fact that by subscribing

to more databases and services, like Pressreader, the library expanded its access to journals and newspapers by thousands. These increases can be attributed to the value parliamentarians derive from the printed information provided by the newspapers and subscription to the electronic newspapers' packages which provides access to a wealth of local and international newspapers. Interestingly, the print journal subscriptions also increased in a similar way to the newspapers. This finding was against the expectation that print journal subscriptions would decrease in the wake of technological developments and Internet access to give way to electronic journal subscriptions.

- **E-journal subscriptions and online databases:** The subscriptions to electronic journals and online databases unsurprisingly enjoyed a steady increase. The increase in the subscription to these information resources is in line with the vision of a fully virtual library which libraries in general aspire to. Access to electronic information enables any library to access a wealth of information speedily to the benefit of the users. Some of the most used online databases include legal databases, such as Lexis Nexis and Juta Law, which are central to the legislatures' mandate of Law Making. Other online databases and online information products used included various products from SABINET, EBSCO, Econometrix and Municipal IQ. The Parliamentarian, Development Southern Africa, Journal of Democracy, Journal of Legislative Studies, Journal of Public Policy, Parliamentary Affairs, Policy and Politics, and so on, are some of the e-journals used to support all the mandates of the legislatures.

- **Other information sources:** Compared to the findings in 2007 an irrefutable decline in the availability of information resources, such as CD collections, newspaper clipping services, pamphlets, videos and cassettes has been noticed. Understandably so, these materials are obsolete. For example, newspaper clippings have diminished because access to newspapers in both print and electronic form, has improved remarkably. Most users of parliamentary libraries have access to the Internet; therefore as a result have access to electronic newspapers. Also, most users have access to the subscribed print newspapers. The above-mentioned information resources have in most cases diminished and no longer form part of the collection of any parliamentary library with the exception of one or two of the parliamentary libraries which still have a few of these information materials still in their collections. No new information resources were identified during the current study.

The lack of the introduction of innovative information sources/services using technology has been identified by the researchers as an area of concern. From the responses on the use of technology for information dissemination, it was established that in general only two tools, namely, television and a web portal are the most popularly and widely used technologies by some of the libraries to provide and

	Library of Parliament		Western Cape		Eastern Cape		Kwazulu-Natal		Mpumalanga		Limpopo		Gauteng		North West		Northern Cape		Free State	
	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013	2007	2013
Books	26 500	80 000	4 000	2 500	4 000	2 000	20 000	250 000	3 000	600	1 700	1 123	1 860	6 237	3 500	4 300	2 000	3 020	2 000	2 400
Newspaper Subscriptions	56	190	8	9	12	8	10	12	9	3	5	14	11	15	7	17	16	22	12	13
Journal / Serial Subscriptions	191	209	31	29		2	12	15	8		14	6	59	26	32	38	4	10	40	0
Electronic Journal Subscriptions		56		1	1			4	1	1	1		1	49				1		
Online Databases Subscribed to	5	5		5		6	1	5		1	8	5	5		3	4	6	6	2	2
Databases on Diskette/CD Roms		13	2	0	1		2											1		
CD Rom Collection	36	60					2				30	17	8	8			4	5		
Newspaper Clippings Services			1	1			1	1	3	1					1	1		3	1	1
Pamphlets																			50	60
Videos					15							25			1			20	70	70
Cassettes					20										15				5	0
CDs			50	250	9															
Legal Deposit Journals	3000																			
Magazines	75					8											19	25		
Others																		5		
(Please Specify)																				

share information. Even though the study noted an increase in the use of television sets (TVs), they were not mainly used to provide a library service but to market library services and to provide access to House Sittings and to communicate information on institutional events, that is, five libraries indicated that they were using the TVs to broadcast House sittings and display library marketing information whilst the other five did not have TVs. The parliamentary libraries that have TVs are Western Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and North West. In general, there is a slow absorption of the use of social technology platforms by the parliamentary libraries. Of the ten parliamentary libraries, six have a library portal, while one uses Facebook and two have library blogs. There is a need to take advantage of available technological platforms to realise the mission, relevance and purpose of parliamentary libraries. There are many existing technological platforms, including social networks that have not been explored yet. These new technologies have the ability to facilitate the free flow of information in easier ways to all users.

