



**NDI**  
*National Democratic  
Institute for  
International  
Affairs*

**Findings of the Guyana  
Parliamentary Library  
Assessment Mission**

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***Political Party Training:*** NDI conducts multipartisan training seminars in political development with a broad spectrum of democratic parties. NDI draws international experts to forums where party members learn first-hand the techniques of organization, communication and constituent contact.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report examines the information needs of the Guyana National Assembly as well as the condition and accessibility of existing legislative resources. As the first step toward the creation of a parliamentary library, this report provides recommendations for the development of information resources for Members of Parliament in Guyana.

Senior Research Librarian Michael Anderson of the United States Library of Congress and Law Librarian Velma Newton of the University of the West Indies traveled to Guyana in March 1996 and, subsequently drafted this report. Background information for this report was developed by NDI/Guyana Program Coordinator Deborah Ullmer, with the help of the Clerk of the National Assembly, Frank Narain, A.A. NDI staff members Thomas O. Melia, Sue Grabowski, Cara Hesse, Marissa Brown, Makram Ouais and Emma Nilenfors edited and refined the document.

NDI acknowledges Narain, Deputy Clerk Sherlock Isaacs and the staff at the Parliament's Office for collecting detailed data, assisting in the coordination of meetings and answering numerous questions. Narain's knowledge of the history and procedures of Guyana's Parliament was an invaluable source of assistance.

We also want to express our appreciation to those who took time to share their views and insights with NDI staff and the assessment team. We make special note of Prime Minister Samuel Hinds; Derek Jagan, speaker of the National Assembly; Dr. Kenneth King, secretary general of the People's National Congress; Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine, co-leader of the Working People's Alliance; Miles Fitzpatrick, attorney-at-law; Ivor Rodrigues, national archivist; Gwyneth Browman, chief librarian of the National Library; Orin Fraser, Supreme Court Library; Maureen Newton, chief librarian of the Caribbean Community library; Pamela Knights, chief librarian of the Bank of Guyana library; and Yvonne Lancaster, chief librarian, and the staff of the University of Guyana Library and Learning Resource Center.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided the financial assistance that enabled NDI to undertake this work. We are grateful to USAID Project Manager Dennis Darby, LL.M. for his assistance to NDI representatives in Guyana.

We hope that this report contributes to the deliberative process by which public policy is made in Guyana.

Kenneth D. Wollack  
President  
National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On October 5, 1992, the people of Guyana elected their representatives to the National Assembly in competitive, multiparty elections, generally viewed as the fairest in Guyana's post-independence history. The electoral mandate enjoyed by these newly elected parliamentarians enhanced the legitimacy of the National Assembly as a forum for the representation of diverse viewpoints and an arena in which to forge policies that benefit the people of Guyana. Since 1992, the National Assembly has considered the major issues facing Guyana including economic reform, environmental protection, health care delivery and educational policy.

The National Assembly does its work, however with quite limited resources. While the Parliament Office comprises 32 staff members, the services provided are mainly administrative. With the exception of those who are cabinet members, parliamentarians have no staff to assist them with their many legislative tasks. In addition, parliamentarians do not have mailboxes, offices or telephones at the parliament building. Most critically, parliamentarians do not have easy access to the necessary background and comparative information on issues of national importance. With access to appropriate information, parliamentarians can inform themselves regarding issues under debate, and policy can reflect the best available options. Moreover, better informed legislators would raise the level of policy debate and would ultimately enhance the ability of the legislature to perform the important task of legislative amendment and oversight of the executive that are expected of a modern democratic legislature.

Currently, parliamentarians have access to only a few resource materials located in an enclosed loft in the parliament building. Materials are not catalogued or indexed, and many are water-damaged or bookworm-infested.

Many Commonwealth Caribbean parliaments enhance the policy making process by establishing libraries to provide resource materials to parliamentarians. These parliamentary libraries at least contain a few works on parliamentary procedure, the publications of that parliament and comparative information on topical issues. Throughout the Caribbean and the democratic world, libraries play a key role in supporting the work of national legislators.

