

**PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION SOURCES, SYSTEMS  
AND SERVICES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE ROLE OF  
PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIES IN INFORMATION  
PROVISION**

**By**

**Bertha Jantine Mostert  
B.Bibl, University of Pretoria, 1978  
B.Bibl (Hons), UNISA, 1986  
M.LIS, University of Zululand, 1997.**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in Library and Information Science, Faculty of Arts, University of  
Zululand. South Africa.**

**2004**

## DECLARATION

**I hereby declare that the content of this thesis unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my original work. It has not been submitted to any other university for a similar or any other degree.**

**Bertha Jantine Mostert**

**Signed:.....**

**Promoter: Professor Dennis. N. Ocholla( PhD)**

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis N. Ocholla", written over a light grey rectangular background.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband Jako, and children Petri and Jako for their unwavering support during the time it took to complete the study. Also to my parents, Peter and Ena Bolink for their example and support throughout the years.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my sincere thanks for the successful completion of the study to:

- God Almighty who gave me the strength to cope with this project
- My supervisor, Prof. D.N. Ocholla for his support, dedication, encouragement and good advice. Without him this would not have been possible
- My husband and children who were always supportive. Thank you also for your support with the data analysis
- My parents and in-laws who always encouraged me
- Sue Butler for the editing.

A special word of thanks to the staff of the Library of Parliament, specifically Mr. A. Ntunja, Mrs. J. van Zyl and Mr. M. Burgers for their assistance during my visits to the Library. In addition, I wish to thank all the staff members from the Provincial Legislatures who assisted with the distribution and follow-up work of the questionnaires.

My sincerest thanks to my assistant Miss Alvina Khubeka who was always willing to try again and again to gain access to the Parliamentarians. Without her, the study done at the Library of Parliament would not have been possible.

## ABSTRACT

Modern legislative functions demand that legislator's access, exploit and use information for effective decision making on a regular basis. It is increasingly assumed that legislative functions in a democratic country are becoming more complex as the electorate's political consciousness and knowledge of their rights and responsibilities is dramatically changing and transforming. During parliamentary sessions information is used for a variety of purposes. These include: preparation for speeches, participation in parliamentary debates, maintenance of formal and informal conversation with colleagues and constituents about matters of mutual concern, and to be able to contribute towards the legislative processes. It is also noted that during recess periods information is needed to communicate with constituents on a variety of issues.

Parliamentary libraries are formal institutions whose specific functions are to provide information services to parliamentarians. Currently they provide a variety of services to parliamentarians such as searching and retrieval of information on request, pro-active information packages on specific topics, research assistance and photo-copying services. In some parliamentary libraries searching facilities to conduct electronic searches are part of the services rendered. Based on their close proximity to the parliament environment, it could be assumed that the libraries would be heavily utilised by the parliamentarians. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

The aim of the study was to determine the extent to which various information sources, services and systems are used by parliamentarians to access information. The role of parliamentary libraries within the parliamentary information provision sector was also investigated. Similarly, the efficiency of these services in satisfying the information needs of their clientele was also to be established. Specific attention was given to the utilization of electronic information sources, especially the Internet. It was assumed that

unsatisfactory educational background of the majority of the current parliamentarians impedes their ability to access information sources.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods that involved largely surveys by use of questionnaires were used. Informal interviews and observation were also used to collect data for the study. Data was collected from the parliamentarians, both on a national and a provincial level, as well as from the parliamentary librarians. Two questionnaires were designed, one for the parliamentarians and a separate one for the librarians. Informal interviews with staff from the Library of Parliament, Cape Town were held to supplement information gained from the questionnaire. An observation schedule was used to capture information relating to the conditions at the Library of Parliament, Cape Town.

