# CLIENT-BASED

# ASSESSMENT 2007

PARLIAMENTARY
LIBRARY

# CLIENT-BASED ASSESSMENT 2007

# Contents

**Executive Summary**

1       The Parliamentary Library reviews the needs of clients once in each parliament. The information gathered enables the Library to review existing services, assess changes in information needs and consider planning for any new services in its role of providing information, analysis and advice to the Parliament.

2       The 2007 review was based on a survey of clients, focus groups and an analysis of the use of services delivered by the Library, including the collection.

3       Overall, clients who responded to the survey were very satisfied with library services. The satisfaction rate increased slightly compared to the previous client survey (89% as compared to 85%[1]). Most significantly, 99% of those who responded expressed the view that they would recommend the service to colleagues.

4       Despite the high level of satisfaction, areas for improvement were identified by many clients through both the survey and the focus groups. The key areas to address were identified as:

   (a)  achieving greater consistency and quality of service in **responses to individual client requests**, especially in the following three areas:

      (i)   communication (particularly feedback on complex and long enquiries);

      (ii)                                  consistency of service (particularly the variability in the quality and timeliness of service); and

      (iii)  tailoring responses to client needs (in particular, focusing on analysis rather than lists of web links);

   (b)  improving, if possible, the timeliness of library publications. Clients highly valued and used the publications, but many expressed concern at the lack of timeliness with **Bills Digests**. While the number of bills produced and the timetable for debates is outside the control of the Library, consideration needs to be given to policies and procedures to improve timeliness;

   (c)  reviewing and establishing a **Communication Plan** to improve the understanding of library services available to clients;

   (d)  improving online services—extending access to the **Electronic Media Monitoring Service** (EMMS) to Electorate Offices and replacing the **ParlInfo** system with one that is easier and more efficient are high priorities to clients for these heavily used services;

   (e)  continuing to improve the **online resources** available to clients at their desktop (or devices);

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[1] In the previous survey, the Library scored 8-9 on a 10 point scale, which has been converted here to 85%.

>> (i) regional newspapers remain the area where most improvement is sought. Three options are identified in this report, of which two would require additional funding and one would require cooperation of Senators and Members to provide clippings. The Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library could provide advice on a preferred option;

> (f) improved means of alerting clients to new relevant resources available from the Library. This is planned as a deliverable from the new Parlinfo system and could be developed with further input from clients.

5       Some insights were obtained into the information collection and research behaviour and expectations of clients in this increasing online world. While there is a wide range of information sources available to clients, the Library occupies a position that is seen as highly reliable and preferred. In order to maintain this position, the survey and focus group findings suggest that the Library needs to build on the benefits of the services it provides, **paying attention to the clients' points of view**. These benefits are:

> (a)  saving the client time in information seeking and analysis;

> (b)  providing high quality information, research and analysis that is tailored to client needs, in a form that can be readily understood and used by the client; and

> (c)  enabling access to relevant information resources (particularly through Parlinfo, EMMS and the Library's website), which can be accessed at any time directly by clients.

## Introduction and background

6       The Australian Parliamentary Library has delivered information services to Senators and Members and other clients for over 100 years. In 2006, the Research Service celebrated its fortieth year of providing specialised analysis and research assistance. During the last two decades, the Library has regularly evaluated its services and established future directions using information gained from research into client needs and client views.

7       In recent years the Library's planning has focused on increasing electronic delivery of information products and services. The most recent client assessment (Maitland Tanner, 2003a) identified that clients were generally highly satisfied with Library services. The report recommended, however, that clients who then used the Library's assisted services at a moderate level (200-300 hours a year) could become "Power Users" (>450 hours per year), if they overcame some perceived barriers to constant use, such as obtaining consistent service levels across all delivery channels. The Maitland Tanner report also recommended that:

> (a)  ParlInfo be improved, particularly navigation;

> (b)  the number and type of research reports be reduced because clients were confused about the range of publication types; and

> (c)  the timeliness of media clippings from the weekend papers available on ParlInfo be further assessed.

8       While progress has been made towards addressing some of these issues, this most recent review provides an opportunity to take stock of the further work that needs to be done. The evaluation report will be presented to the Parliamentary Library Executive[2] and the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library[3] for discussion. It will also be used by the Senior Management Group[4] of the Parliamentary Library for strategic planning for 2007–08.

9       The evaluation of the Parliamentary Library has been conducted to:

   (a)   understand key issues in the information needs and preferences of clients of the Parliamentary Library;

   (b)   review the extent to which current services meet these needs and the value of our services to clients;

   (c)   seek feedback on areas where services should be improved, changed or introduced;

   (d)   establish an information base to ensure that efficient use is made of Library resources to deliver service in accord with our clients priorities; and

   (e)   consider the information environment and position the Library to successfully provide quality services in accordance with its legislative requirement under the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*.

10      The *Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS)* for 2006-07 includes overall client satisfaction as a key performance indicator. The overall satisfaction result from this evaluation will be reported against the PBS measures in the Parliamentary Librarian's 2006-07 *Annual Report*.

11      The evaluation uses a range of information sources to assess in a considered way the position of the Library from the point of view of its clients.

12      The Library has developed services over many decades. In recent years there has been an increase in alternative information providers (such as the Internet), changes in priorities and drivers of client workflows, and changes to the Library's use of technology to deliver new services (such as the Electronic Media Monitoring Service (EMMS)). All these factors have created a dynamic environment that requires regular assessment to ensure that the Library's services are continuously improved and adapted to changing needs.

13      The 2007 evaluation has been undertaken using the following information sources:

   (a)   a survey of all clients conducted in March/April 2007;

   (b)   three focus groups of clients conducted in March 2007; and

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[2]   Parliamentary Library Executive: Roxanne Missingham, Parliamentary Librarian; Dr Jane Romeyn, Assistant Secretary Research Branch; Nola Adcock, Assistant Secretary Information Access Branch.
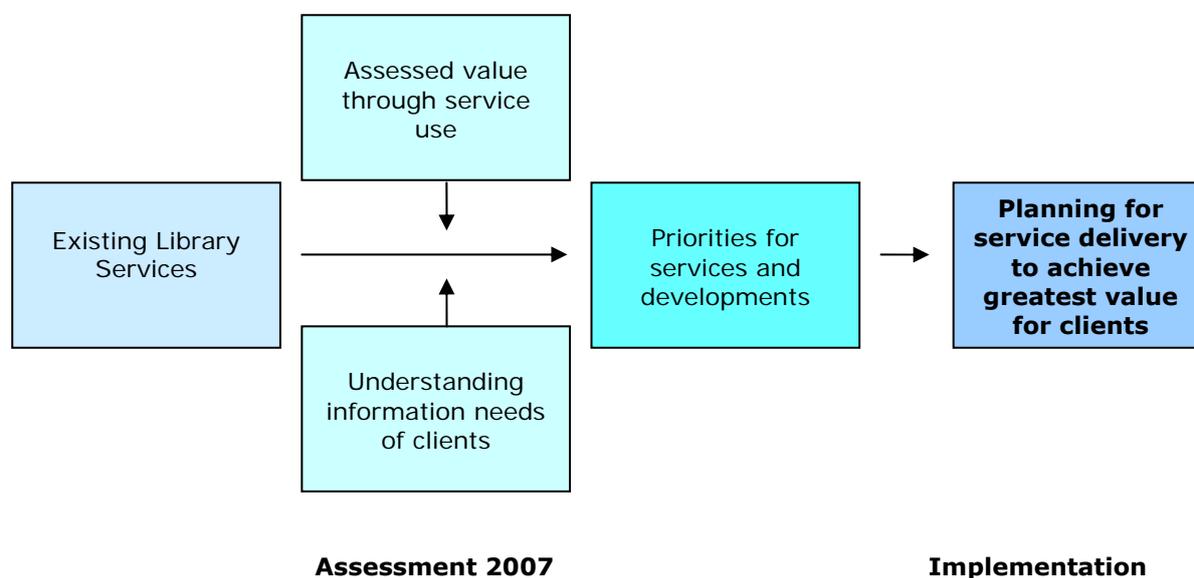[3]   http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jscpl/members.htm
[4]   Senior Management Group: Directors and Assistant Directors from Research Branch and Information Access Branch.

      (c)    statistical analysis of use of library services.

14     In adopting the mix of measures for this evaluation, the following model can be applied to assist the planning of developments of Library services for 2007–08 and the next parliamentary session:

**Chart 1 Assessment model for Australian Parliamentary Library Evaluation 2007**

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                    ┌──────────────────┐
                    │  Assessed value  │
                    │  through service │
                    │       use        │
                    └────────┬─────────┘
                             │
                             ▼
┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
│ Existing Library │──▶│ Priorities for│──▶│   Planning for   │
│    Services      │   │  services and │   │ service delivery │
│                  │   │  developments │   │   to achieve     │
└──────────────────┘   └──────────────┘   │  greatest value  │
                             ▲             │   for clients    │
                             │             └──────────────────┘
                    ┌────────┴─────────┐
                    │   Understanding  │
                    │ information needs│
                    │    of clients    │
                    └──────────────────┘
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**Assessment 2007**                                     **Implementation**

15     The Library business planning for 2007–08 commenced with a workshop with the Senior Management Group in April 2007.

## Evaluation of Parliamentary libraries

16     Parliamentary libraries around the world usually provide dual functions. They are traditional libraries providing information resources through print and online collections, and they also provide research services, publications and responses to individual client requests using subject expertise. The larger Parliamentary libraries have undertaken research and reviews of their use and client needs over many years. Recent studies have included:

      (a)    Parliamentarians' information behaviour in South Africa (Mostert and Onchella, 2005): A survey of all parliamentarians and parliamentary libraries in South Africa found that use of electronic services was increasing rapidly, matching print use. 23% of all parliamentarians in South Africa responded to the survey. Internet access was found to be widespread (78% of respondents) and heavily used. Use of electronic resources was almost the same as of print materials, with developments in bandwidth, content and ICT knowledge and skills identified as barriers to using the Internet. The majority of parliamentarians who responded accessed information through personal sources (75%), with 62% using personal computers to access information. Better educated parliamentarians were greater users of technologies, with most of the parliamentarians who responded (70%) undertaking their own searching. Use of parliamentary librarians and parliamentary researchers by respondents was relatively low (31% and 35% respectively).

(b) UK House of Commons value study (Edmonds et al, 2003): This survey was based on interviews with MPs, their research assistants, constituency-based staff, select committee staff and other organisations which use the Library. The study also included benchmarking with organisations such as the British Library and Bank of Canada. The study found the Library's customers perceived the Library's strengths as:

    (i) accessibility to subject specialists;

    (ii) accurate, reliable, impartial and up-to-date information;

    (iii) rapid responses to reference enquiries;

    (iv) access to online information created by the library and acquired from external sources; and

    (v) research publications.

Areas of frustration/weakness included:

    (i) limited awareness of the Library's services and products;

    (ii) library website is unclear, unhelpful and difficult to navigate and search;

    (iii) network communications are slow and unreliable;

    (iv) client responses are too long, detailed, and overly academic; and

    (v) the Library is not proactive enough in promoting what it does.

(c) UK House of Commons observational study of MPs (Orton 2000): Using case studies, the authors found a high level of services that used formal and informal sources to supply information. Members' use of online information was highly variable. Motivations for using library services were found to be very unpredictable, dependent on issues emerging and the media.

(d) Members of the European Parliament information needs study (Marcella, Carcary and Baxter, 1999): This study was based on a survey of the information needs of Scottish and UK representatives to the European Parliament. It found that Members were called on to cover a very large range of subject areas, which required them to rely on information from a large number of sources. Respondents considered that the sheer volume of information made information retrieval a "seemingly impossible task". Information contacts were seen as the most important and reliable source of information.

(e) Information needs of MPs in the House of Commons (Serema, 1999): This study found that requests for information from the Library were increasing. The Library was considered a key, indispensable resource. The quality of Library services was highly rated by information users (MPs). Challenges identified were the broad range of issues MPs were required to cover, and the short turnaround times for research and information.

17      The studies summarised above have been based on a variety of social science research techniques. Their findings and techniques were reviewed as part of the preparation of the survey and focus group questions for this report.

18      Major studies of use of library, information and research services were also reviewed and comparative data is included in the analysis of particular service requirements and information behaviours of our clients.

## The Parliamentary Library's clients and service model

19      Information is at the heart of the operation of the Australian Parliament and the parliamentary duties of Senators and Members. Many of the Library's clients view the Library as one of the most critical parliamentary services available to them. On her retirement, Senator Vanstone recently commented:

> I wish to record my thanks to all the staff associated with the Parliament … The Parliamentary Library and its staff are one of the Australian Political System's best assets. (Vanstone, media release, 2007 p1)

20      This view is reflected in comments in the Senate and the House of Representatives regularly each year.

21      The Parliamentary Library provides  services in accordance with the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999*:

### 38B  Functions of Parliamentary Librarian

(1)      The functions of the Parliamentary Librarian are:

(a)      to provide high quality information, analysis and advice to Senators and Members of the House of Representatives in support of their parliamentary and representational roles; and

(b)      to undertake such other responsibilities within the joint Department, consistent with the function set out in paragraph (a), as are conferred in writing on the Parliamentary Librarian by the Secretary of the joint Department with the approval of the Presiding Officers.

(2)      The Parliamentary Librarian must perform the function mentioned in paragraph (1)(a):

(a)      in a timely, impartial and confidential manner; and

(b)      maintaining the highest standards of scholarship and integrity; and

(c)      on the basis of equality of access for all Senators, Members of the House of Representatives, parliamentary committees and staff acting on behalf of Senators, Members or parliamentary committees; and

(d)      having regard to the independence of Parliament from the Executive Government of the Commonwealth.