As a first step toward enhancing the availability of information resources in Guyana, key members of the National Assembly identified the establishment of a library facility as a priority. These members recommended that the library be housed in the parliament building and strive to contain complete sets of all parliamentary documents and government reports, as well as comparative information from other parliaments. As envisioned by these members, the library would primarily serve the research needs of all members and their committees by dispensing information on a broad range of issues in a confidential, objective and timely manner.

As a part of an overall program to support the National Assembly, and respond to the priorities established by the assembly members, NDI asked two senior research librarians to participate in a library assessment mission in March, 1996. Michael Anderson, a senior research librarian at the United States Library of Congress and Velma Newton, a law librarian at the University of West Indies in Barbados traveled to Guyana to determine the material, staffing and

structural needs for the establishment of a parliamentary library.<sup>1</sup>

Anderson and Newton met with Members of Parliament, principal staff of the Parliament Office and key research librarians to determine the scope of the information needs of the Parliament. They also assessed the physical space for the proposed library wing; the resources and documents currently available to parliamentarians; the organizational structure of the parliamentary staff; and existing relationships among the main libraries in Guyana.

Following their visit, Anderson and Newton drafted this report describing the existing facilities including resources available to parliamentarians and outlining recommendations for the managerial and structural development of a parliamentary library. This paper examines Guyana's existing facilities, documents and resources available to MPs and the constraints they face in obtaining pertinent documents. The paper then outlines recommendations for the development of a parliamentary library capacity in the Guyana National Assembly.

Anderson and Newton indicated that a parliamentary library could provide members and their committees with research services by responding objectively to member requests and disseminating timely background information. Furthermore, the report contends that a properly designed and operated parliamentary library of modest means could foster understanding and highlight available policy choices. Drawing on its own resources, and those of Guyana's academic community, executive agencies, the private sector and other information sources, the parliamentary library could help inform MPs about the best alternatives for creating legislation to solve Guyana's many pressing issues.

Based on their many conversations with Guyanese and their knowledge of information resource facilities in other countries, Anderson and Newton suggested the following options for improving and expanding the facilities available to parliamentarians in Guyana.

- Form a library committee of Members of Parliament to develop a flexible collection and operation policy;
- Establish cooperative links with librarians working in other parliamentary libraries, government depositories and professional library organizations;
- Catalogue and index existing parliamentary documents before placing them in the new library;
- Collect pertinent documents and publications currently available in Guyana;
- Employ a trained librarian to manage the parliamentary library;
- Obtain indexes, rather than sets of books, in order to conserve space;

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1 for further biographical information.

- Locate a temperature-controlled storage space for all new materials that are acquired for the library; and
- Equip the parliamentary library with at least one computer, a high-grade printer and a photocopier.

NDI views the assessment of current facilities and the production of this paper as the first phase of its assistance to the National Assembly.<sup>2</sup> The report will be circulated to MPs, government officials, parliamentary staff and other interested organizations both in Guyana and abroad.

In the second phase, NDI will continue to work closely with the clerk to implement suggested measures. As the clerk supervises remodeling of the proposed library area, NDI anticipates contracting a librarian, on a short-term basis, to assist the parliamentary staff. In this interim period, this librarian could recommend materials to be replaced, bound or discarded; assist the new librarian in cataloging existing material; help to collect materials available in Guyana; identify materials of historical value; and provide training to a designated librarian.

When the structural remodeling is completed, NDI expects to support the acquisition of basic research material for the library. Acquisitions will be based on recommendations outlined by Newton and Anderson. NDI will also continue to inform international organizations that may want to play a role in supporting the library's further development such as equipment procurement and collection acquisition.

## **II. PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY CONSULTATIONS**

From March 21 to 25 1996, NDI brought two research specialists, Michael Anderson, senior research librarian at the United States Library of Congress and Velma Newton, law librarian at the University of the West Indies in Barbados to Guyana to participate in a parliamentary library assessment mission. While in Guyana, Anderson and Newton interviewed Members of the Guyana National Assembly, government officials, political leaders and professional librarians. Both librarians found the Guyanese they met to be enthusiastic about establishing a parliamentary library and increasing the amount of information resources available to the Guyana library system as a whole.