The questionnaire for the parliamentarians was distributed to all parliamentarians on address lists provided by the parliaments, or those available on the Internet. Seven hundred and sixty questionnaires were mailed to parliamentarians and 167 were returned, giving a return rate of 23%. It was recognized that a low response rate is common on related studies reported in the literature. The low response rate, in our view, did not obscure the validity of the results obtained from the study. The questionnaire for the Parliamentary Libraries was mailed to all ten of the parliamentary libraries and a 100% response rate was obtained.

The major findings of the study were that South African parliamentarians indeed had the same incessant need for information as their counterparts in other countries. A variety of information needs were expressed, many of which could be directly related to the portfolio or committee to which the parliamentarian was attached. Three major information needs however emerged i.e. the need for information on governance, politics and provincial issues, as well as safety and security. It was found that the respondents used various information sources, services and systems to satisfy their information needs. The strongest preferences were expressed for printed materials; however utilization of electronic sources were strongly supported. In respect of using electronic sources a

number of problems were highlighted by the respondents. Both formal and informal information services and systems were utilized a lot less than anticipated. However, a close relationship was found between the level of education of the parliamentarian and the variety of sources used. For example, the higher the educational levels attained the wider the variety of sources used. It was interesting to note that only a small discrepancy was found between the preference to receive information in a printed or an electronic format. The oral medium, which is a prevalent medium within the African continent, was the least preferred.

The respondents notably preferred to look for the information themselves, but a large group also used an intermediary close to them, i.e. their Personal Assistants to do their information searches for them. Information sources utilized were mainly sources personally available to the parliamentarian. A large group also used their computers to search for information. Parliamentary libraries, even though they provide a variety of traditional and pro-active information services were not utilized optimally. This trend was reiterated by some of the librarians who mentioned that they were severely under-utilized even during parliamentary sessions.

With the exception of the Library of Parliament, Cape Town, parliamentary libraries at provincial level are new developments, and as thus still busy establishing themselves as role-players in the information provision sector. The success of their activities varies from library to library, from being well-utilized units, to being severely-underutilized. Problems identified in this regard are the marketing of services and products and user-education. The majority of the libraries are moving progressively towards the utilization and the provision of electronic information sources for parliamentarians.

Recommendations included an aggressive and effective marketing strategy to keep parliamentarians informed on the latest available products and services. In this respect, the electronic medium should be used optimally, either through the Intranet or the Internet. Innovative ways and means of user education should also be investigated.

It is also recommended that the parliamentary Libraries develop a niche area for themselves in respect of the provision of electronic information services. Parliamentarians do not have the time, nor the expertise, to spend on doing fruitless searches. Particular attention should be given to the role of the Personal Assistant in the information seeking. Similarly, parliamentarians need to be educated about the advantages of using a skilled information-seeking intermediary instead of an unskilled person. Attention should be given to educating parliamentarians about the various information sources available to them, both within the parliamentary libraries, as well as in the country. Once again the parliamentary libraries could see this as a niche area for service delivery.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Declaration .....	ii
Dedication .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Abstract .....	v
List of tables .....	xix
List of charts .....	xx
List of figures .....	xxi
List of abbreviations and acronyms .....	xxiii
Glossary .....	xxiv

### **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Background	1
1.2 Problem statement and motivation	5
1.3 Aims and objectives of the study	9
1.4 Research questions	10
1.5 Scope and delimitations of the field of study	10
1.5.1 Subject	10
1.5.2 The context	11
1.5.3 Research environment	12
1.5.4 Methodological scope	12
1.5.5 Political limitations	13
1.6 Assumptions	13
1.7 Significance of the study	14
1.8 Dissemination of the findings	15
1.9 Thesis design	15