22      The *Statement of Client Services* contains a description of the services available to each client group. The Statement was approved the Presiding Officers and the Joint Library Committee of the Parliament, the predecessor to the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library, on 17 March 2005.

23      The Library's current service model is based on a three tier delivery approach:

**Table 1: Client model**

| Primary Clients | Senators, Members and their staff and Parliamentary committees | All services, full information and research services<br><br>Priority is Chamber work |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Secondary Clients | Staff of Parliamentary Departments | All services, information and research services depending on availability |
| Community | Non Parliamentary clients including the Australian public | All library publications, metadata on library collections and library created media databases through ParlInfo |

24      The model provides the basis for communication and marketing activities including orientation, training, and the contact network, in addition to the actual delivery of services.

25      Underpinning the service model are established policies and procedures for collection management and the delivery of research services.

26      Past research has been used to identify areas for development of services within this model, such as greater delivery of content directly to clients through ParlInfo, EMMS and other web-based systems.

27      In recent times, the most significant changes to the Library's clients have been the increase in Parliamentary Secretaries and their staff over the past decade, and the creation of a new staff position for each Senator and Member in early 2007. It is, as yet, too early to assess the impact of the latter.

28      Members of the 41st Parliament have, as a general group, the characteristics of being "middle aged, well-educated men, who are likely to have been employed in politics-related occupations, business or law before entering parliament in the last decade" (Miskin and Lumb, 2006 p.4). While the 2004 election provided the highest intake of new Senators since 1987, these attributes have remained consistent for a number of decades.

29      The staff of members of parliament come from a range of backgrounds. Some are younger, and have relatively recently graduated from university. This means that the Library's users are a mix of those with high-level information literacy skills and those whose research experience has been based on a print environment.

30      Similarly, staff in the parliamentary departments (including Parliamentary Library staff) are from a mix of generations, information experience and skills.

## Methodology for this evaluation

31      The sources of data for analysis for this evaluation come from the Survey of Clients of the Parliamentary Library, focus groups of clients and statistics on the use of the Library's services.

32     By taking a three-pronged approach, this evaluation has been constructed to use the major approaches to social science research available to review programs and activities. The evaluation processes are based on techniques available for social science research which include:

(a)   qualitative analysis based on survey data and focused to understand the perceived use of services and thus their usefulness to users. Research in this area enables analysis of issues such as the awareness of services, relevance of the content and the degree to which it meets clients needs;

(b)   quantitative analysis, measuring the actual use of services, which enables assessment of trends in use, particularly of more newly introduced online delivery of services to assess the extent of take-up by clients;

(c)   impact analysis, to review the characteristics of the use of services through use by clients in their parliamentary activities; and

(d)   economic analysis to assess the cost benefit of services. In this report economic analysis is applied by comparing the perceived usefulness (value) of services with their use to enable a review of the priorities that should be given to the various services.

33     A market research approach was used for the survey and focus group studies.

*Survey*

34     The client survey was developed by Library staff in consultation with the members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library. The survey questions were designed to collect information on satisfaction, use, knowledge, perceptions and the extent to which library services met the needs of clients. In addition, the survey sought data to assess the information behaviour of clients. Question structure was based on well-established standards. The questions used a Likert scale for most multi-choice options. Bivariate analysis was used to compare perceptions of key services.

35     The survey was available to clients online and in print. Clients were able to complete the survey over a two-week period in March 2007. Some clients requested an extension to enable them to complete the survey after the close date. They were provided with print surveys.

36     Respondents to the survey came from the primary and secondary client groups served by the Library. The primary client group comprises 226 Senators and Members (Members of Parliament). Each Member of Parliament has at least four staff. The secondary client group comprises the 1079 staff employed by the Parliamentary Departments (158 Department of the Senate, 154 Department of the House of Representatives, and 767 Department of Parliamentary Services).[5]

37     A total of 223 individuals completed the survey. Two additional responses were received via email and print that could not be used because they were not complete responses.

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[5]   Data obtained from 2005–06 Annual Reports.

**Chart 2 Survey respondents by client group**
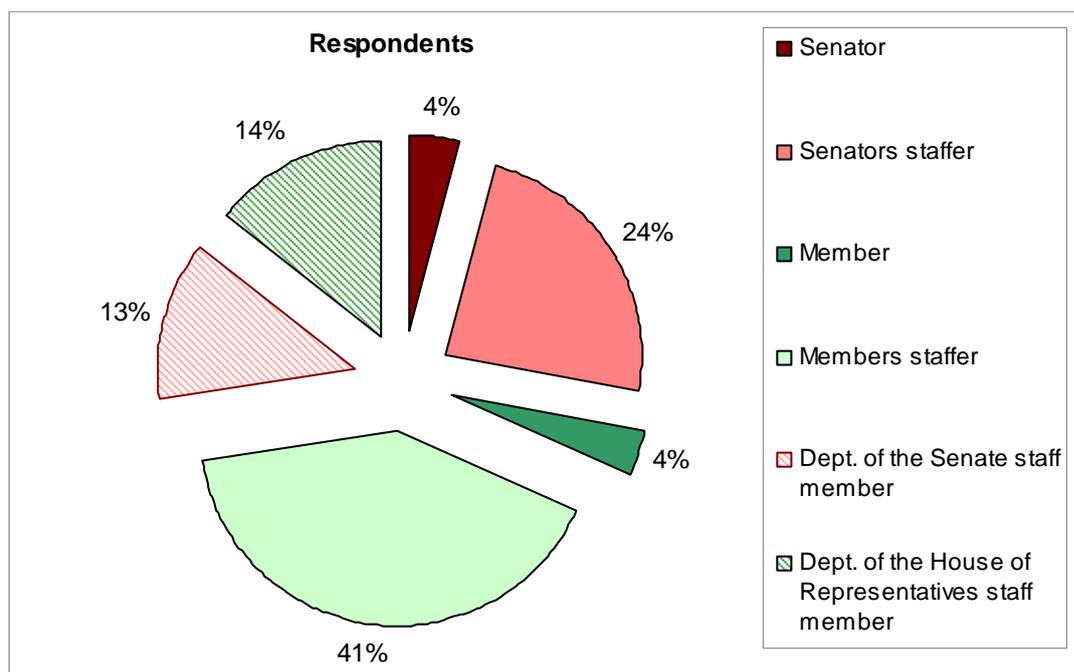


38     While the overall response rate based on these figures was approximately 15.5%, some respondents indicated that they were responding on behalf of their Member of Parliament's office, meaning that they supplied a single response representing the views of several people. The respondents came from all political parties—the Coalition, Australian Labor Party (ALP) and minor parties—and from all levels—Minister, Shadow Minister, Whip, Parliamentary Secretary, Assistant Minister, and minor party member with portfolio responsibility.

**Chart 3 Survey respondents by political party—parliamentarians and their staff**
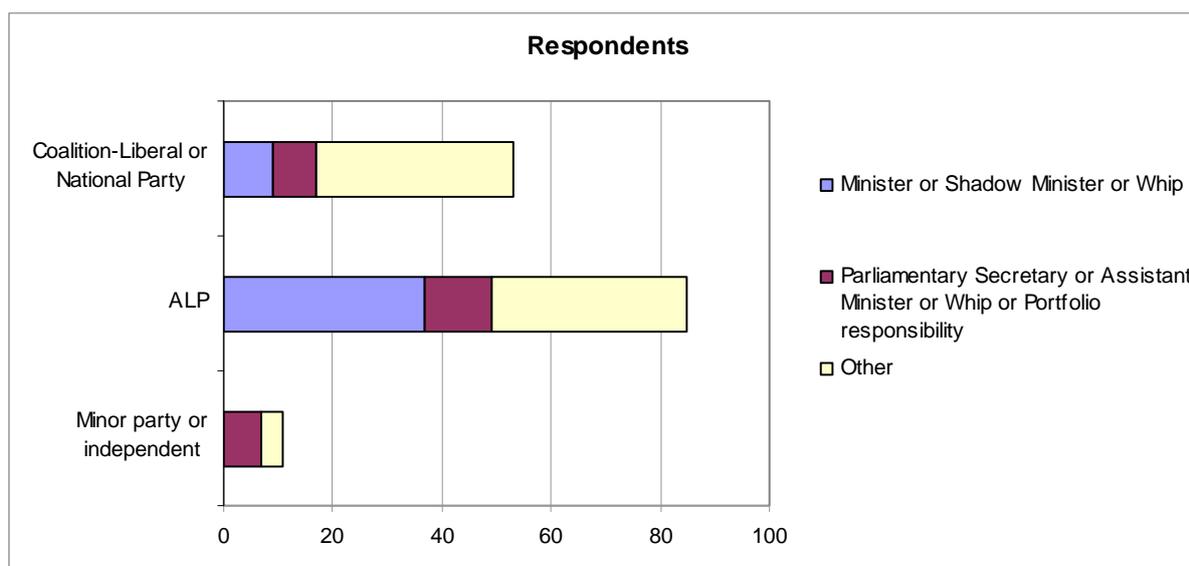
*Focus groups*

39      All Library clients were invited to attend focus groups held on 22 March 2007. Four sessions were scheduled to provide sessions over a range of times. The focus groups were run by an independent company, Libraries Alive, with questions developed in consultation with the Parliamentary Library Executive.

40      The participation rate in the focus groups was low, with only 10 attending in total. Given the pressure of meetings and events on a sitting day, the low turnout was not surprising, although it was disappointing. Attendees were Members of Parliament, staff of members, and staff from the chamber departments. Interestingly, the highest participation was from these departments, and these attendees provided some useful insights into possible reasons for low response rates from their colleagues to the survey.

41      The small number of participants in the focus groups means that data collected must be used very carefully. It provides further information on issues raised through the survey, rather than being a major source of information.

*Statistical analysis*

42      To supplement the survey information, information was gathered on use of the Library's research service, selected online services and the print collection. The statistics were obtained from sources as follows:

>    (a)    use of the research service data from the Library's Time and Recording Data Information System (TARDIS);

>    (b)    online service use from statistics from ParlInfo, e-journal services (Proquest), and the Parliament's web measuring systems; and

>    (c)    print collection use from the Library's catalogue system.

## The Library's services: is the Library meeting clients' needs effectively?

43      Clients are able to access a wide array of information, analysis and research services from the Parliamentary Library. Previous evaluations have found that the number and range of services has, in fact, caused some confusion for clients. Since the last evaluation, there has been a small consolidation of the range of research publications, although the old series continue to be displayed on the Library's web site according to the type of publication.

44      Information was sought on clients' awareness of a selection of services and the extent to which these services met their needs.

45      Overall the awareness of services was high, with all services except three rating above 80% to the question "I know about (the service)." The two below this level were the *It's New* service (52%) and *Monthly Economic and Social Indicators (MESI)* (46%).

**Chart 4 Service awareness**
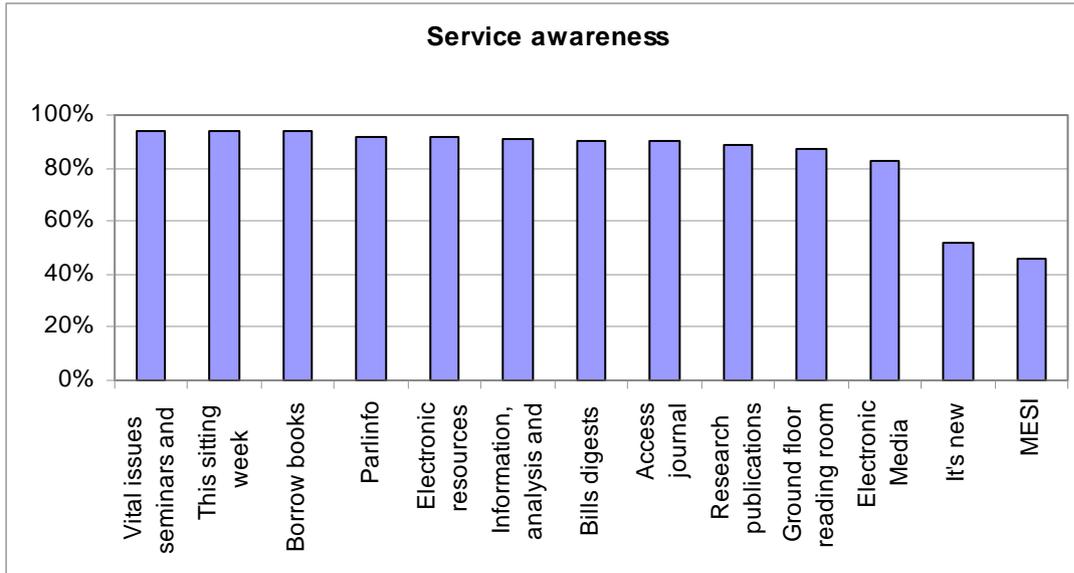


46     When asked whether the services met their needs, above 80% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their needs were met for all except three services. The three below this level were *It's New* (74%), *MESI* (72%) and *Vital Issues Seminars* and *Parliamentary Library Lectures* (64%). When the "somewhat agreed" category was added, no service was below 90% rating.

