2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE of

the IFLA Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section

Senado de España, Madrid, 17-18 October

Conference report

The IFLA Library and Research Services for Parliaments Annual Conference was held on the 17th and 18th of October 2024 in Madrid, Spain, generously hosted by the Spanish Senate. The event's main theme was "Leveraging Collective Expertise for Innovation and Impact in Parliamentary Libraries and Research Services", and the focus was on Innovation and New Practices for enhanced service delivery, and on Collective Expertise in the Age of Artificial Intelligence. The event aimed to provoke reflections on the evolving role of parliamentary libraries and research services in a rapidly changing world, discussions on strategies for professional growth, adaptability, while embracing new challenges in the age of fast technological developments, and to inspire colleagues to step out of their comfort zones and drive meaningful change in their organizations.

The conference was organized in collaboration of the IFLAPARL Standing Committee and the Direction of Documentation of the Spanish Senate on behalf of the Institution, following the WLIC 2024 cancellation and after a survey conducted in February 2024 among the Section members on whether they would favor an online or an in-person meeting (and where). The survey revealed that members wished to meet in person even if the WLIC was not happening. Europe was the preferred geographical location and October was revealed as the preferred month for an annual gathering. A two-day in-person event was selected as the favorite format for an annual conference.

The two-day program begun with the Standing Committee meeting, held in the Spanish Senate in the morning of Thursday 17 October, before the opening of the Conference. During the meeting, members of the IFLAPARL community were able to attend as guests, either in-person or virtually, since traditionally the Section holds an open to all meeting along with its yearly meeting event.

17 October 2024

Opening of the Conference

The official opening of the Conference was on the afternoon of the same day: Excmo. Sr. D. Pedro Rollán, President of the Spanish Senate, opened the event with a warm welcome address, where he emphasized the critical role of librarians in a world overloaded with information and in the era of AI. He also stressed the importance of libraries in ensuring access to credible and reliable sources of information: "The work that you carry out is worthier every day… You have a task that goes way beyond the keeping of information; you have become the guardians of knowledge and the guardians of history".

Following the President's opening speech, Josefa Fuentes, Director of Documentation of the Spanish Senate and former Chair of the IFLAPARL Section gave her welcome speech. Ms Fuentes underlined the need of "the spirit of collaboration and shared knowledge" in supporting documentation and research in parliaments, which plays an active role in the decision-making process. She also made a short presentation of the services provided by the Direction of Documentation and the innovations achieved over the past years.

After the official welcoming by the Spanish Senate, the current Chair of the Section Ms. Carolyne Ménard (Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec, Canada), before giving the floor to the keynote speaker, presented the Section and IFLA's work, while

reiterating the importance of engagement and collaboration in the community, and thanking the Standing Committee members for their generous involvement.

The keynote speech, on Leveraging Collective Expertise for Innovation and Impact in Parliamentary Libraries and Research Services was delivered by Mrs. Anoja Fernando M.B.E., (Knowledge Exploitation Lead, His Majesty's Government, United Kingdom, past Chair of IFLA Division B, and current Chair or IFLA Government Libraries Section). The speech highlighted the need of regulatory framework on AI (such as the EU AI Act, and the UK AI Regulatory Principles), and stressed how libraries can engage with AI to improve decision-making, manage misinformation, and ensure accessibility, while repurposing collective expertise for innovation.

Finally, Ms Carolyne Ménard (Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec, Canada), in her initial presentation as Section Chair, discussed the future of parliamentary libraries and their constant need of innovation, focusing on Artificial Intelligence's increasing influence it the legislative work. She presented the three impact areas of IFLA's 2024-2029 strategy, showing how IFLAPARL's objectives are directly aligned with this strategy and how it can be a roadmap for libraries wishing to implement change.

First Session

The first session was dedicated to the host and the parliamentary libraries networks in Spain and Spanish speaking countries, with three exciting presentations on the post-incunabula of the Spanish Senate Library (Paz Otero, Donaire Bravo), on the Red Parlamenta and the website of professional cooperation, dissemination and transparency (López Hernández, de Diego Lozano, del Rincón García & Bosch Jorba), and the sources of information for the study of the Autonomous Communities of Spain (Juliani Aguado).

Second Session

The second session included presentations on innovative practices and new strategies implemented by parliamentary libraries and research services in the Assembleia da República, Portugal (Amante, Aleixo, Revez), in the European Parliament (Vuijlsteke & Bassot), in the Hungarian National Assembly (Holle), in the UK House of Commons (Harding), and in the Chamber of Deputies in Mexico (Rosales).

The guided tour of the Palacio del Senado and the exhibition of selected Royal bibliographic heritage in the Library of the Senate, followed by the official conference dinner in the Senate were the excellent conclusion of the first day of the event, providing the attendees the opportunity to learn about the history of the institution, to admire the treasures of its library and to connect with colleagues from around the world.