1.10 Summary	17
--------------	----

## **CHAPTER 2: THE SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM**

2.1 Introduction	18
2.2 Democracy	20
2.2.1 Definition of democracy	20
2.2.2 Types of democracy	21
2.2.3 Criteria for a democratic process	21
2.2.4 Features of a democracy	22
2.2.5 Parliaments and Parliamentary representation	22
2.3 Historical development of democracy	24
2.4 The development of democracy in South Africa	28
2.4.1 Khoisan	28
2.4.2 African people	28
2.4.3 White people	31
2.4.3.1 The Dutch period (1652 - 1795)	31
2.4.3.2 British period (1795 -1934)	32
2.4.3.3 Military government	32
2.4.3.4 Crown Colony Government	33
2.4.3.5 Representative government	33
2.4.3.6 Responsible government	34
2.4.3.7 The Great Trek (1834 - 1854) - political consequences	35
2.4.3.7.1 Oranje-Vrijstaat	35
2.4.3.7.2 The Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek	36
2.4.3.8 Natal	36
2.4.3.9 Unification of the British colonies under responsible government in South Africa	37
2.4.3.10 The Union of South Africa	38

2.4.3.11	Apartheid and its role in politics	40
2.4.3.12	Homelands	42
2.4.3.13	The Republic of South Africa	43
2.4.3.13.1	Political dispensation	43
2.4.3.13.2	Legislature	43
2.4.3.13.2.1	The State President	44
2.4.3.13.2.2	The House of Assembly	44
2.4.3.13.2.3	The Senate	44
2.4.3.13.2.4	The Executive	45
2.4.3.14	Pressure for change and the abandonment of apartheid	45
2.4.3.15	Democracy and the new government	46
2.4.3.15.1	The National Government - Parliament	46
2.4.3.15.2	The National Assembly	47
2.4.3.15.3	The National Council of Provinces	49
2.4.3.15.4	Provincial government	49
2.4.3.15.5	The structure of provincial government	51
2.5	Summary	52

### **CHAPTER 3: INFORMATION SOURCES SYSTEMS AND SERVICES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

3.1	Introduction	53
3.2	Information sources, services and systems	54
3.3	Parliamentary libraries and their role in formation provision to Parliamentarians	75
3.3.1	The development of parliamentary libraries	75
3.3.2	Role of the parliamentary library	77
3.3.3	Trends in international parliamentary libraries	78
3.3.3.1	Services and products	78
3.3.3.1.1	Traditional services	79
3.3.3.1.1.1	Lending services	79

3.3.3.1.1.2 Reference service	79
3.3.3.1.1.3 Compilation of bibliographies	80
3.3.3.1.1.4 Development of databases	80
3.3.3.1.1.5 Other services	80
3.3.3.1.2 Automated/Electronic services	81
3.3.3.1.2.1 Automation of library services	81
3.3.3.1.2.2 The automation of legislative services	82
3.3.3.1.2.3 The creation of data banks	82
3.3.3.1.2.4 Providing access to Information networks on the Internet and Intranet	83
3.3.3.1.3 Parliamentary research services	85
3.3.4 Barriers to the provision of effective and efficient information services in parliamentary libraries	88
3.3.4.1 Inadequate funds and resources	88
3.3.4.2 Lack of support for library services	89
3.3.5 South African Parliamentary Library Services	90
3.3.5.1 The Library of Parliament, Cape Town	91
3.3.5.1.1 Library of the Cape Legislative Council, 1854-1884	91
3.3.5.1.2 Library of the Cape Legislative Assembly, 1854-1884	92
3.3.5.1.3 Library of Parliament, 1885-2003	93
3.3.5.2 Organisational structure	101
3.3.5.3 Services offered to Members by the Library Unit	102
3.3.5.4 Services offered by the Research Unit	103
3.3.5.5 Staff development	104
3.3.5.6 Cooperation between the Library of Parliament and the Provincial legislative libraries	105
3.3.5.7 Promotion of services offered by the Library of Parliament	105
3.3.6 Provincial legislative libraries	106
3.3.7 Modern parliamentary library and research services vs The Library of Parliament, Cape Town	108
3.4 Summary	111