**Chart 5 Extent to which library services meet clients' needs**
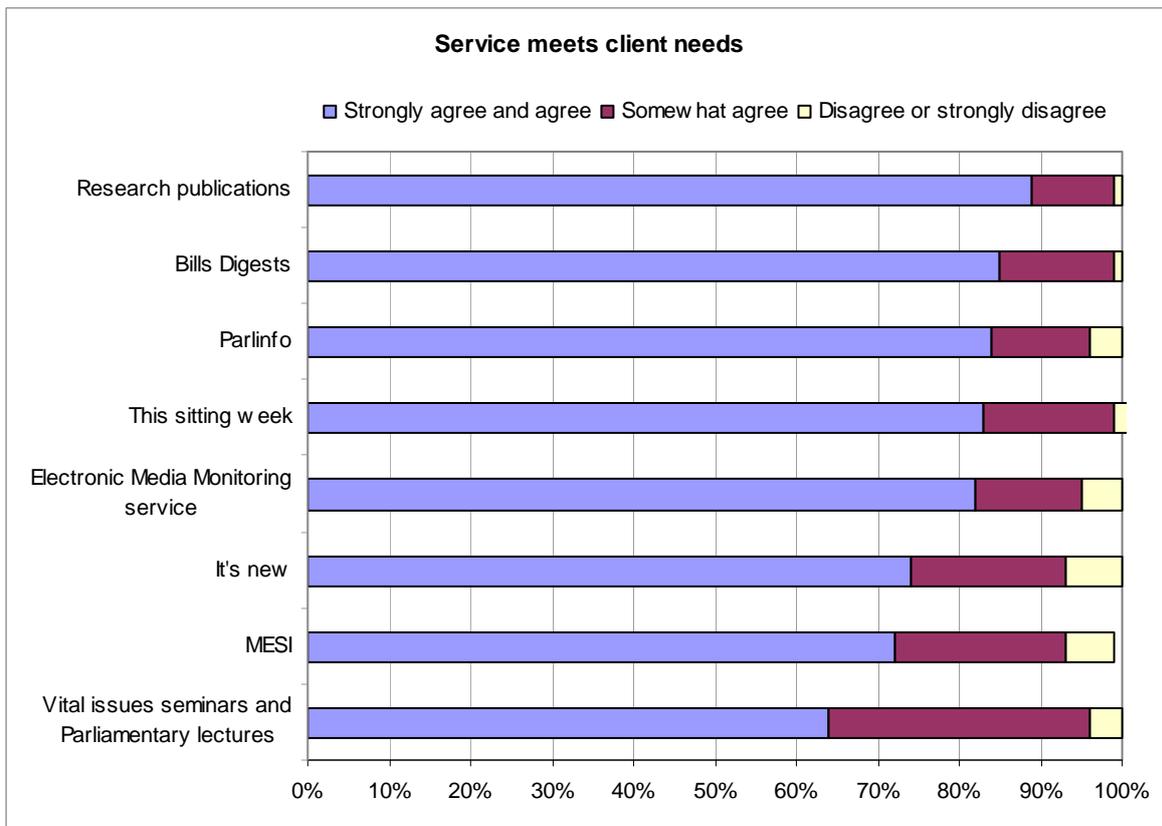


47     Detailed analysis of the value and impact of publications is covered later in this report.

48    The Library's traditional services, such as borrowing books, accessing journals and the Ground Floor Library, had high levels of recognition. This is likely to be because the services offered by most libraries are well known and clients have used these types of services in their university, public or corporate work.

49    The research service and research publications were generally also well known and meet client needs. As noted above, one library publication, *Monthly Economic and Social Indicators (MESI),* and one library product, *Its New*, were less well known and are relatively specialised services. They will be reviewed and/or improved and marketed.

50    There was a significant gap between knowledge of the *Vital Issues Seminars* and *Parliamentary Library Lectures* and other services and products. The seminars and lectures are held approximately eight times per year at 12.30pm on sitting days. Attendance at the 2006-07 seminars has been up to 80 per session, an increase over attendance in 2005-06.

51    Many Senators and Members and their staff are unable to attend the events because of the pressure of parliamentary work on sitting days. However, if the events were held on non-sitting days, the majority of Library's primary clients would not be able to attend.

52    Comments suggested that there was a low level of awareness that the lectures and presentations could be downloaded from the Library's web site. To provide easier access to these sessions the Library will explore whether they can be offered via video streaming in real time and other opportunities for communication, such as automatic downloading.

53    Overall there was a high level of awareness of Library services: both the services associated traditional libraries and the research and analysis service offered through individual client responses and publications.

## Research services and individual client services

54    Library clients are able to request research from Library staff. The research ranges from relatively straightforward requests for factual information or particular publications to requests for very detailed analysis of complex issues, such as international trade or climate change.

55    Robinson, formerly of the Congressional Research Service, has commented that:
> Good research and information can improve the effectiveness of the legislature along several dimensions … First, research can improve decision making on specific policy issues faced by the legislature … At the next level, research can help improve institutional dynamics within the legislature. A commonly accepted body of authoritative facts provided by the parliamentary library or research service can facilitate political agreement by narrowing the range of debate to differences in value, rather than disagreement over the facts of the case. (Robinson, 2001, p. 561-2)

56    Answering individual client requests is an essential service in the Australian Parliament from the point of view of clients and Library staff. The service enables clients to obtain information tailored to their individual needs.

57      The survey revealed, consistent with previous surveys, that clients consider that the service is very important and that a major strength of the Library is the staff who provide research services. Clients are able to access research services by email, phone, fax or in person through the Central Enquiry Point in the main Library or directly from Library staff. Services are provided by staff from all sections of the Library.

58      The nature and pattern of research enquiries has changed somewhat over the past decade. The delivery of full-text information resources, such as newspaper clippings, newspapers and journals, to clients' desktops has increased in the past three years. There has also been an increase in information available freely online through the web. In addition clients, particularly staff of Senators and Members, have increased their skills in web searching.

59      Interestingly, the time taken to respond to client enquiries has not changed significantly in the past decade, although the number of short enquiries did appear to reduce from 1997–98 to 2000–01, as Chart 6 shows. The Chart shows the number of requests able to be met in less than 15 minutes ("short requests") and those taking more than 15 minutes to address ("long requests"). Although enquiries easily undertaken online are often now undertaken by clients themselves, the fact that there has not been a reduction in short enquiries suggests that other relatively straightforward enquiries have replaced them.

60      Feedback from the survey and staff suggests that while general factual enquiries may have decreased, requests for assistance in locating specific items has increased. This assistance takes the form of answering enquiries such as "there was a newspaper article on topic X published in the past week" or "member Y said something about topic Z in the past couple of months". It is likely that the sheer volume of resources available at the desktop, all with different means of access, may mean that more assistance is required to find specific resources. This assistance may also be important to improve the skills of clients in searching the vast range of electronic data available to them.

**Chart 6: Individual client requests: short (less than 15 minutes) and long (greater than 15 minutes)**
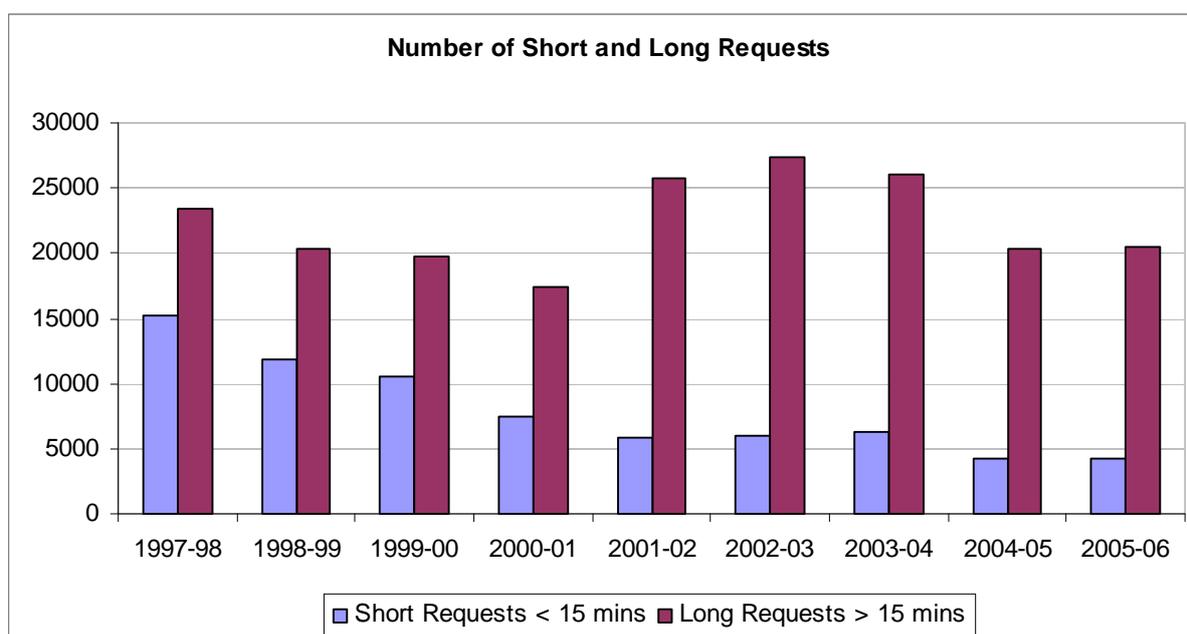
61      An enduring characteristic of the research service has been its use by all groups of the Library's clients. The Library is more heavily used by the opposition executive, backbenchers and minor parties than by Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and, to some extent Government backbenchers. However, while the latter groups have access to information services from government agencies, they still use the Library's services. Further analysis of this breakdown is being undertaken.

62      The ongoing relevance of the Library's research service to all Senators and Members is reflected in the fact that for the financial years 2005–06 and 2006–07, at least one enquiry had been received from every Senators' and Members' office.

63      In response to the question "please list what you consider to be the major strengths of the Library", 97 respondents (43.5% of all respondents) commented that the research service and staff delivering this service were highly valued. To have approximately 68% of all respondents make a written comment to this question suggests both that these are very strong opinions about the Library. The  fact that the majority of comments (64% of those who responded to this question) were about the research service indicates the importance of the service to our clients.

64      The majority of comments praised most of the Library staff and research service output. For example: "Excellent briefs, digests, services. Research assistance from specialised Library staff."

65      However, not all clients' comments on research services and service delivery were positive: one-third (34%) of responses to the question on service delivery identified problems in variable quality and service attitudes. Comments included:

> Responses vary in quality from extremely good to quite poor—the latter particularly where I am referred to a piece of information that I have already specified I am aware of and have. Responses that simply contain a series of links to large reports are too common.

> Quality and impartiality varies between staff members. There is often difficulty obtaining information in a short time frame. Occasionally requests are passed off as not necessary or with a short verbal response and no follow up.

66      Comments identified three major areas of concern:

    (a)   communication, particularly feedback on complex and long enquiries;

    (b)   consistency/variability in the quality and timeliness of service; and

    (c)   the need for responses to be tailored to client needs, particularly focusing on analysis rather than lists of web links. (Note that the last Library client survey identified this as an area for improvement, and a new range of training/support may be required.)

67      Scheeder has noted (Scheeder, 2005) that, with the increase in the quantity of information available to clients, and the highly variable accuracy of resources available through the web, the role of Parliamentary Library research services is more important than ever before. By analysing and synthesising

information and tailoring responses to individual clients needs, high-quality information can be provided to better support parliamentary activities.

68    The focus groups also identified concerns in this area. Participants indicated that some were reluctant to request services from the Library as they felt Library staff were "busy" or had a pecking order that limited access to services. There appeared to be some confusion about entitlements to access research services; this confusion could be addressed through the Library's Communication activities.

69    Quality of service has been identified as a key issue by other parliamentary libraries (Gardner, 2000; Robinson, 2001). Discussion on models for ensuring high quality research has occurred at the research conferences of the Library and Research Services for Parliaments section of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA).

*Service delivery ethos*

70    The survey also sought views on the perceptions of Library staff's delivery of service and service ethos. Over 84% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Library staff treat them "fairly and impartially", "are readily available to assist me", "display initiative with me", "telephone calls and emails are answered professionally", "demonstrate and understanding of my need" and "inform me clearly about services available."