Working closely with Clerk of the National Assembly Frank Narain and Deputy Clerk Sherlock Isaacs, Anderson and Newton conducted a complete assessment of: the information needs of Members of Parliament; the proposed library wing; resources and documents currently available to MPs; the organizational structure of the parliamentary staff; and existing relationships among the main libraries in Guyana.

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<sup>2</sup> For background information about NDI involvement in Guyana, see appendix 2.



During these consultations, Guyanese from many sectors expressed concerns relating to fiscal constraints that could threaten the establishment and sustainability of a parliamentary library. Although government officials recognize the need for expanding information resources within Guyana, they anticipate difficulties in executing such a commitment in light of other spending priorities. For example, the parliamentary library may face recruiting problems in attracting a candidate for the professional librarian position given the present low salaries available for public servants. In addition, Guyanese discussed staffing and training needs, the poor condition of existing parliamentary documents and the availability of these documents.

With the exception of cabinet members, parliamentarians do not have personal support staff to assist them with their legislative and research needs. Although the staff of the Parliament Office does provide support to all members of the National Assembly and its committees, its services are mainly clerical. The clerk of the National Assembly, who administers the Parliament Office, personally responds to requests from MPs and from anyone else, whether journalists or university students, to locate various government documents. However, the clerk is already overextended with his numerous other duties. In many ways, the clerk performs multiple roles, from document keeper to parliamentary historian.

In responding to requests, the clerk relies on memory to locate parliamentary documents, official publications and other reports. Currently, most of these items are stored in a loft of the upper floor of the parliament building that is not readily accessible by MPs. Furthermore, the assembly's own collection of documents is uncatalogued. The older documents that are of archival or historical value, particularly the *Guyana Hansard*, which contains the National Assembly's proceedings and debates, may be near extinction due to neglect unless there is a move to index or catalogue their contents soon.

Under Guyana's constitutional structure, most legislation is prepared by cabinet members before introduction to the assembly. Other parliamentarians wishing to obtain background information may be left empty handed as many current government documents and comparative information are not available. This resource vacuum poses a problem for those MPs who may be unfamiliar with a particular issue and lessens the ability of lawmakers to intervene constructively in policy debates.

### **III. THE GUYANA PARLIAMENT**

#### **Structure**

Since independence on May 26, 1966, Guyana has moved toward a hybrid form of presidential and parliamentary government systems. Executive power is concentrated in the hands of the president, who is leader of the party receiving the most votes in the legislative election, even if only a plurality. The president has the authority to appoint a prime minister with powers similar to that of a vice-president. The president also may select other vice-presidents and name the leader of the opposition, without any provision for votes of confirmation. In addition, cabinet members who are also appointed by the president, become non-voting members of the National

Assembly.

Legislative power rests with the National Assembly, a unicameral body comprising 65 elected members and such others who may become members, whether by virtue of election as speaker or appointment as a minister in the government. Fifty-three members are chosen by a system of proportional representation from national lists drawn up by the political parties. In an unusual feature of the system, the party leader, subsequent to an election, selects those candidates from the slate who will actually sit in the assembly. Thus, most members obtain seats at the discretion of their respective party leaders.

The remaining 12 MPs are elected indirectly. On the same day as national elections, citizens also vote for Regional Democratic Councils (RDC) in each of Guyana's 10 regions. The councils, elected in a proportional representation system, vary in size from 12 to 35 members and are responsible for carrying out central government initiatives and development tasks. Each RDC elects one person from among its members to serve as a Member of Parliament. The RDCs also each elect two members to sit on the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs. This 20-seat body then elects two of its members to Parliament. The term of office for members of parliament is five years, unless the assembly is dissolved earlier by the president.