6.6. Marketing library services

The effective marketing of information services has a direct impact on the awareness of and the utilisation thereof. The study conducted by Mostert in 2007 established that very traditional methods were used to create awareness and to promote the services among the users. The question therefore aimed at establishing whether innovative methods have been introduced in the quest to attract the attention of both current users as well as potential users. The study found that while the Parliamentary Library Services continues to market its services rigorously, making use of tried and tested methods, very few new and innovative methods were employed. The methods currently used included:

- distributing brochures and flyers advertising library services;
- acquiring lists of new books circulated;
- displaying new books and journals;
- providing current awareness services;
- establishing a library portal;
- holding exhibitions;
- organising seminars;
- publishing an internal newsletter;
- conducting an orientation programme for new parliamentarians and staff;
- e-bulletin;
- holding open days;
- conducting pro-active research;

- doing book selection exercises with staff;
- hosting events to celebrate World Book Day, Library Week, and so on.

Additionally, the parliamentary libraries conduct marketing exercises to inform users about the information products, generally to increase awareness about what is new in the libraries and to educate users about the features of different information products available.

7.   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that over the past five years, steady growth in terms of services and products delivered has been experienced in most of the libraries. However, the lack of evidence of embracing technology as a platform for innovative and pro-active information service delivery is a cause for concern.

According to Ellis (2013), there is great variance between the quality and quantity of collections found in parliamentary libraries globally, which could be as a result of a variety of factors such as funding, political affiliations, corruption, educational levels, traditions and political instability. The same variance in the quantities of the collections can be seen in the South African context, though factors, other than those mentioned above might be responsible for this state of affairs. Some of the provincial legislatures are relatively small and therefore the collections will reflect this fact.

There is a need for parliamentary libraries to keep up with the fast changing pace of the Knowledge Economy era, more so because they are information agents and need to usher in change in their respective legislatures. Miller, Pelizzo and Stapenhurst (2004) warn that it is not enough for parliamentary libraries to just make information sources and services available, but that it is also imperative that the users be trained to use the information provided in the libraries effectively, something that might not always be possible within the context of the small staff complements found in most of the South African Parliamentary Library services. Ellis (2013) has expressed a real concern that the inability of the users to use the information might lead to the floundering of democracy in developing countries. It is therefore not just enough to market the services more vigorously and innovatively, but also to embark on training the users to be effective information users. The study therefore recommends that:

- Given that we are in a knowledge economy era, which is characterised by rapid changes and development in technology, it is imperative that parliamentary libraries, as agents of information, do not let technology pass by. An e-collection is vital for a sustainable and meaningful e-service. The libraries should therefore consider increasing their e-collections, both in terms of newspapers and books. This could assist the libraries to offer products and services that are easily accessible and current.

- Academic institutions have a consortium where in some instances they negotiate for a joint product package with some service providers. The South African Parliamentary Sector can derive benefits for itself if it undertakes a similar approach, which can only strengthen the sector while the libraries benefit from a wider range of information products with huge cost savings. This could mean that new information service products can be designed and customised by the service providers to respond to the needs of the sector at reasonable rates. The establishment of a Parliamentary Library Consortium will strengthen the sector.

- Parliamentary libraries should broaden some of their services to include members of the public. This is due to the fact that the South African parliaments are currently the main institutions that create knowledge on issues pertaining to oversight, public participation and law making. Lack of public access to information focusing on the legislative business and sector, makes the information rare and under-researched. Access to sector information by post-graduate students, for example, would encourage research in these fields, stimulating new knowledge that results in growth.

- The sector can consider creating a platform for itself within the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA). This will assist in the sector being recognised; provide a platform for the discussion of its issues and challenges; and elevate its professional status, at a national and international level.

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