**Chart 7 Service performance**
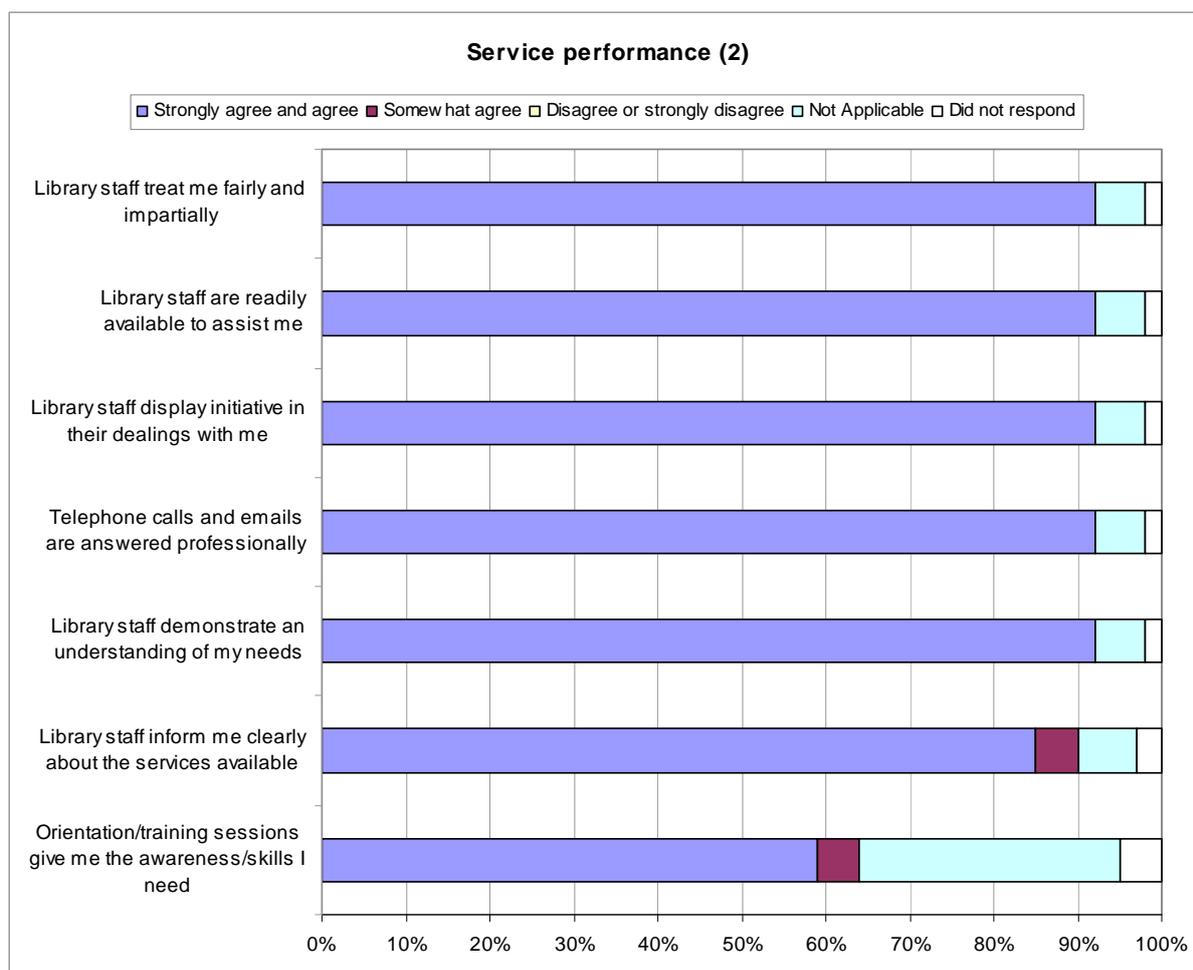
71      Although these results indicate high levels of satisfaction with Library staff attitudes, some clients have concerns about how they are treated. Some respondents made quite critical comments about service ethos and staff behaviour:

> Some staff are frankly snobbish, and are not as welcoming of junior staff members as they are of people with higher status, or whom they recognise as being important.

> Some of the staff on the front desk can be a bit blunt with mere staff. While accepting our place in the scheme of things, we are usually only acting on a request from a Senator or Member.

> Occasionally I have felt that the info provided hasn't been quite on the mark, but the deadlines we ask the Library staff to meet are often tight, so it is understandable that they can't always work miracles!

72      Similar research into library staff in university libraries (Ambit Insights, 2006; Saw and Clark, 2004) has revealed a median of 83% in response to five rating-scale questions. The Australian Parliamentary Library exceeds the university median in this category for six aspects. For one aspect, however, the Library's performance was relatively low (59% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed) "orientation/training sessions give me the awareness/skills that I need". Comments provided some clarification:

> I have extensive research experience and training so the Library's training wasn't really useful—it was pretty much what I already know.

> A one on one offered at the beginning of each Parliament would be useful as a refresher.

73      Because of the limited number of comments, and the lack of information from focus groups, any advice on refining or redeveloping orientation and training can only be general. Further advice from the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library would be useful.

74      Clients' expressed need for access to a high quality research service and collections, particularly digital collections created by the Library, suggest that these should remain the cornerstone of training. The analysis of drivers for information behaviour, presented later in this report, suggests that the concepts of saving time, obtaining very timely access to information and research, and obtaining responses that meet clients' needs should be emphasised in orientation and training.

75      Two respondents indicated that they considered there was a shortage of research staff. It is not clear whether this was the result of short-term vacancies, periods of unusually high workload, or a genuine gap between the demand for and supply of research services. Monitoring of refused requests could provide information to further assess this issue.

76      In summary, while clients continue to use the Library's research services relatively constantly, and they consider that the Library's service delivery and ethos is high, they also raise issues of the quality of service delivery and communication that should be addressed to better meet their needs.

## Library research: publications

77    To provide information, analysis and advice on issues that are of interest, or likely to be of interest, to a number of clients, the Library publishes a range of research products and Bills Digests. In 2005–06, the Library produced 262 publications, a decrease of 16% from 2004–05. The 2006-07 publications output is likely to exceed the previous year and return to the 2004-05 level.

78    The proportion of hours spent by staff on publications has decreased over the past two years, after rising for most of the decade. In the past year there have been some delays in filling positions in the Research Branch because of the need to await the outcomes of the Continuous Improvement Review (CIR). This is likely to have affected the resources available for publications. The reason for the reduction in 2005-06 is not known. The response to the CIR has been prepared and, pending final comments of the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library, recruitment action is underway for positions for which no change is proposed.

**Chart 8 Staff hours on GBAPs**
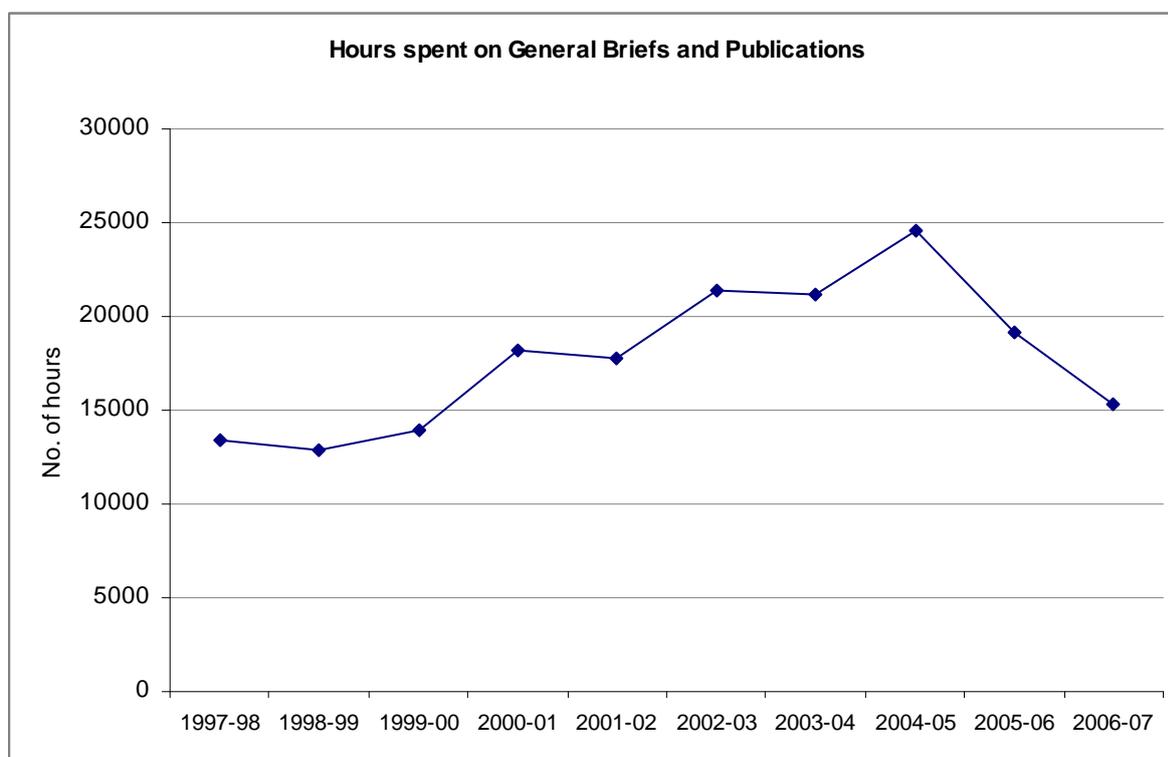


79    Bills Digests constitute a major publication output of the Library. In 2005–06, 63% of the publications were Bills Digests. The volume of digests is directly related to the volume of bills before the Parliament and has been increasing. In the 2006–07 financial year to mid April, 129 Bills Digests had been prepared, compared to 112 over the same period in 2005–06. The increase in bills and, in some cases, the limited time available between introduction and debate, has put pressure on the Library, as there has not been an increase in resources for this service. During the period July 2006 to mid April 2007, 19 digests were not produced in time for the debate in the alternate Chamber.

80    Data collected from the survey reveals that, of those who responded to the survey:

(a)  there is a very high awareness of publications (90% for Bills Digests, 89% for research publications);

(b)  the publications meet client needs to a high level (89% of respondents in relation to research publications and 85% in relation to Bills Digests strongly agreed or agreed that the service met their needs); and

(c)  publications are well used (77% used Bills Digests, 81% used research briefs and 79% used research notes "a lot" or "a little").

81     Bills Digests were among the four library services on which comments were made most frequently: EMMS (50 comments), ParlInfo (38 comments), Bills Digests (33 comments) and Vital Issues Seminars/Parliamentary Library Lectures (31 comments).[6] The most reported concern with Bills Digests was timeliness; 48% of the comments identified a desire for earlier publication of Bills Digests. Comments included:

> Not something the Library can control, but with the recent pattern of legislation referral to committees, sometimes the Bills Digest is not complete when I need to read it.

> Digests themselves are great but the service would be better if Digests could be produced by the end of the week before the legislation is to be prepared and when advisory staff need them most.

82     The timeliness of Bills Digests has been raised in every client survey undertaken by the Library. The particular pressure of an increased legislative program this session has provided a very significant challenge to the Library. This has necessitated digests to be prioritised (for example, based on anticipated client interest and need). In addition, where it is not possible to produce digests in time for debates, Library staff make every effort to support clients by providing draft digests or other briefing material. Further work will occur in this area, with a clinic planned in the winter recess to identify opportunities for further streamlining the process of developing digests.

83     Other comments made suggestions about the format of Bills Digests that have been taken into account in the development of policies and procedures related to publications.

84     The Library's clients highly value its range of publications, and there is a high degree of awareness of most Library services and publications. *It's New* and *Monthly Economic and Social Indicators (MESI)* have the lowest level of awareness (51% and 46% respectively). All types of publications received a good rating to the question about whether the publication "meets my needs".
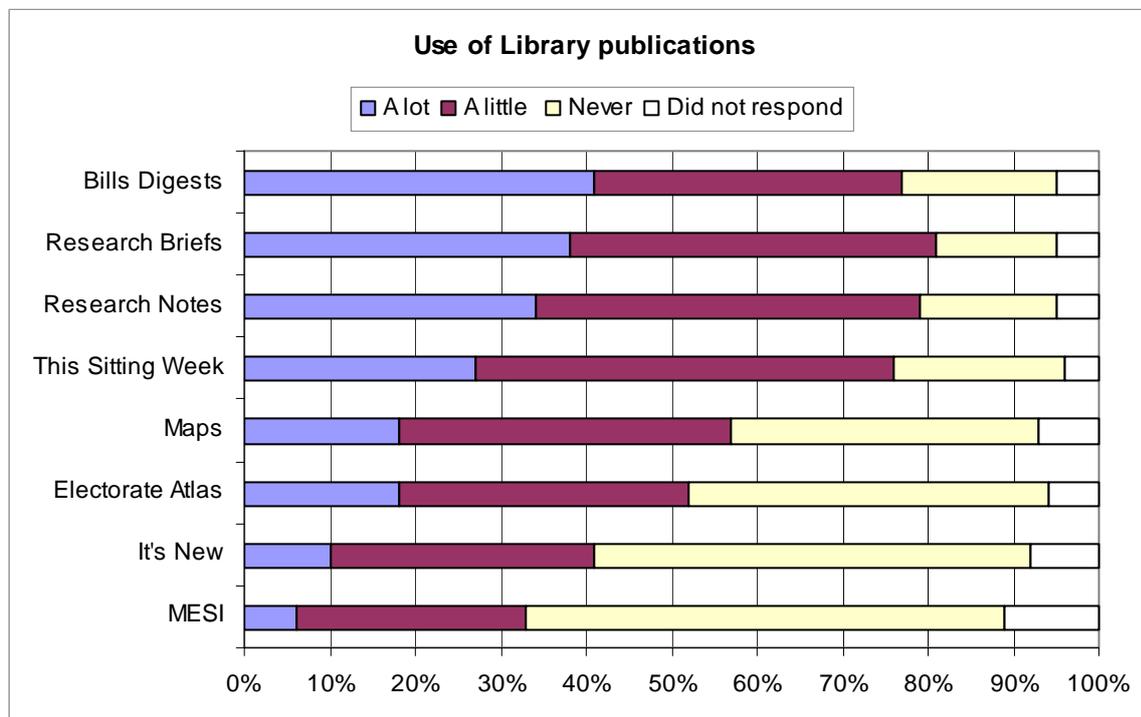
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[6] Detailed comments on EMMS and Parlinfo are included in the next section of this report.

**Chart 9 Use of Library publications: relevance to client needs**



**Service meets client needs**

Legend: Strongly agree and agree / Somewhat agree / Disagree or strongly disagree

Categories: Research publications, Bills digests, Parlinfo, This sitting week, Electronic Media Monitoring service, It's new, Monthly economic and social indicators, Vital issues seminars and Parliamentary lectures

**Chart 10 Use of Library publications: extent of use**



**Use of Library publications**

Legend: A lot / A little / Never / Did not respond

Categories: Bills Digests, Research Briefs, Research Notes, This Sitting Week, Maps, Electorate Atlas, It's New, MESI

85      Three publications rated below 80% for "strongly agree" or "agree" with the proposition that they "meet my needs". The *Maitland Tanner* (Maitland Tanner, 2003a) report identified that clients were confused with the number of different series of Library publications (notes, current issues briefs, papers, monographs, subject guides). The number of series was being reduced in response to this feedback and an internal publications review.