18 October 2024

Poster Session

The second day of the conference was just as full and satisfying. The day begun with the poster session, where three posters were presented, namely the "Infotableaus" created by the Information Service for MPs of the Hungarian National Assembly (Kardos), the "From tacit to explicit" poster on enhancing service quality in the Portuguese Parliament Research Service (Barosso, Borges & Cabral), and the "EODopen" poster on opening up hidden knowledge by making a bulk of textual material digitally available, presented by the Parliamentary and Social Sciences Centre of the National Library of Estonia (Linask).

Third Session

The third session of the conference was also about innovative practices and new approaches to support library users both in situ and virtually. The presentations

concerned the Assemblée nationale du Québec, Canada (Ménard), the Library of Congress, USA (Taylor & Manning), the National Library of Togo (Sanguia, Biyante-Afeto & Dahoe), the German Bundestag (Piel), the National Assembly Research Service of Korea (Young Lee), and the National Assembly of Thailand (Phetpanaporn).

Fourth Session

The fourth session was dedicated to updates from the associations of parliamentary libraries and research services worldwide (APLESA, APLIC, ECPRD, BIPARLAC etc.), and to the IFLAPARL 2023-2025 Action Plan updates, where the Standing Committee members gave reports on the items of the Action Plan, followed by a conversation on what the members of the community would expect from the Section to better fulfill their professional needs. The session emphasis was on knowledge sharing and inter-parliamentary cooperation to overcome challenges and create better services for all patrons.

Fifth session

After a hearty lunch offered by the Spanish Senate, the fifth and final session focused on the Artificial Intelligence, its role in parliamentary libraries and research services, and case studies of experimental uses of it. An introduction by the moderators Ms Josefa Fuentes and Mr Manuel Pereira (Spanish Parliament) was followed by four thought provoking presentations on exploratory testing of Gen AI tools at the Library of Parliament, Canada (Genin Charette), on the recently published *Guidelines for AI in Parliaments* (Cueto Aparicio), on the role of AI in open parliament (Gonzalo Rozas), and on how building AI awareness and good information is at the heart of democracy (Harding). The panel discussion after the presentations touched on many topical issues and highlighted common concerns on the use of AI.

The closing speech-conclusions of the conference delivered by the Section Chair Ms Carolyne Ménard, the attendees had the opportunity to exchange views, concerns and ideas in an informal networking event that left everyone with the best impressions.

Overview of participation

For the IFLAPARL 2024 Annual Conference, 105 colleagues (presenters included) registered to attend, and 97 finally attended, not counting the colleagues from the Cortes Generales (Spanish Senate and Congress of Deputies) who joined the event. Of these attendees, appr. 58% came from Europe, 16% from Africa, 12% from Asia, and 13% from North and South America.

Apart from the opening speech by the President of the Spanish Senate, the welcome speeches by the Director of Documentation and the IFLAPARL Chair, and the Keynote Speech, 18 presentations were delivered by 26 presenters, and 3 poster presentations were delivered by 5 presenters. A section and regional updates session followed by open discussion among the members of the community, and a round table discussion on AI created further opportunities for the attendees to connect and create new professional networks, in order to increase effectiveness in the field of work, to promote openness and transparency, and to develop and promote solid standards in providing information and knowledge to parliaments.

With the support of the Spanish Senate, the event was live streamed, both on the host's channels (Day 1 and Day 2) and on the IFLAPARL YouTube channel, with English and Spanish interpretation. The single views of each day on both channels are reaching 1.000 (English and Spanish interpretation combined) until the moment this report is being written.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the IFLAPARL 2024 Annual Conference was a successful hybrid event for the community. Focusing on leveraging Collective Expertise for Innovation and Impact in Parliamentary Libraries and Research Services gave the attendees the opportunity to exchange new ideas, best practices and solutions on challenges that arise in the parliamentary libraries and research services, in an era of fast and vast technological developments in the information field. The conference underscored the evolving role of parliamentary libraries as essential hubs of innovation, bridging the gap between legislative bodies and their constituents. Through collaboration, the adoption of new technologies like AI, and a commitment to continuous professional development, libraries can ensure that they remain vital in supporting democratic processes and legislative effectiveness.

The Spanish Senate excelled as host of this year's event and the community set a date for next year's meeting in WLIC 2025 in Astana, Kazakstan.

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Iouliani (Lila) Theodosi (Hellenic Parliament Library, Greece)

IFLAPARL Information Coordinator 2023-2025

and

Carolyne Ménard (Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec, Canada)

IFLAPARL Chair 2023-2025

On behalf of the IFLA PARL 2024 Annual Conference Organizing Committee

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