### **Current Membership**

On October 5, 1992, Dr. Cheddi Jagan of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) was elected as Executive President of the Sixth Parliament. In addition, four parties were elected to serve in the National Assembly; the PPP/CIVIC alliance won 32 seats; the People's National Congress (PNC) garnered 30 seats; and the Working People's Alliance (WPA) won two seats and The United Force (TUF) won one seat.

Similar to members of other parliamentary systems, members of Guyana's Parliament may pursue other careers while holding public office. The present legislature embodies a variety of professional experience, including approximately 15 business people, seven farmers, six lawyers and four university lecturers.

The 1980 Constitution stipulates that the prime minister serve as head of the National Assembly. The speaker's duty is to chair and maintain orderly conduct in the proceedings of the assembly and its procedural committees. Choosing the speaker is the National Assembly's first order of business. The speaker need not be an elected member of the assembly. If the assembly should elect a speaker who is not an MP, as was the case of the current Sixth Parliament, that person becomes an MP by virtue of his election to the speaker post. However, the speaker's power to cast tie-breaking votes is expressly limited to those speakers who are elected from within the legislature. In circumstances where a speaker is not an elected MP, the motion fails on a tie vote.

### **Session Calendar**

The Constitution provides that the National Assembly determine its own calendar and that

“the assembly shall sit every day except Saturdays and Sundays.” Although the leader of the Parliament consults with the clerk of the assembly about pending business, it is the government that determines the schedule. As a result, the assembly meets irregularly and infrequently as issues arise and as the government calls it into session. The Sixth Parliament has met 80 times as of early May 1996, averaging about two days per month.

### **Legislative Procedure**

The president’s cabinet comprises 18 offices (including the prime minister, 16 senior ministers and the secretary to the cabinet), and constitutes the principal policy making body. Within the ministries or government departments, there are subcommittees of advisors that make recommendations on proposals which are drafted into bill format by the Attorney General’s office. Bills may be reviewed by the cabinet for any modifications before being presented to the assembly.

Although any parliamentarian may introduce a bill or propose a motion for debate in Guyana’s National Assembly, legislation is in fact introduced almost exclusively by the government. Furthermore, the assembly must seek the consent of the cabinet before proceeding with any legislation relating to taxes or public spending. Some issues, such as those relating to contracts or the ministries themselves, are handled within the cabinet and never debated in the assembly.

Before a bill is considered by parliamentarians, the clerk of the National Assembly confirms that the provisions of the bill are within the scope of its title, writes an explanatory introduction and checks for grammar. After this process is completed, the bill is placed on the Order Paper for a particular sitting and arrangements are made for it to be printed in the *Official Gazette* (published every Saturday). The clerk is also responsible for distributing copies of the bill to MPs. The bill is now ready to be introduced in the assembly.

At this stage, the speaker orders that the bill be read for the first time, a procedure that alerts MPs to legislation to be considered at a later sitting. According to the Standing Orders, no bill shall be read a second time until seven days have passed from the date of its publication in the *Gazette* and until it has been circulated to the MPs. In many instances, however, non-cabinet members are not provided copies of the bill until it is read for the second time. It has become customary for MPs to receive a copy of the bill the day it is being debated, a practice that disadvantages those unfamiliar with the issue.

After a second reading, a bill is submitted to the entire assembly, known as the Committee of the Whole Assembly, for consideration. Unless the assembly refers the bill to a committee, any amendments to the bill are addressed before it is read for the third and final time. Upon the third reading, the speaker proposes the question that the bill be passed without debate. Legislation adopted by the assembly is then submitted to the clerk who delivers it to the president for his approval or disapproval.

A bill can become a law only if the president agrees to sign it. If the president withholds

his assent, it will be returned to the National Assembly with a message stating the reasons for his disapproval. If two-thirds of the National Assembly determines to return the bill again to the president, he or she must assent to it within 21 days, unless the president dissolves the Parliament before that time. Thus, a legislative override of a presidential veto could prompt new elections. Such elections would be both for president and the legislature. It is possible under the present Constitution that a president would not command a majority in the legislature; thus, the legislature might amend a government proposal to such an extent that the executive could not abide it. This political situation has not yet arisen and no bills have ever been returned.