86      This survey identified that many clients are not aware of, or satisfied with *It's New, MESI*, or *Vital Issues Seminars*. Comments do not make clear if this is because the publications are difficult to use or have a specialised audience. Nor do the comments indicate whether clients believe these publications should cease. *It's New* will be redeveloped after implementation of the new ParlInfo system, which should resolve problems with presentation and scope. A marketing program will be developed for *MESI* to improve awareness of the service and seek feedback on specific improvements. Seminars and lectures are opportunities to obtain information from experts in a range of fields. Different delivery options, particularly to mobile devices and personal computers will be investigated.

87      Overall, Library publications serve a very well recognised and important role in the Parliament and in the broader community. The major issue for further consideration is investigating whether Bills Digests can be produced in a more timely way.

## Library services overall

88      In addition to research and publications, the Library provides a range of information and collection-based services. The Library creates digital collections for client use including newspaper clippings (available through ParlInfo), radio and television news and current affairs (available through EMMS), political party publications (available through ParlInfo) and Australian digital publications (in collaboration with the National Library of Australia through the Pandora service).

89      Information on clients' awareness of these services indicates that they are all well known. Overall, for the majority of services, there is a very high level of recognition and use. Specific comments regarding research publications and collections are included in the relevant sections of this report.

**Chart 11  Use of Library services**
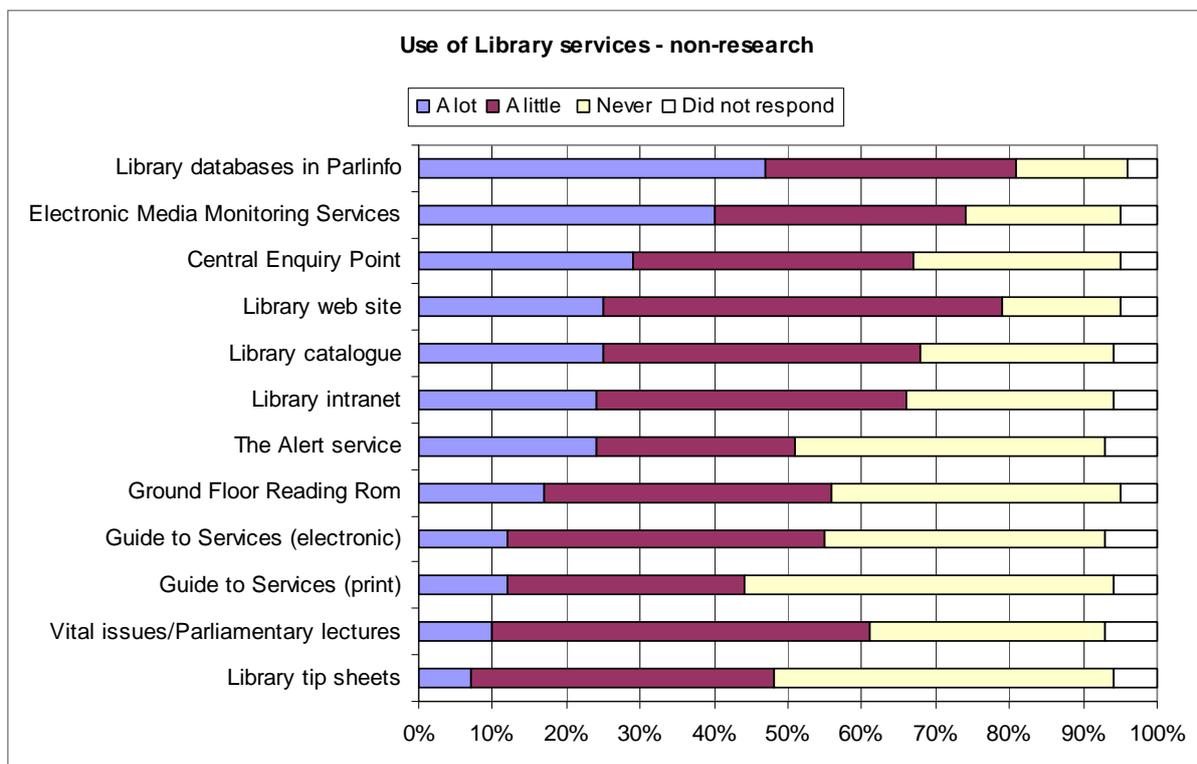
90     In addition to being well known, the majority are relatively well used by clients. The services that clients consider they use least are:

    (a)    Guide to Services (electronic) (used "a lot" 12%, "a little" 43%, "never" 38%);

    (b)    Guide to Services (in print) (used "a lot" 12%, "a little" 32%, "never" 50%);

    (c)    Vital Issues Seminars/Parliamentary Library Lectures (used "a lot" 10%, "a little" 51%, "never" 32%); and

    (d)    Library tip sheets (used "a lot" 7%, "a little" 41%, "never" 46%).

91     The services clients considered they used most are:

    (a)    Library databases in ParlInfo ("a lot" 47%, "a little" 34%, "never" 15%); and

    (b)    EMMS ("a lot" 25%, "a little" 54%, "never" 16%).

92     The focus group participants indicated that they were not aware of the *Guide to Services* and also that they were not aware of the range of Library services that were available to them. This was particularly noted by staff from the chamber departments. While participants were more interested in information on general library services, they were small in number so conclusions can only be very general.

93     ParlInfo enables clients to access newspaper clippings, Hansard and Library catalogues and many other documents through the Parliamentary Computing Network. External users, including the wider Australian community, can access most of the resources in ParlInfo. Use of ParlInfo is high but has plateaued in recent years.

**Chart 12  Use of non-research services**
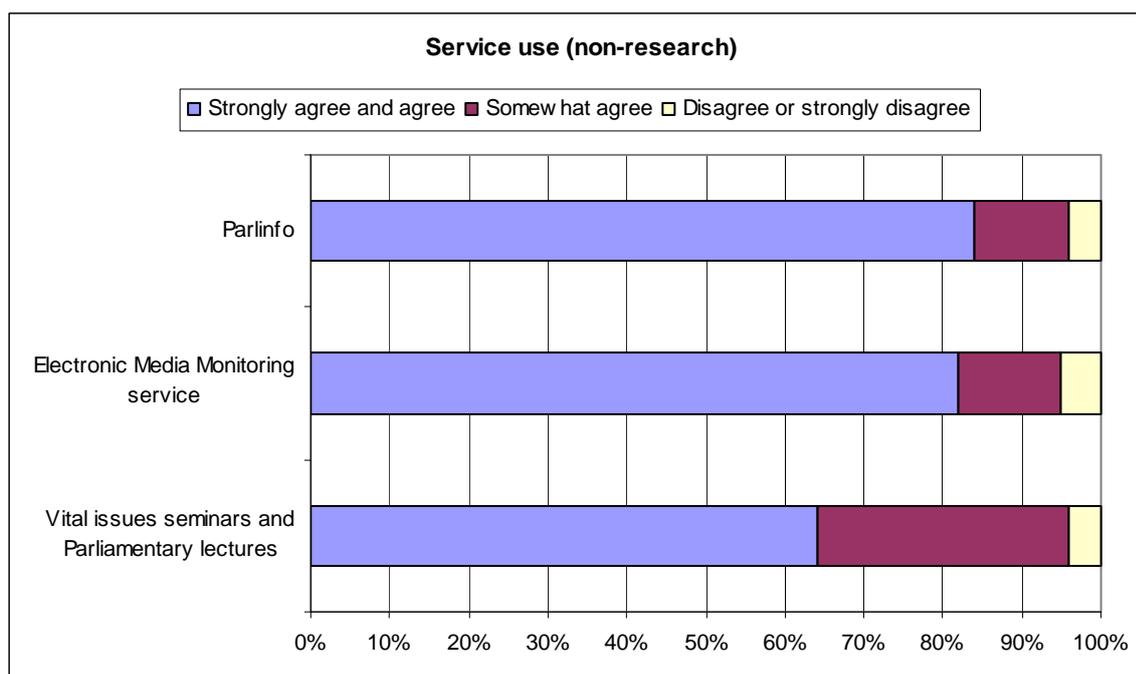
94    Many respondents to the client survey commented that Parlinfo was not user-friendly or reliable, and that it would be more useful if data (such as newspaper clippings) were available earlier. These improvements were also identified in the Library's previous surveys. In late 2006 a project commenced to replace the ParlInfo system with new software, and procurement is currently under way. The Expression of Interest stage was completed in April and a detailed tender document will be issued shortly. When the new system is in place, the Library will seek to improve the timeliness of the loading and availability of newspaper clippings.

95    Focus groups were held with clients in August 2006 to assist with the development of specifications for the replacement Parlinfo system. Further focus groups could be useful in determining implementation issues and to assist in the development of client use case documents. As Parlinfo is a very high priority service to users, this could be particularly beneficial in engaging with many user groups.

96    The EMMS system was launched in September 2004, and provides access online to immediate replay of radio and television news and current affairs programs. The use of this service quickly rose to a level that indicates it is an essential tool to Senators and Members and their staff. The major issue identified in the survey, and by clients since its launch, is the fact that the replay part of the service is not available to staff in Electorate Offices. A trial of Electorate Office access commenced in December 2006, and the Library and the Department of Finance and Administration are reviewing the results of the trial. The Library will be negotiating the roll-out of Electorate Office access as soon as possible in 2007.

97    Clients clearly consider this to be a very important step because of the number of comments and the nature of the comments. Electorate Office access is a very high priority for the Library. The August 2006 peak is likely to be due to interest in a change in leadership in the Australian Labour Party.

**Chart 13 EMMS**
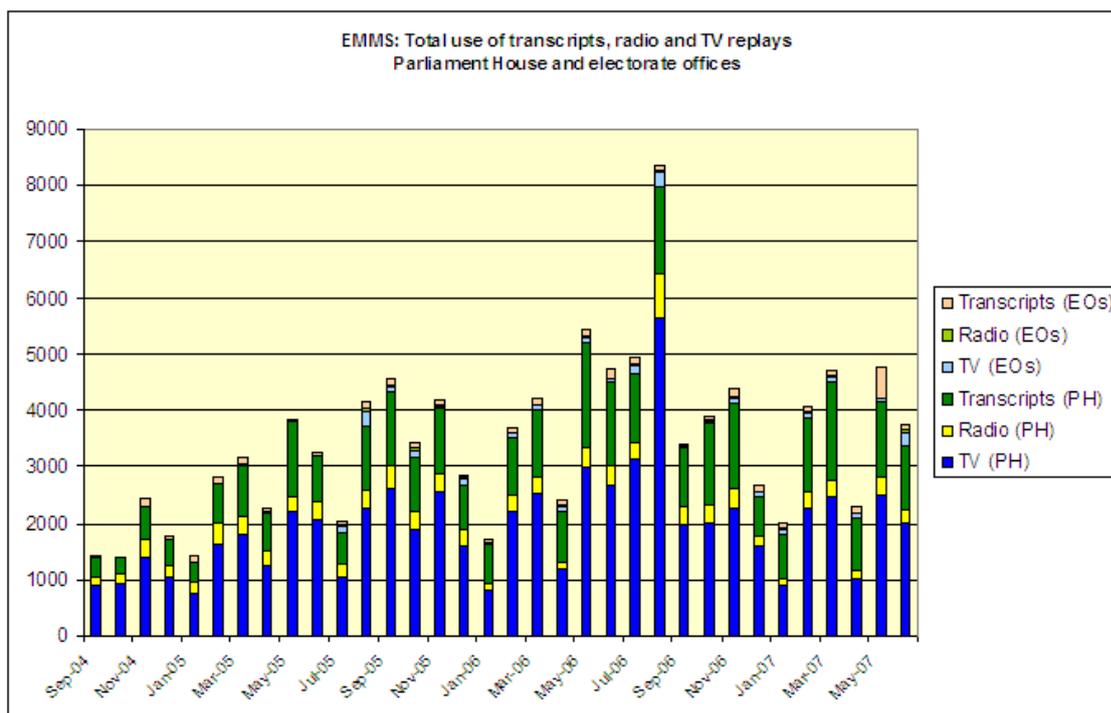
98     Few clients are aware of, or use, Library tip sheets. The sheets provide assistance on using Library services, and it may be that if they were available in a short form on the pages offering access to these services, they would be better used. It may also be that they are not required and that a short list of information pages from a "help" page may be more successful in assisting clients. The need for the tip sheets should be further considered before any resources are expended on them.

99     The *Guide to Services* does not appear to be a very effective tool for communicating the Library's services to clients. The low use and the low awareness of the *Guide* suggests that the product/s developed to communicate services should be different. As staff, and their areas of expertise, change regularly due to staff movement, a print solution for this information is not appropriate. The online search system for staff expertise is a very effective solution and could be emphasised in client training and orientation. The new means of communicating services could focus on a kit for new Senators and Members (with a contact officer briefing), new staffers (with a letter of welcome) and chamber department staff (with a letter of welcome and/or presentations at staff meetings every year or so).

100    In summary, the majority of the Library's non-research services are well used and meet clients' needs well. Replacement of ParlInfo and Electorate Office access to EMMS are high priorities from the clients' perspective. Library tip sheets and the *Guide to Services* require rethinking and reshaping, as they do not currently provide effective and useful services to clients.

## Collections

101    Collections are the heart of the services provided by the Library. They provide direct access to information for clients and are also a key resource for research undertaken for individual client requests and for publications. As with most research libraries, over the past decade there has been an increasing emphasis on electronic resources and delivery of these to the desktop of all clients.

