



**Library of Parliament**  
**Submission brief to the Royal Society of Canada**  
**Re. Libraries and Archives Public Consultation**  
**Ottawa, October 4, 2013**

The Library of Parliament is submitting this brief as an individual library recognising that our responsibilities are broader and on a larger scale than those of our member colleagues in the Association of Parliamentary Libraries in Canada (APLIC-ABPAC).

We have reviewed and we support the submission to the RSC prepared by APLIC, but offer this individual response in addition.

**Q1: What is your mandate and who are your members?**

The Library of Parliament (LOP)'s mission is to contribute to Canadian parliamentary democracy by creating, managing and delivering authoritative, reliable and relevant information and knowledge for Parliament.

We carry out our mission through these services:

- Provide customized research and analysis to parliamentarians and their staff
- Keep parliamentarians informed and up to date, and deliver news and information that is relevant to our clients
- Support legislators and committees with the information they need to examine the issues of the day, consider legislation, and hold the government accountable
- Preserve Parliament's documentary heritage and ensure access to its collections
- Help parliamentarians inform Canadians about Parliament and the issues before it

Our clients are:

- Individual parliamentarians and their staff
- Parliamentary staff
- Parliamentary committees and associations
- Organizations that support Parliament
- The Canadian public, on behalf of parliamentarians

**Q2: From your collective perspective, what challenges or issues are most prominent for your organisation today?**

The issues that we face are:



- making our digital resources easy for parliamentarians and the public to find and access on their own, and the cost of doing so;
- staying abreast of technology and implementing solutions that take into account our clients' information needs, our staff's capacity, and our shrinking financial resources;
- recognising and taking into consideration the changing needs of our client groups, acknowledging that our primary parliamentary clients want timely, personalised, customised and in-person service;
- Given that our clients work in a very fast paced environment they require very quick turnaround from us. They function in a highly visible and mediatized environment so the Library has to offer them access to knowledge and information that is very competitive in terms of content but also in terms of response time;
- Competing with Google, the www, user-generated info resources, and personal networks —as information providers
- functioning in a hybrid environment has been a challenge for many years; as a library we are finding that we have less control over what documentation we can acquire/retrieve (on one hand too many sources, and on the other dealing with information that is “here today, gone tomorrow”)
- market changes –fewer vendors, and more proprietary practices, especially with respect to digital content;
- Library vs consumer availability of e-resources
- the advent of social media presents challenges: how do we harness them for improved outreach and awareness of our services and, how can we search for and harvest relevant knowledge from the glut of data;
- preserving and providing effective and broader access to our historical and unique collections as well as recognising the importance of preserving current born digital information for future clients;
- attracting, retaining and developing bilingual staff in a competitive environment

**Q3: What do you anticipate as future challenges (by 2020), and how do you see your membership contributing to address them?**

We assume many of the current challenges will persist, though the pace of change will increase. We anticipate that the use of physical library spaces where we meet clients and where we provide staff workspace will change markedly.

By 2020 Parliament Hill will be undergoing significant renovations which will impact the use of the historic Main Library building. We expect to digitize more of our print collections and disseminate these more widely; and, we hope that we will benefit from other libraries (e.g. APLIC and the recently announced CGI-PLN Network) doing the same thing. In order to be able to afford this digitization, we anticipate the need to create



innovative partnerships, networks and collaborative arrangements to make sure we are not all digitizing the same titles but loading them in different systems. Finally, there will likely be new legal and licensing considerations that present challenges for libraries and their users.

We anticipate that we will have more competition from information sources that may not yet exist (i.e. web4.0?) and that are available anytime, anywhere and on any device. As a library we will have to differentiate ourselves.

For libraries, the cost of storing print materials will have shifted significantly to the cost of storing, migrating and providing access to huge quantities of data (not just written but images of all types and audio ++). Decisions about keeping conservation copies of print publications will need to be agreed upon at a provincial and national level – which organization is best suited to lead this?

Data management will require new investments in technological infrastructure and staff competencies, which in turn will create pressures in an environment that is already under pressure.

**Q4: What would your organisation be doing if funding were increased? And what are you not doing because of cutbacks or reduced funding?**

If our funding were increased we would be providing better tools for our clients and staff to use to efficiently discover the information they need. We would invest in digital preservation and description to enhance retrieval. We would implement better content management. We would develop a capacity to provide more graphical and geographic information systems to better respond to our busy clients' needs. We would carry out more outreach about Parliament on behalf of parliamentarians. We would invest in continuous staff development to stay ahead of our clients' information needs. Data mining and further value-added services would become more prominent.

The government wide Strategic and Operating Review affected the Library of Parliament leading us to cut positions, reduce collection expenditures and to rethink the way we offer our services.

We have noted an increase in “offloading” from a variety of partners/providers. The decision of LAC to cut ILL services has had an impact on our services as noted in Q5 response. The decision by providers to cease distributing print materials has required changes in our work processes and even in some cases has led to reduced exchanges of publications. The increased awareness and commitment to avoid duplication is encouraging greater collaboration which in turn leads to changes over who controls certain activities in which we participate – sometimes we gain and sometimes we lose, the same can be said for our clients.



**Q5: How does your organisation relate to Library and Archives Canada (LAC)? Or, in your view, how should LAC relate to major archival and librarian organizations?**

The Library of Parliament has had a very long history of collaboration with Canada's national library, until 1952 the LOP held the legal deposit role. As a result we provided the bulk of LAC's initial collection of published materials and, had continued to donate Canadian publications we no longer required until 3-4 years ago. At their request we stopped doing so.

We partnered with LAC to digitize the parliamentary debates in 2009-2010 which in turn enabled the LOP to build in partnership with Canadiana.org the recently announced Historical Debates Portal.

We use AMICUS to assist us with ILL requests, we download records from the union catalogue to save us time and effort, we use the Canadian Subject Headings maintained by LAC and we search the PAC records for a variety of research requirements. We used LAC's excellent ILL service extensively until it was cut in 2012. We have noted a significant increase in requests to borrow from the LOP since that time.

We link to certain records on LAC'S website to add detail to our [parl.gc.ca](http://parl.gc.ca) products thus reducing duplication of effort. (e.g. Prime Minister pages).

We contribute to numerous consultative exercises such as Last copy initiative, Analogue Preservation, the Pan-Canadian Digital Network.

Overall, we relied on LAC to provide standards and leadership to the library community in Canada and to represent us abroad. On a more local level they provided leadership and kept the government libraries informed of developments within the federal government information management network.

This community coordination/ leadership role is very important. One example: as libraries try to do more with less, a national coordination of digitisation initiatives would be very helpful in reducing duplicated efforts, clarifying responsibility, and making others aware of resources that are digitally available from other Canadian libraries. Other initiatives (e.g. the GCI-PLN) have developed to fill the leadership gap, but it is unfortunate that these initiatives seem to be responding to a gap left by a national institution.

Library and Archives also has a role to play in:

- Establishing standards and guidelines for libraries and archives



- Leading initiatives and being a centre of expertise for libraries and archives to support them in implementing new technologies, modernize practices, and reduce duplication (e.g. in digitization) etc.
- Negotiating collective licensing
- Developing expertise in
  - Training
  - Access and preservation (esp. digital, but all formats as required)
  - Open access digital repositories to house national collections (esp. government publications, but also significant Canadiana)

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