**CHAPTER 4: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

4.1	Introduction	112
4.2	Theoretical framework	113
4.2.1	Information	114
4.3	Modeling of information seeking behaviour	119
4.3.1	Background information to the development of the model	120
4.4	Wilson's general model of information behaviour (1996)	122
4.4.1	Information needs	124
4.4.2	Stress/coping theory	126
4.4.3	Intervening variables	127
4.4.4	Risk/reward theory	134
4.4.5	Social cognitive theory	134
4.4.6	Information-seeking behaviour	135
4.4.7	Information searching process	136
4.4.8	Information processing and use	138
4.4.9	Uses and gratification theory	139
4.4.10	User-in-context	140
4.5	Application of the model to the current study	141
4.5.1	Background to the information needs of parliamentarians	141
4.5.2	Model application	142
4.6	Critique of the model	145
4.7	Summary	145

**CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION**

5.1	Introduction	146
5.2	Study population	147
5.3	Research design and method	148
5.4	Data collection instruments	149

5.4.1	The questionnaire	150
5.4.1.1	Questionnaire design	151
5.4.1.1.1	Questionnaire for parliamentarians	152
5.4.1.1.2	Questionnaire for parliamentary libraries	152
5.4.2	Observation	153
5.4.3	Literature review	154
5.5	Pilot study	155
5.5.1	Research questionnaires - parliamentarians	155
5.5.2	Research questionnaires – parliamentary libraries	156
5.6	Administration of research instruments	156
5.6.1	The questionnaires for parliamentarians	156
5.6.2	Questionnaire for parliamentary libraries	157
5.6.3	The observations	157
5.7	Data processing and analysis	158
5.7.1	Analysis of data from questionnaires	158
5.7.2	Analysis of data from observation	158
5.8	Problems encountered	159
5.9	Summary	160

## **CHAPTER 6: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

6.1	Introduction	161
6.2	Section one: Parliamentary questionnaire	161
6.2.1	Responses from Parliamentarians	161
6.2.1.1	Personal information of parliamentarians	162
6.2.1.2	Gender distribution	163
6.2.1.3	Educational level	163
6.2.1.4	Political affiliation	164
6.2.1.5	Member status	165
6.2.1.6	Position held within the parliamentary hierarchy	165

6.2.1.7	Provincial representation	166
6.2.1.8	Access to Personal Computer connected to the Internet	167
6.2.2	Information needs and searching strategies	168
6.2.2.1	Period when information need is experienced	168
6.2.2.2	Frequency of information seeking	168
6.2.2.3	Reasons for seeking information	169
6.2.2.4	Search strategy	171
6.2.2.5	Information sources/systems used during retrieval process	172
6.2.2.6	Electronic sources utilised	174
6.2.2.6.1	Search engines	175
6.2.2.6.2	Database hosts	175
6.2.2.6.3	Databases	176
6.2.2.6.4	Internet websites/topics	176
6.2.2.6.5	Electronic journals or newspapers	177
6.2.2.6.6	Digital libraries	178
6.2.2.6.7	Virtual libraries	178
6.2.2.7	Problems experienced whilst using electronic source	179
6.2.2.8	Information needs	180
6.2.2.9	Information source format preference	183
6.2.3	Institutions used to find information	183
6.2.3.1	Institutions used to find obtain source	183
6.2.3.2	National and International organisations contacted for information	185
6.2.3.3	Parliamentary library service utilisation	186
6.2.3.4	Reasons for utilising the Parliamentary Library	186
6.2.3.5	Availability of research assistants	187
6.2.3.6	Utilisation of research assistants	187
6.2.3.7	Research service affiliation with parliamentary library services	187
6.3	Section two: Parliamentary libraries	187
6.3.1	Parliamentary libraries	188
6.3.2	Background information	188
6.3.3	Information system	191