102    For 2006–07 the Library established a target of increasing the number of titles in the collection available to clients at their desktops to 20%. By 30 April 2006, the percentage of titles delivered in this manner had increased to 17.86%, from 16.5% (at the beginning of the financial year). The Library recently completed a tender for the purchase of online news services. This has resulted in the purchase of Factiva's news service (with over 7000 leading news and business publications, including selected Australian regional newspapers), 30-day archive and *Newspaper Direct Press Display*[7] (with over 400 newspapers from over 65 countries in over 35 languages).

**Table 2: Breakdown of collection—serial and monograph, print and electronic publications available to clients at their desktop/devices**

| Percentage of titles in Library collection available to clients in full text | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Jul-06 | Apr-07 |

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[7] For a description of newspapers covered by this service see
http://www.proquest.com/products_pq/descriptions/newspaperdirect_pd.shtml

| % book titles in full text | 10.40% | 11.80% |
|---|---|---|
| % serial titles in full text | 54.70% | 56.90% |
| Book and serial titles | 121992 | 124128 |
| Electronic-book and Electronic-serial titles | 18783 | 20878 |
| % titles in full text | 15.40% | 16.80% |

103   The major issues associated with purchasing electronic resources for access by all clients are the cost of the resources (which may be significantly higher than the print version of the title) and licence issues (which may include indemnity provisions that are unacceptable under Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines).

104   Respondents to the survey considered that the Library's print collection met their needs well (81% strongly agreed and agreed) and was generally easily accessible. They did not consider that the Library's electronic collection was as successful in meeting their needs (64% strongly agreed and agreed and 14% somewhat agreed). The most significant low rating was to the statement "I can find the material I need through the Library catalogue".

105   Focus group participants commented on the electronic collections, suggesting the Library increase the resources available to all users. Factiva was considered to be an extremely useful resource and some would like to have access to Lexis/Nexis. They commented that the Library catalogue was difficult to search and that information resources were not always described in a way in that a user would use when searching. The Library collection was praised and its usefulness for analysis noted. Participants commented that material in the electronic collection was hard to find because they were not sure which resources were in Parlinfo, the catalogue and the electronic serials catalogue.

106   The use of the print collection has declined slightly over the past three years, when measured by the loans issued. Loans fell by 11.94% from 2005-06 to 2006-07 for the total loans issued over the year. The fall from 2004-05 to 2005-06 was 5.86%. The reduction over the three year period was 17.1%.

107   The highest users of the print collection are staff from the Departments of the Senate and the House of Representatives and Senators and Members and their staff. The number of interlibrary loans from other libraries, particularly from the National Library, has remained constant over the past two years. Focus group participants noted that this was a particularly useful service.

**Chart 14 and Chart 15 Library collection usage (from Integrated Library Management System (ILMS) statistics)**



**Loans from the collection**



**Loans by user group**
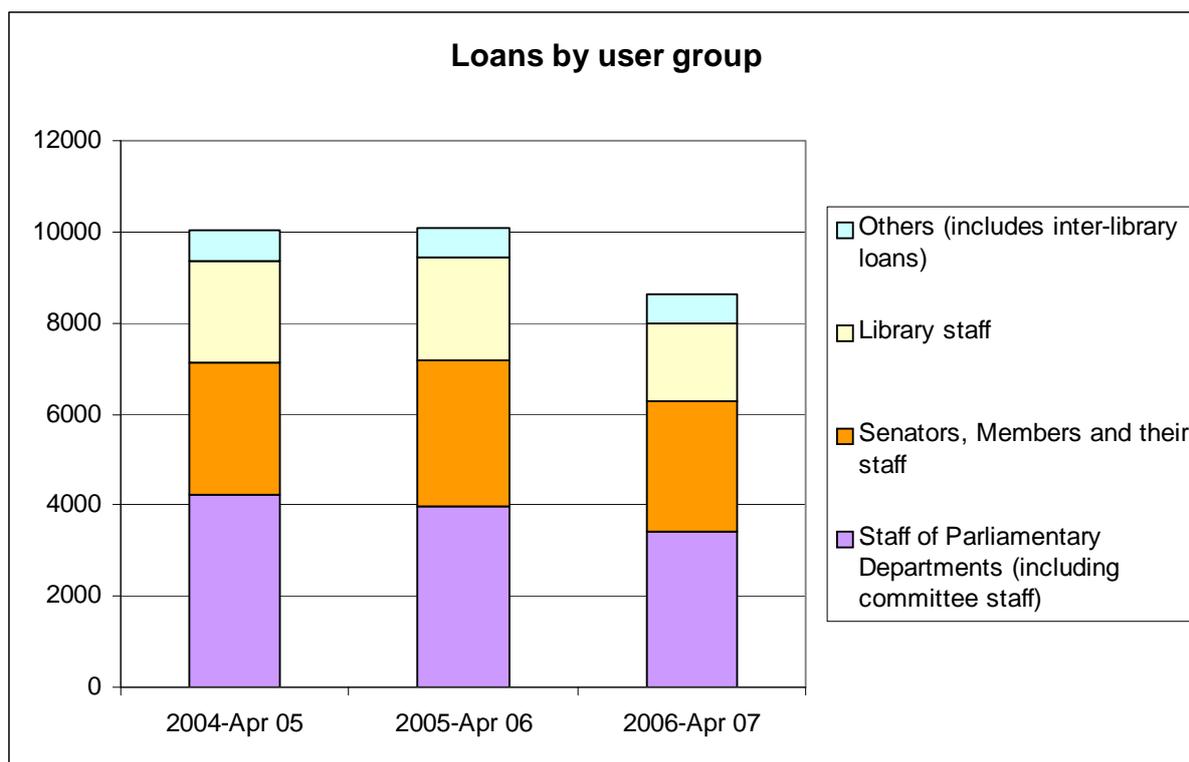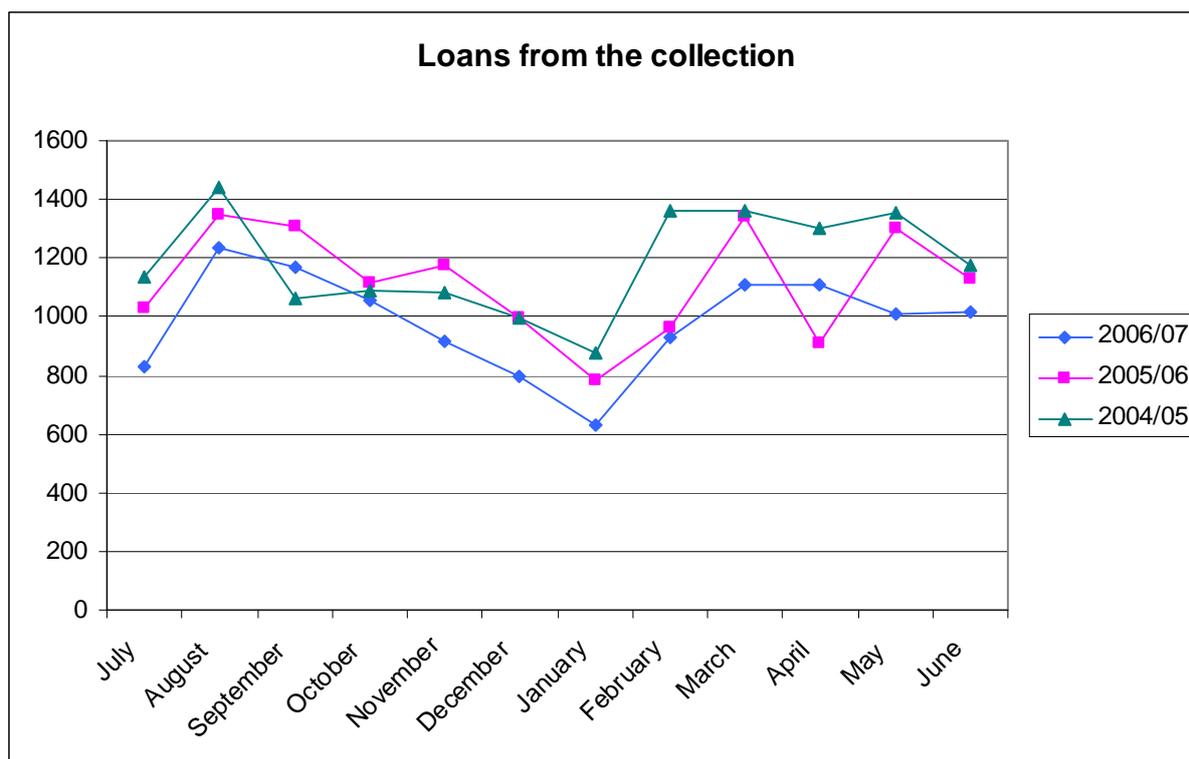
108    The Library provides its clients with online, full-text resources. The largest service is from Proquest, which contains 10 977 journals in fields including social science, health and medicine, academic studies (all subjects), and business as well as newspapers. Access is available through the Library's electronic serials catalogue. Use of the collection, particularly full text articles, is significant. While use of the journals increased in 2005–06 from 2004–05, use has not increased in the 2006–07 year to 30 April.

**Chart 16 Proquest use**

**Proquest database use**
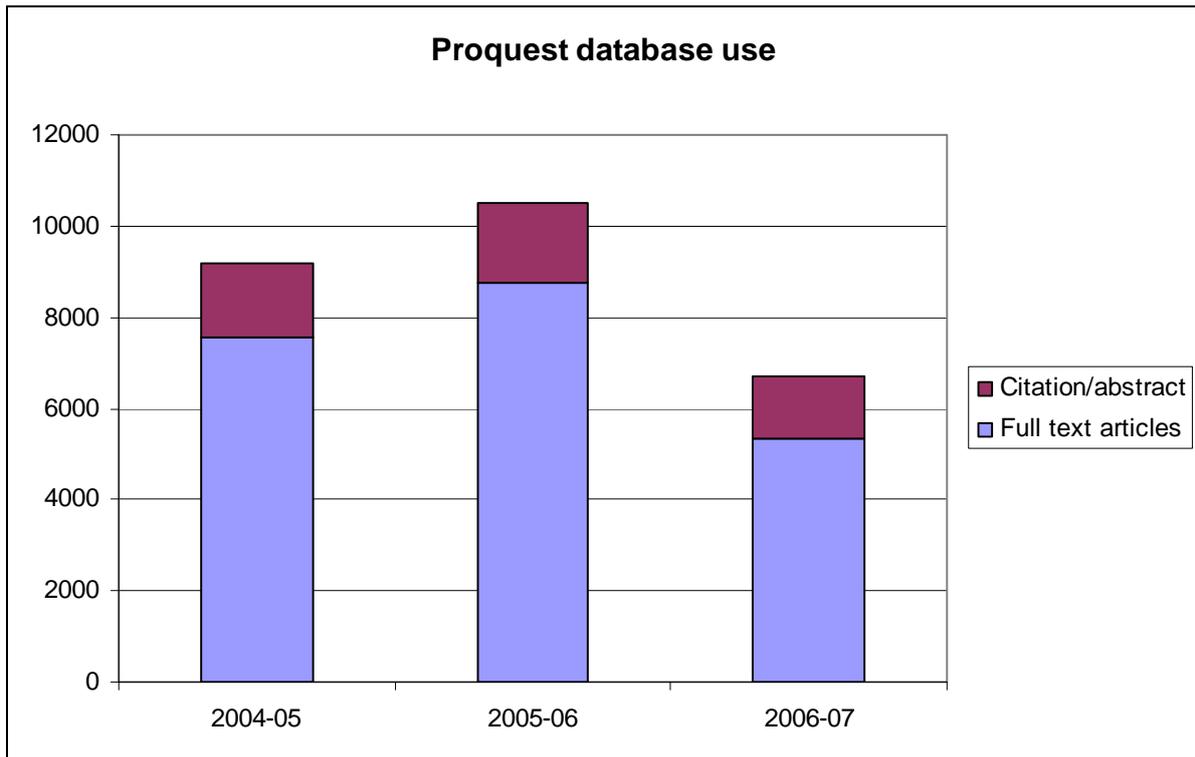


109 The use could have plateaued because clients are using other online services (such as Factiva), because clients are not aware of the service due to staff turnover and lack of publicity or because the content is difficult to find. It may also be that use of Proquest journals is not representative of other electronic collection use.

110 Comments on the Library collection included:

A rich set of materials we are all very luck to have access to.

Think it takes too long to order and process new books, seems to take months rather than weeks.

More regional newspapers would be good.

111 A small number of comments suggested that more rapid acquisition of resources and a more rigorous circulation system were required. The Library will investigate these issues.

*Newspapers*

112 Clients raised the issue of increasing access to regional newspapers in questions on the Library collection and ParlInfo. Currently the Library provides access to approximately150 Australian metropolitan and regional newspapers online in full text. Thirty-three regional newspapers are available in print in the Newspaper Reading Room in the Ground Floor Library.

113 The Library has been asked to increase the range of regional newspapers for many years and, while increasing access to 150 electronically has provided improvement, the demand to increase access continues.

114    There are several options for increasing access to regional newspapers in the Library's collection, including:

   (a)    the Library could increase the contract for newspaper clippings that are added to ParlInfo to include a greater number of regional newspapers, perhaps one for each Senator and Member. This will have significant cost implications and could only be funded if expenditure on other Library services was reduced, or if additional revenue was provided.

   (b)    the Library could subscribe to digital services that have the more significant regional newspapers. Research undertaken by the Library has found that the number of regional newspapers that could be acquired is likely to be another 400 titles. Services that could be purchased to provide clients with direct access to these newspapers are likely to have a significant cost.

