

**“Are the Parliamentary Library and Archives of Your
Country Offering Their Services to the General Public?”
An analysis of the ECPRD Questionnaire no 1481.**

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ECPRD SEMINAR

*Services Provided to the General Public
by Parliamentary Libraries and Archives*
Athens, Friday 28- Saturday 29 May 2010





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QUESTIONNAIRE

The Library of the Hellenic Parliament is organizing an ECPRD Seminar concerning the *Services provided to the General Public by Parliamentary Libraries and Archives*. We think it would be useful to chart the existing conditions of our Parliamentary Libraries related to the theme. Please answer the following questions.

Country: Name

E-mail:

1. When was the Parliamentary Library (PL) of your country founded?
2. Is the PL of your country offering its services to the general public?
Yes
No
Partially
Comments
3. If yes, was it from its foundation the PL open to the general public?
Yes
No
4. If the PL is open to the general public, could you indicate what kind of services it offers and if yes, what hours is open to the general public?
5. What are the most popular service areas of the PL?
6. How many users make use of its services per year?
7. If your PL is not offering services to the general public, is the opening of the PL to the public in its plans?
8. What is your personal opinion on the issue of offering services to the general public? Could you justify your opinion?

1. When was your Parliamentary Library and/or Parliamentary Archive founded?

- 1799 : 1
- 1800-1810 : 1
- 1811-1820 : 4+1A
- 1821-1830 : 1
- 1831-1840 : 2
- 1841-1850 : 6
- 1851-1860 : 2
- 1861-1870 : 3
- 1871-1880 : 2+1A
- 1881-1890 : -
- 1891-1900 : -
- 1901-1910 : 1
- 1911-1920 : 4
- 1921-1930 : 2
- 1931-1940 : -
- 1941-1950 : 4+1A
- 1951-1960 : 2
- 1961-1970 : 1
- 1971-1980 : -
- 1981-1990 : -
- 1991-2000 : 5
- 2001-2010 : WEU (2002-2011)

2. Are your Parliamentary Library and Archives offering their Services to the General Public?

Partially means:

- When the study or research involves legislation and/or parliamentary practice and the history of the building
- In case the needed material is unique or rare and difficult to reach and is located at the PL
- Proceeding that are not on the internet
- Academics, researchers, lawyers upon request
- Officials from other European institutions
- By appointment on non sitting days of the Parliament
- Requests by letters, phone, fax and e-mail are accepted and satisfied
- The Secretary General of the Parliament has the authority to issue a reading permit
- In some cases, a special services branch is created for the general public

YES	12
NO	9
PARTIALLY	22

3. “If yes, was it open from the foundation of the PL/PA to the general public?”

- 18 PLs noted that there **is** a change of policy in their openness strategy.
- From the group of PLs that **did not** change their openness policy 3 declare so, since there were open from the start. 9 come from the area of not offering their services to the general public
- 8 state that they follow the partially servicing condition.

4. “Indicate what kind of services your PL offers to the general public”

Library & Archive Services

- Access to the Reading Rooms and consultation of materials
- Reference Services
- On-line catalogue
- Web site
- Databases
- Digital library
- Parliamentary Minutes
- *Official Gazette*
- Newspapers & journals collection
- Special collections & historical collections
- Reference collection
- Copying Services

4. “Indicate what kind of services your PL offers to the general public”

Information Services

- General information concerning the Parliament
- Visitor information, orientation & support
- Remote enquiry service ie telephone, fax, responding to e-mail requests
- Production of free publications in print & on the website

Education Services

- Information sessions to educate students
- Information sessions about learning opportunities for teachers
- Training & orientation courses
- Building & Library tours
- Conferences, seminars
- Exhibitions

5. What are the most popular services areas of your PL?

Collections

- The Minutes and parliamentary papers in print & in digital form
- *Official Gazette* in print
- Minutes of Committees
- Newspapers & journals in print & in digital form
- Law & history books
- Political biographies
- Documentation of MPs writings
- EU collection
- Statistics
- Data bases
- Digital library
- E-publications & articles

Services

- Reference & Information Desk
- Factual & bibliographic information
- Expertise
- Seminars & information sessions
- Summaries of government bills
- Thematic information packages of articles
- Questions on foreign law
- Loaning & Inteloaning
- Online-services ie website, catalogue
- Facilities ie reading room, e-access & computer, copying services (photocopying & digitization)
- Exhibitions & displays

6. “How many users make use of your PL/PAPER year?”

- 40 users/year:1 library
- 100-200 : 7
- 200-400 : 3
- 401-500 : 1
- 2000- 4500 : 6
- 6 500 : 2
- 10 520 : 1
- 12 800 : 1
- 28 970 : 1
- 35 000-36 000 : 4
- 42 000 : 1
- 52 000 : 1
- 59 900 : 1
- 100 000 : 1
- 135 000 : 1+ website
- 1.75 million : 1

7. “Is the opening of your PL/PA to the general public in your plans?”

- 12 PLibraries already open to the general public did not have something to add
- Did not answer : 9
- “Yes” : 8
- “No” : 10
- Rethinking and considerations over the issue expressed four (4) PLs

8. “What is your personal opinion on the issue of offering services to the general public?”

The attitude towards openness was overall positive.

- Support of transparency policy & participatory democracy
- Accountability
- Expertise on parliamentary information, a unique asset
- Contribution to scholarship & research
- Public relations tool of Parliaments
- Positive image & raises the profile of Parliament
- Exchange & closeness lead to interest & better understanding of parliamentary work
- Introduction to the legislative process nationally and internationally
- PLibraries as a part of the library community
- Better use of historical collections, old editions, national heritage

8. “What is your personal opinion on the issue of offering services to the general public?”

On the other hand, a series of difficulties and practical matters were indicated to stand in the way:

- Security factor
- Rising costs
- Limited staff resources
- Premises, space, housing
- Time allocation
- Disorientation from the primary users

The above difficulties have lead to the creation of special public information services.

Conclusion

Parliamentary Libraries and Archives offer their specialized services primarily to MPs, their associates, and staff;

selectively to defined social groups, prominent figures and upon request.

A growing number is open to the general public. It seems that the majority of PLs and PAs are doing their best to respond to requests under the circumstances.

Partial openness is the preferred option.

Points

- Rare and unique historical collections have acquired a new accumulative worth. They ought to be treated separately.



- Openness is nowadays detached from physical presence. An achievement of the new technologies and the Internet. Data is available at the internet horizon; the notions of time and space are expanded to infinite. Security pains are eliminated.

Thank you very much
for your attention