6.3.4	Research service jurisdiction	192
6.3.5	Staff complement	192
6.3.6	Staff qualifications	193
6.3.7	Products and services offered by the Library/Research units	193
6.3.8	Special services	196
6.3.9	Problems experienced in delivering information services to parliamentarians	196
6.3.10	Size of collections	197
6.3.11	Reading room availability	199
6.3.12	Number of reading rooms available	199
6.3.13	Position of reading rooms	200
6.3.14	Utilisation of reading rooms	200
6.3.15	Reasons for utilisation/non-utilisation of reading rooms	200
6.3.16	External service delivery and networking	201
6.3.17	International Network contacts	203
6.3.18	Marketing of services and products	204
6.3.19	Restrictions on the utilisation of library services	205
6.3.20	Type of restrictions applied	205
6.3.21	Service statistics	206
6.3.22	Perceived information format preference	208
6.3.23	Availability of computers in the library	210
6.3.24	Number of computers available to staff and clients	210
6.3.25	Networking of the computers	211
6.3.26	Connection to the Parliamentary Network	211
6.3.27	Name of Network connected to	211
6.3.28	Main functions of computers in the Legislative Libraries	211
6.3.29	Computer utilisation for information-seeking purposes by parliamentarians in the library	213
6.3.30	Other technology used in the library	213
6.3.31	Important developments in the library/research services in each respective library	214

6.4 Section three: observations at the Library of Parliament, Cape Town	216
6.4.1 Location and observation of the library building	216
6.4.2 Inside of the library building	216
6.4.3 Library staff	217
6.5 Summary	218

## **CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

7.1 Introduction	219
7.2 Information sources, services and systems	219
7.3 Trends in information source utilisation by parliamentarians	221
7.3.1 Role of education in information source/system utilization	224
7.4 Information needs and information seeking strategies	228
7.4.1 Sustaining democracy through vigorous information seeking	228
7.4.2 Search strategies	229
7.4.3 Nature of the information needs	230
7.5 Role of the Legislative Libraries in the information delivery process	231
7.6 Proposal of a conceptual model for effective parliamentary information services	238
7.7 Summary	241

## **CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 Introduction	243
8.2 Summary	243
8.2.1 The various information sources, services and systems used to access information	243
8.2.2 Parliamentarians' utilization of traditional information sources, services and systems during the information seeking process	245
8.2.3 Internet and e-source utilisation during the information-seeking process	246
8.2.4 Efficiency of Parliamentary Library Services	246

8.2.5 Conceptual model	247
8.3 Conclusions	247
8.4 Recommendations	248
8.4.1 Information mediums/formats	248
8.4.2 Maintenance and evaluation of parliamentarians' own information sources	249
8.4.3 Searching strategies	250
8.4.4 Internet accessibility and utilization	252
8.4.5 Technological problems	252
8.4.6 Expansion of library staff	253
8.4.7 Access to PC's with the ability to do electronic information searches within the parliamentary libraries	253
8.4.8 Marketing of the library services	253
8.4.9 Marketing of non-partisan information and research services	254
8.4.10 Participation by parliamentarians in collection development	255
8.4.11 Expansion of information networks by parliamentary libraries	255
8.4.12 Development of niche areas	255
8.5 Further research	256
<b>REFERENCES</b>	257
Addendum 1: Questionnaire: parliamentarians	287
Addendum 2: Questionnaire: parliamentary libraries	297
Addendum 3: Observation schedule	307
Addendum 3: Letter of introduction	309
Addendum 4: Permission for research	310

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1	Information and research needs of parliamentarians	3
Table 2	Government Departments Homepage evaluation	72
Table 3	Provincial legislative libraries	106
Table 4	Service delivery levels: well-developed parliamentary libraries vs. the Library of Parliament, Cape Town	109
Table 5	Information and knowledge	115
Table 6	Provincial representation	167
Table 7	Reasons for seeking information	169
Table 8	Information sources/systems used	173
Table 9	Search engines used	175
Table 10	Topics searched for on the Internet	177
Table 11	Sources and facilities used to obtain information sources	184
Table 12	Staff complement in information system units	192
Table 13	Products and services offered	194
Table 14	Size of information sources collections	198
Table 15	External individuals/groups/organisations served/networked with	202
Table 16	Marketing strategies	204
Table 17	Types of restrictions on library utilisation	205
Table 18	Preferences perceived in libraries for specific information formats during the dissemination of information process	209
Table 19	Computer availability in the libraries	210
Table 20	Main functions of computers in Legislative Libraries	212
Table 21	Technologies used in the information seeking process	214
Table 22	Relationship between level of education and information source utilisation	227