   (c)    Senators and Members could use their newspaper allowance to purchase the regional newspapers that they wish to access. The clippings from these newspapers that they wished to be available for a length of time could be loaded to the newspaper database on ParlInfo. While at present only Library staff can add material to this repository, it is likely that the new ParlInfo, to be implemented in 2007–08, could have the capacity for staff in Senators and Members offices to add press clippings.

115    It is worth noting that the National Library of Australia maintains a complete collection of Australian newspapers, including regional press. Copies and loans are provided promptly from the National Library without charge on request. The National Library has also initiated a national newspaper digitisation project aiming to produce over three million pages of digitised newspaper images in stage one. While the National Library is digitising out-of-copyright material, the concept of working with a national infrastructure and national standards could provide efficiencies for Parliamentary Library newspaper digitisation practices.

*Summary*

116    The Library has maintained a collection that is highly focused on the needs of the Parliament. The Library's special relationship with the National Library of Australia means that its vast collection is accessible to clients of the Parliamentary Library, to which it gives a high priority and speedy service.

117    The move to acquire electronic resources that are accessible by clients at their desktop is an important strategic direction for the Library. Progress towards the target of 20% of titles of resources in the Library collection available electronically to users is an important step in achieving a significant "virtual" library.

118    Future directions should include a further increase in electronic resources available directly to clients, based on acquisitions of resources that meet the needs of clients. To achieve this within the current budget will mean redirecting resources from the monograph and print serial collection. Further significant steps can only be taken either through additional funding, ceasing other services or more cost efficient purchasing through national or other consortia (purchasing for multiple libraries).

119    Increasing the number and range of regional Australia newspapers remains a priority for clients. The three options on increasing the press clippings contract, purchasing more electronic resources and adding clippings through Senators and Members offices, should be explored with the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library.

## Overall satisfaction

120    An important goal of the survey was to measure the overall satisfaction of clients with the Library and its services. This measure is required for the *Portfolio Budget Statement* and for overall monitoring of service delivery.

121    The 2002 survey found that the overall client satisfaction was 8–9 out of 10, which can be interpreted as an 80–90% (or 85% single figure) satisfaction rating. In this survey clients gave the Library an overall satisfaction rating of 89% ("strongly agree" and "agree" that they are "satisfied with the services the Library provides"). An additional 10% are somewhat satisfied and 1% selected "don't know/not applicable." No respondents selected the options "disagree" or "strongly disagree." While it is heartening to receive a satisfaction rate of 89% and no significant dissatisfaction, the comments in the survey have indicated areas that could be improved in order to increase satisfaction with the individual services that the Library provides.

122    Other organisations have surveyed clients to determine satisfaction recently. The results of their assessments are:

**Table 3: Comparative client satisfaction measures**

| Agency | Overall satisfaction level (%) |
|---|---|
| Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts | 96 |
| Medicare Australia | 96 |
| National Library of Australia | 96 |
| Australian War Memorial | 94.5 |
| National Museum of Australia | 93 |
| Department of Veterans' Affairs | 90.4 |
| Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Passports Customer Survey) | Over 90 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 90 |
| Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources | 88.7 |
| Office of the Employment Advocate | 87.2 |
| Centrelink | 86 |
| Office of the Australian Building and Construction Commission | 84 |
| Comcover | 81 |
| IP Australia | 80 |
| Office of the Privacy Commissioner | 73 |
| Child Support Agency | 3.5  (of 5) |

(Australian Public Service Commission, 2006, p 232)

123    The Parliamentary Library, while rating well on this measure, is in the average range of organisations providing research and some other services. It is neither at the top nor the bottom of other agencies, suggesting that there is some room for improvement.

124    An alternative measure of the value of the Library to its clients was included in the survey—"Would you recommend the Parliamentary Library to colleagues?" The response to this question was 99% affirmative and 1% negative. This measure was included as discussions at performance measurement conferences[8] have suggested it is a more reliable measure of clients' satisfaction with a service or organisation. The 99% score is a remarkably high rating, which suggests that, overall, the Library's service are relevant and meet client needs.

## Clients: information behaviour and key drivers

*Introduction*

125    Over the past decade, access to information through the Internet, both free information and resources subscribed to by the Library, has vastly increased. The ability of clients of the Library to find resources at any hour of the day and night means that there are alternative ways to obtain information that was previously only available through the Library. This change to the information environment has led to changes in the information behaviour of clients and the position of the Library within this environment.

126    Recent research on libraries (OCLC, 2005) has found that libraries are associated with physical collections (books) and that information seekers typically commence their search for information through an Internet search engine (84%). While Internet search engines were favourably rated, nearly half the respondents to this study (which included US, Canadian, Australian, Singaporean and Indian respondents) had at least a favourable/very favourable opinion of libraries as sources of information, with online libraries rated overall as neither favourable nor unfavourable.

127    This research, and that undertaken by others (such as that reported in Case, 2002), suggest that while libraries are delivering access to print and electronic material, and are generally well regarded, their value to their client has changed from the pre-Internet environment. Some suggest that the role of libraries in synthesising and providing access to relevant information, and preventing information overload, is more important than ever before (Scheeder 2005). Other studies suggest that libraries have been bypassed by those who would have previously used the library for general information (OCLC, 2005). A theme has emerged that suggests "library" be considered to be an activity rather than a place and that individuals now undertake the activity "library" themselves.

128    Research libraries, particularly the academic libraries, have repositioned themselves through creating information stores, for example (Australian Partnership for Sustainable Repositories (APSR)[9], and Australian Research

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[8] For example the Northumbria International Conferences on Performance Measurement in Libraries and Information Services

[9] http://www.apsr.edu.au/

Repositories Online to the World (ARROW)[10]. Others have moved to provide online "virtual" reference serves[11], digitise collections and develop innovative online exhibitions (such as atMitchell[12]).

129    The Australian Parliamentary Library stands in a different position to traditional libraries in two major ways. The first is the research service, which, using specialists in a range of subject areas, provides analysis and advice through individual client responses and through publications. The second is the digital collections of newspaper clippings, radio, television and political material, which are available to clients through ParlInfo and EMMS. Because the Library has had a role in creating and storing information that is critical to the operation of Parliament, it has a strong place in the online environment. The Library has provided access to historical resources and current, up-to-date information. In line with the Library's objective of providing access to as many resources as possible directly to all clients (an objective contained in the Library's business plan), the Library is seeking to deliver databases with material that is available in as timely a manner as possible. In 2007, the backlog of newspaper and journal articles loaded to Parlinfo was eliminated, providing more timely access to these resources.

130    Given the changing information environment and increase in electronic resources from the Library, it was timely to seek information from clients on their information needs and use of information sources.

*Findings*

131    The survey sought information on clients' use of information sources, which sources they used first and their perceptions of reliability of the sources. Comments made by respondents suggest that some very carefully considered the appropriate sources for information, while others go to a particular source (such as Google or ParlInfo) first. Responses to the question asking "which source would you usually go to first" included:

> Depends on what I need. For technical matter to the Library website, then, if necessary researchers.

> Regrettably perhaps Google or Google Scholar are usually the best place to start. But once I properly know what I'm looking for, I switch to the Library's resources.

> Internet for speed, but would use Library if, after authoritative source or something difficult to find.

132    Responses to this question indicated that clients use the Internet (generally Google) more as a first point of search, then the Library or ParlInfo, with government websites coming third, as a first point for information. Many respondents listed the Library and Internet as first points, suggesting that their information seeking is for complementary information from each source.
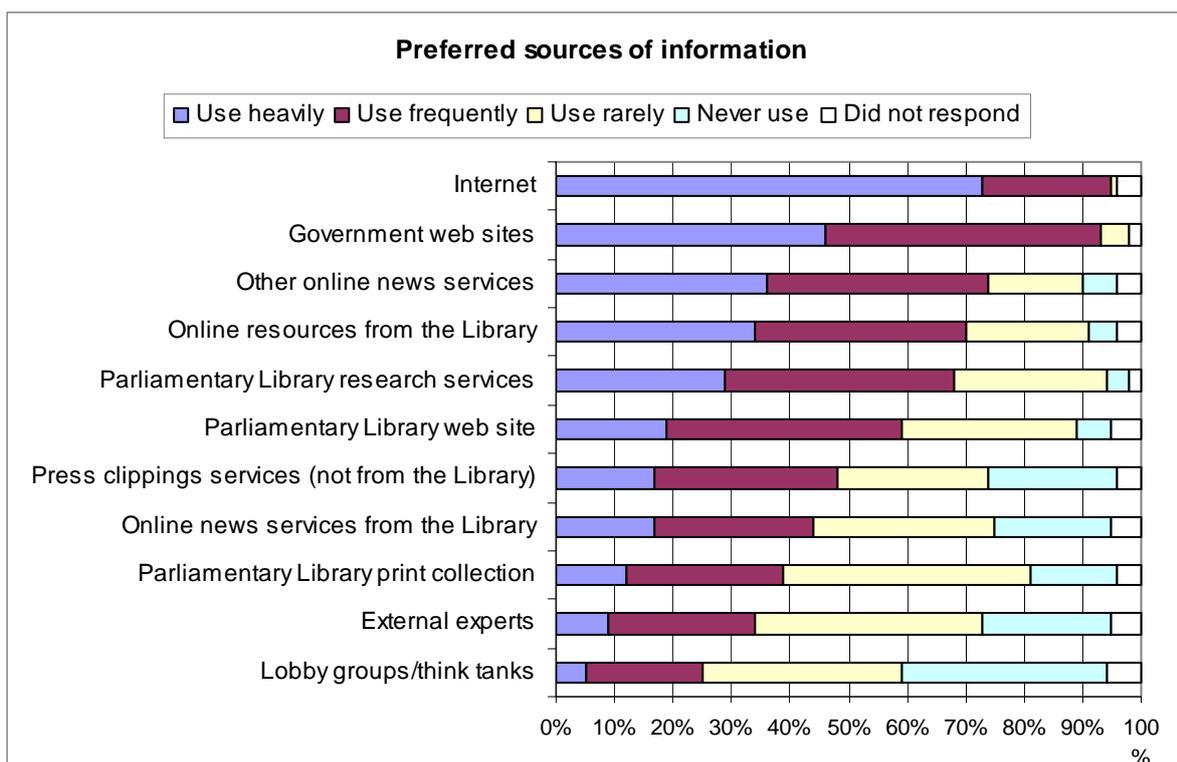
**Chart 17 Preferred sources of information**

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[10] http://arrowprod.lib.monash.edu.au:8000/
[11] For example Ask now, collaborative online reference project of national, state and territory libraries,  http://www.asknow.gov.au/index2.html
[12] atMitchell, http://www.atmitchell.com/

**Preferred sources of information**

□ Use heavily ■ Use frequently □ Use rarely □ Never use □ Did not respond

Internet
Government web sites
Other online news services
Online resources from the Library
Parliamentary Library research services
Parliamentary Library web site
Press clippings services (not from the Library)
Online news services from the Library
Parliamentary Library print collection
External experts
Lobby groups/think tanks

0%  10%  20%  30%  40%  50%  60%  70%  80%  90%  100%

133   Not all information resources are equally trusted. Trust is a dimension that has been used to assess the influence and value of information sources (Australia. Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 2005). The OCLC study found that respondents primarily used personal knowledge/common sense to determine trustworthiness.

134   In this survey clients were asked how reliable they considered the information sources to be. Interestingly, the Library's research services and government websites and the Internet ranked roughly equal as "highly reliable" with a score of around 90% (combining very reliable and average ratings). The Library's research service and website receive the highest rating of "very reliable" (79% and 69% respectively). The Internet received only a 19% rating as "very reliable". These were very closely followed by the Library's web site (87%) other online news services 85%. External experts scored at the lowest level on this question.

**Chart 18: Perceived trust**



Perceived trust
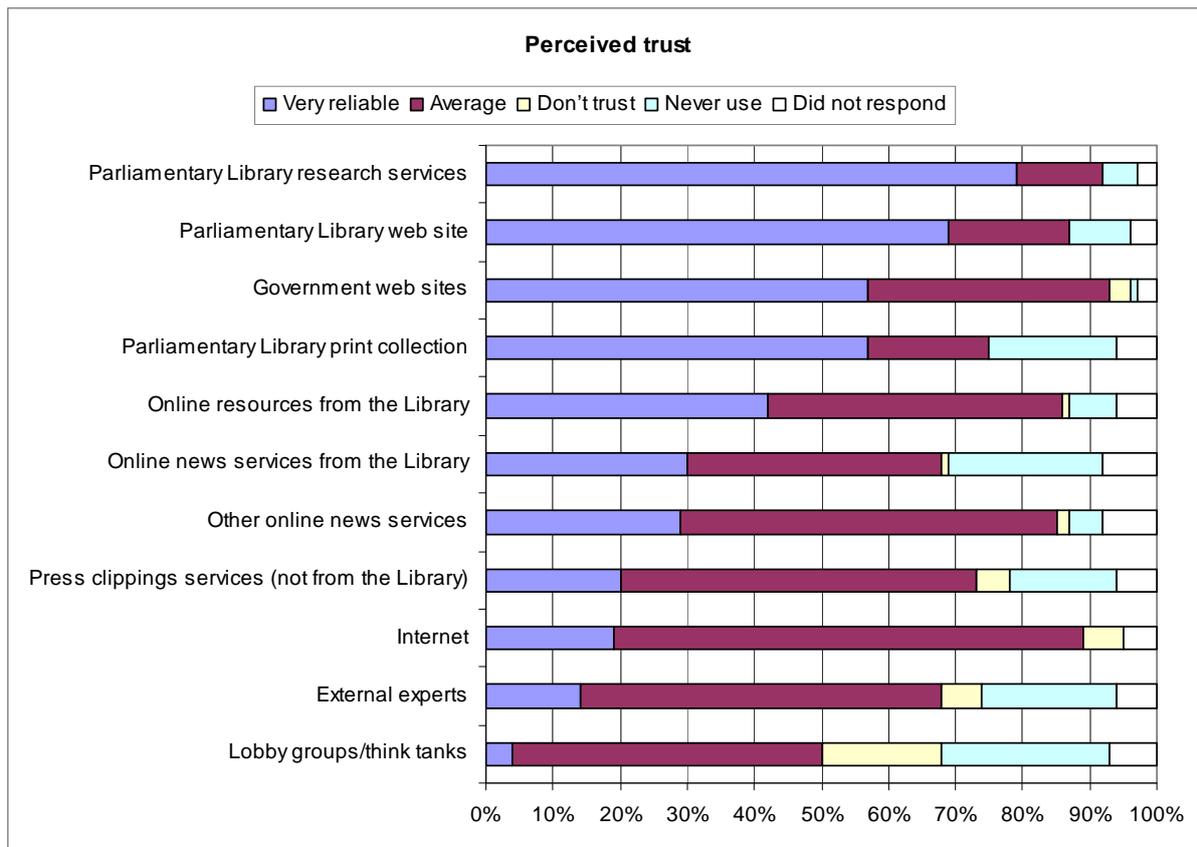
135   When "preferred source of information" and "reliability/trust" are considered together, the information sources fall into four categories. The sources that are preferred and reliable (A grade choices) include government web sites, online resources from the Library, the Library's research services and the Library website. This suggests that the Library has a very significant and valuable position as a provider of information for the Parliament.

136   Sources that are preferred, but are considered to be less reliable (B grade choices) are the Internet (highly preferred), other online news services and "other" resources. Only one source is less preferred, but considered to be reliable (C grade choices)—the Parliamentary Library's print collection. Comments did not provide an insight into which collection was not preferred. The suggestions elsewhere in the survey that online access is more convenient, particularly to Electorate Office staff and those requiring information after the Library closes, may explain this rating.

137   The information resources falling into the category of less preferred and perceived as less reliable, comparatively, were lobby groups/think tanks and external experts and, marginally from the perspective of preferred use, online news services from the Library and press clippings (not from the Library). Clients do not view the media as a reliable source of information, as opposed to it being the Library's service per se.

**Chart 19 – Information sources from the clients' perspective**

Reliability and preference for use
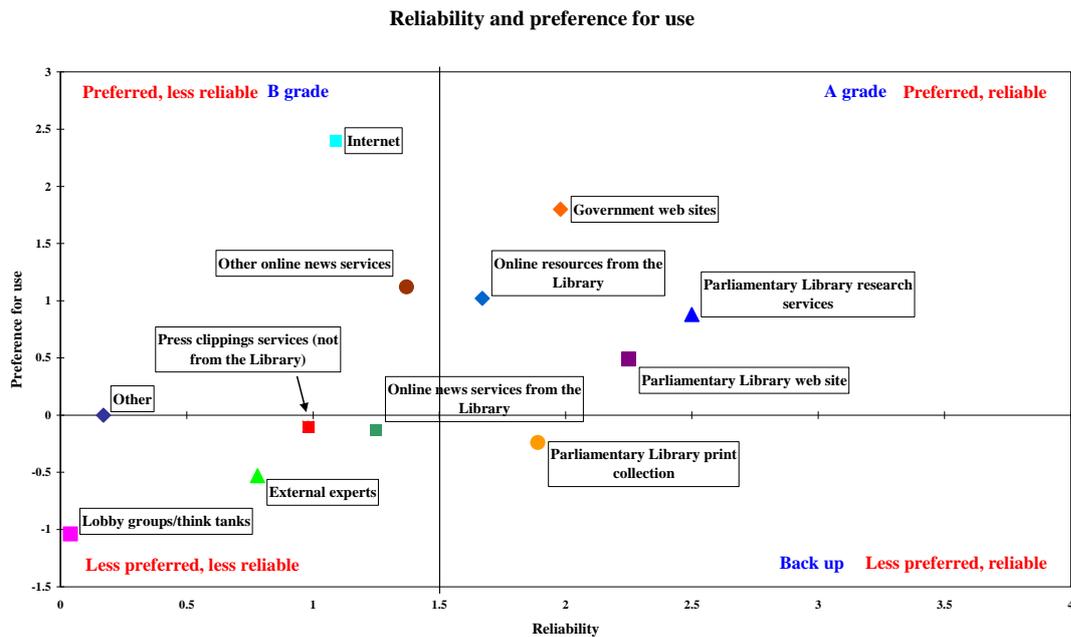


## Discussion

138    In a complex information environment, clients are faced with a plethora of information sources, many of which claim to provide analytical and objective information. The survey results suggest that the Library's clients have a strong awareness that not all information is equally useful and that a critical approach is essential. The Library is very well positioned in the information landscape as a preferred and reliable provider of high quality information, analysis and advice.

139    The preference of clients for electronic resources suggests that convenience is an important factor. Respondent comments suggested that the significant motivating factor in using the Library was the need to obtain information and assistance from the Library quickly. Client need for fast and efficient delivery of reliable, high-quality information explains the comments on, and suggestions for, improvement in the timeliness and consistency of the Library's responses to client requests for information and analysis. In an environment where information and research is required for parliamentary business, such as speeches in the chambers on bills and the budget, the deadlines to enable speeches to be written are tight and have little flexibility. In a year where there is increased pressure on Library resources from a heavy legislative program, this will inevitably lead to tension between limited Library resources and desired client outcomes, such as the prompt production of Bills Digests.

140    A second driver of client needs identified in the survey and focus groups is the need for impartial information that can be used by clients in their environment. Comments suggested that this was an area where clients sought some improvement. The Library needs to recognising the pressures of clients to use information in a range of parliamentary duties which results in short time frames. The need to balancing the provision of information required with impartiality is a critical aspect of Library services.

141    In addition, clients indicated that, given time constraints and their need to be across a wide range of subjects quickly, they would inevitably rely on the Library as a "one-stop shop" for advice over a wide range of subjects. Such demands impose pressures on Library staff to have a general understanding within their subject area, and to be able to provide advice on emerging issues drawing on the best resources. Presenting the information and research to clients through responses, publications, briefings and seminars/lectures is highly valued, with timeliness again being a critical factor.

142    The Internet and Google are competitors with the Library in that they provide immediate access to many resources. They do not, however, provide analytic or independently tested information. Nor, as noted, are they seen as being as reliable as the Library. These factors suggest there is an opportunity that the Library could exploit through better marketing of its independent, analytical and reliable services.

143    The Library's services have a critical edge when they are able to:

(a)      save the client time in information seeking and analysis;

(b)      provide information, research and analysis that is tailored to client needs, in a form that can be readily understood and used by the client (not just lists of web links);

(c)      provide access to relevant information resources (particularly through ParlInfo, EMMS and the Library's website) which can be accessed at any time; and

(d)      provide consistent, high-quality information, research and analysis that is accurate and reliable.

144    These service qualities best meet our clients' priorities for timely access to information resources and expertise. These benefits should be incorporated into the service ethos and communication and marketing plan.

**Future directions: priorities for 2007-08 and beyond**

145    This evaluation provides an opportunity to understand better the needs of clients and establish where the Library can provide the most value. Clients were specifically asked for comments on improving or introducing services to influence future planning, in addition to the feedback on specific services.

146    Two significant priorities stand out as being the most highly valued by clients and also the areas where most comments suggesting improvement were made: customer service and the Library's collections.

147    In terms of customer service, quality and variability were identified as areas requiring improvement (individual client responses). While some respondents indicated that variability could be the result of tight timeframes, others expressed concern at a lack of impartiality and performance.

148    The Library, noting the overall high level of satisfaction with research services, should consider specific activities to raise the standard and quality of all interactions with clients to a uniformly high level. Training, policies and performance management should focus on three themes:

(a)   focusing products on the specific needs of the clients (tailored to their needs rather than extensive lists of web links);

(b)   good reference communication (regularly getting back to clients and reporting on progress); and

(c)   timeliness (recognising that, while short timeframes may be given, clients may not have control of these).

149   In terms of the Library's collections, there were positive comments as well as suggestions for improvements. While a small number of respondents expressed a desire for an increase in material in the print collection (including Australian political party material and overseas publications), more expressed interest in increasing the digital collections available to clients at their desktops. There was a continuing theme of increasing resources available through ParlInfo, particularly regional newspaper clippings and EMMS—especially regional/state news and television programs. There was a much greater emphasis on increasing coverage of Australian news than on any electronic collections which the Library should subscribe to (only Stratfor was mentioned).

150   Responses in Library planning could include exploring models of cooperation with State Parliamentary Libraries to enable the digital newspaper resources of Australian parliamentary libraries to be available directly to clients through a single interface, perhaps the new ParlInfo. In addition, further consideration of options of obtaining funding for increasing press clipping coverage, or enabling Senators and Members offices to add clippings, radio and television, could be explored. Discussions of these options would need to recognise that there are technical issues, including authorisation and access management, that would need to be taken into account.

151   The next group of priorities for clients, based on comments, were the lack of awareness that many had of the range of the Library's services. Through the survey and focus groups, clients identified a desire for more/better training to use the resources that the Library makes available to all clients. Feedback suggests that the *Guide to Services* is of limited use and that other activities of the Library, such as orientation and training, may need to be refocused.

152   Access to information sources and Library expertise through the website was noted by a significant number of clients as an area where resources could be invested to improve the service. Development should bear in mind the impact of the new ParlInfo system, for which great desire was expressed, due to problems with reliability, speed, ease of use and alerts (timeliness and ease of use).

153   Finally, while comments on improvements were relatively low for Library publications, the overall feedback is that the timeliness of publications, particularly Bills Digests, needs to be improved. While the Library is developing policies on publications (including the Bills Digests), it is timely to look at issues and practices that could mean that publications better meet the timeframe of clients.

154   Some specific suggestions on improvements to services were identified, which are attached (Attachment A). Interestingly the comments revealed that there was a lack of awareness about some of the Library's services and products.

155    In comparison with the international studies of parliamentary libraries, the theme that the Library's survey found of requiring timely responses to client requests across a broad range of subject expertise, echoed other studies. A significant difference that the Library's survey found to these other studies was that it was not common for its clients to rely on personal sources and electronic resources that they had identified outside the parliamentary system.

156    In conclusion, this evaluation, using a range of assessments of client needs and information behaviours, provides a basis for refocusing the Library's services. The highest priorities for immediate action are:

      (a)   focusing on the value brought by the Library to clients; and

      (b)   delivering quickly high-quality, relevant research and information services that support clients, thereby supporting the efficient, informed operation of Parliament.

157    Directions for priority activities for 2007–08 and beyond include:

      (a)   focusing on client service quality and consistency;

      (b)   collection development (particularly regional newspapers);

      (c)   further delivery of services to the desktop (particularly EMMS to electorate offices); and

      (d)   collaboration with other parliamentary libraries to cost-effectively provide services.

158    The resource implications of service directions will require further investigation and discussion.

159    In summary, the Library's clients value fast, analytic services and seek ways to access information from an increasingly digital collection that "doesn't make them work hard to get information".

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**Attachment A**

*Specific suggestions for service improvement*

| Suggestion | Comment |
|---|---|
| **Electronic Media Monitoring System** | |
| 1 Larger viewing frame | To be considered in planning for future developments. |
| 2 Ability to download programs | To be considered in planning for future developments. |
| 3 Coverage of State-based programs | Library will review potential to have programs added by Senator and Members offices. |
| 4 Coverage of Question Time and Estimates | To be considered in planning for future developments. |
| 5 Electorate office access | Trial completed. Awaiting decision on roll out to all Electorate offices. |
| **IT Network** | |
| 6 Increase network speed in electorate offices | Responsibility of Department of Finance, which plans work to improve response time in 2007 and 2008. |
| **ParlInfo** | |
| 7 Add older press clippings | Library to investigate major retrospective digitisation when new ParlInfo system selected. |
| 8 Removal of older clips | The Library does not remove press clippings from ParlInfo. |
| 9 Ability to download multiple speeches | In specifications for replacements system. |
| 10 Opening of PDF documents in a separate window | In specifications for replacements system. |
| **Vital Issues Seminars and Parliamentary Library Lectures** | |
| 11 Deliver via streaming video | Currently the audio files available within 24 hours of the seminars/lectures. Will investigate streaming audio. |
| 12 Make audio available as downloadable MP3 file | Audios are available as MP3 files – will provide information through *This Sitting Week* about how to download the files. |
| 13 Send clients information when audio files and presentations are available | Will investigate potential for inclusion in alerts in addition to listing in *This Sitting Week.* |

| Suggestion | Comment |
|---|---|
| **Website** | |
| 14 Place link to Parliamentary Handbook on navigation bar | Parliamentary handbook now on left hand navigation menu on Parliamentary Library intranet. |
| **Collection** | |
| 15 Locate newspaper on microfilm in open access | Under review. |
| 16 Ensure all on the wait list for books are not "dropped off" | Reviewing access to ensure that the routing lists do not "drop off" requestors. |
| **Products and publications** | |
| 17 Update electronic access (NSW and Queensland) in light of federal electorate redistribution | Underway. |
| 18 Improve timeliness of alert service and ease of use | Anticipate the new ParlInfo system will resolve this issue. |