**LIST OF CHARTS**

Chart 1	Parliamentary Library utilisation	186
---------	-----------------------------------	-----

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1	Wilson's model of information behaviour	121
Figure 2	Wilson's general model for information seeking behaviour	123
Figure 3	Educational levels	163
Figure 4	Parliamentary position held	166
Figure 5	Information needs	182
Figure 6	Information seeking behaviour of parliamentarians	239

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ANC	African National Congress
AUSAID	Australian Government overseas aid programme
CD-ROM	Compact Disc Read Only Memory
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPA	Certified Public Accountants
CSIR	Council for Science and Industrial Research
DA	Democratic Alliance
DOC	Directory of Contacts
DVD/CD	Digital Versatile Disc/Compact Disc
EU	European Union
FAO	Food Agricultural Organisation
GBN	Global Business Network
GCIS	Government Communication Information System
HIV/AIDS	Human Immune Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HRSC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IFP	Inkhata Freedom Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOL	Independent Newspaper Online
LIS	Library and Information Science
KPMG	Klynveld, Peat, Marwick and Goerdeler
MEC	Member of the Executive Committees
NAARS	National Automated Archival Retrieval System
NAMAC	National Coordinating Office for Manufacturing Advisory

Centres

NASA	National Archives of South Africa
NCOP	The National Council of Provinces
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NFVSA	National Film, Video and Sound Archive
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NISC	National Information Services Corporation
NLSA	National Library of South Africa
NNP	The New National Party
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PASA	Publishers Association of South Africa
PIT	Public Internet Terminal
PMG	Parliamentary Monitoring Group
SA Media	South African Media
SABINET	South African Bibliographic Information Network
SAGD	South African Government Directory
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SAIS	South African Interlending Scheme
SANDC	South African National Defence Council
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TWAS	Third World Academy of Sciences
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organisation

## GLOSSARY

***Library:*** an organized collection of items of various formats (books, journals, videos, CD-ROMSs, etc.) along with services required to make them available to a given user group or groups (Tennant 1999).

***Electronic library:*** a library consisting of electronic materials and services (Tennant 1999). It includes the full range of optical, magnetic and digital technologies used to disseminate printed information (Demas 1994). An electronic library differs from a digital library in the sense that it contains materials originally typed in on the computer.

***Digital library:*** a library consisting of digital materials, and services (Tennant 1999). Materials are digitised by optically scanning in existing sources. Digital libraries can, but do not have to be, from one geographic domain. It can consist of related sources linked together.

***Digital material:*** items stored, processed and transferred via digital devices and networks (Tennant 1999).

***Digital information services:*** services that are delivered digitally over computer networks (De Kock 1998). Information available in digital form covers a wide range of topics and the services can provide the data as text, still and moving graphics, sound and conversations.

***Virtual libraries:*** a library that does not exist “in real life” (Tennant 1999). It can also be seen as a library depending upon virtual reality for its existence (Barker in Olën 2000) De Kock (1998:32) also describes it as “an international system of electronic networks providing access to all digital networks.” Virtual libraries will allow the user immersion

into the text enabling them to use their sense in the process of utilising the information. To derive maximum benefit from this experience it is possible that the user will have to use specifically designed gear or clothing, for example gloves or helmets.

***Parliament:*** The word is derived from two sources, i.e. the Latin word ‘parliamentum’, and the French word ‘parler’ meaning ‘talk’ (Ilbert 1920; Laundry 1989). The basis of a true democracy is to allow every citizen the opportunity to have their voices heard. Since it is not practically possible for every to speak their minds personally, they elect representatives who will make their voices heard within the highest echelons of power in a country.