### **Committee System**

The assembly has had no permanent committees with subject jurisdiction that relate to departments of the government. However, it does have sessional committees that are mainly concerned with procedural issues. The most active sessional committee in the current legislature is the Public Accounts Committee, which examines the mechanisms and management system for the expenditure of public monies.

Other sessional committees in the assembly include: the Standing Orders Committee, to consider changes in the standing orders; the Committee of Selection, to select the membership of other committees; the Committee on Privileges, to consider various matters referred to it by the National Assembly; and the Assembly Committee, to consider matters of comfort and convenience for Members of Parliament. In addition to the sessional committees, the assembly convenes as the Committee of Supply in order to consider the estimates of revenues and expenditure for a financial year.

Special ad-hoc committees, which may be appointed to consider particular pieces of legislation or other issues designated by the assembly, play a crucial role in the legislative process. If so authorized, these committees can hear outside witnesses.

### **Parliament Office**

All business for members is conducted through the Parliament Office which comprises the clerk, deputy clerk and a team of 32 staff who handle six support areas, including Registry and Typing, Clerical and Office Support, the Sergeant-at-Arms and Operatives, Personnel, Accounts, and Reportorial. The positions of the clerk and deputy clerk of the National Assembly are established by the Constitution and are not public service offices. Appointments to these two positions are made by the president with the advice of the speaker. Their terms are determined by a special commission established by the Constitution for this purpose. All other parliamentary staff are appointed by the Public Service Commission after consultation with the clerk. Many times, the clerk is delegated the power to appoint staff.

The current clerk has served the assembly more than 30 years and is highly respected by all MPs for his nonpartisan service. Before appointment to his position, the deputy clerk served as a public servant for about 15 years. He handles all financial matters relating to the assembly.

The parliamentary staff provide support services to the MPs and parliamentary committees. Their duties include making preparations for sittings and committee meetings, providing members with various documents, keeping financial records, and handling the allowances and benefits provided to the members. Of these staff members, seven assist the clerk with the administrative processing of parliamentary documents, which includes recording minutes, and proofreading, printing and circulating all bills. The extent of their services is examined in section five of this paper.

Currently, six parliamentary staff positions are vacant. In interviews, the clerk noted the urgency in filling these vacancies so that his office may more adequately serve the growing needs of the MPs.

### **Existing Facilities**

The National Assembly meets in a two-story brick building located in the center of Georgetown. Since it was constructed in 1832, the building has accommodated several government ministries, departments and offices. At present, the parliament building houses the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs, the Race Relations Commission, the Public Utilities Commission and the Supreme Court temporary library.

MPs have never had personal offices or mailboxes in the building. In fact, existing facilities for members are minimal. For instance, there are two aging photocopiers (only one of which is capable of handling large jobs) and one facsimile machine for all of the support offices. The clerk and deputy clerk are the only staff who have computers and printers (both are 386 models hooked up to dot matrix printers). For the most part, the parliamentary staff still use typewriters to produce minutes, Order Papers and legislation. Limited knowledge of word processing contributes to the scant use of computers, though some staff have taken courses to increase their skills in this area.

The only office in the parliament building with modern facilities is the Reportorial section. This office, which was recently refurbished, is in charge of transcribing the *Hansards*. It is equipped with four computers and two dot matrix printers. In addition, the equipment is hooked up to surge protectors and computer backup units to protect against damages resulting from frequent power outages. However, the staff indicated that their work is hampered by technical problems with the equipment.

The National Assembly has designated only one room for committee meetings. The committee room, also used as a refreshment area during breaks in sittings, is furnished with a large table that seats about 15 people. Occasionally, the assembly chamber is used for committee meetings.

MPs do not have access to a library containing background or comparative information on issues of national importance. As described in the following section, there are only a few resource materials located in an enclosed loft in the parliament building.

#### IV. EXISTING DOCUMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

The parliamentary document loft, which is supposed to serve as a depository facility for all parliamentary materials, government reports and other pertinent publications, is missing important items from its small collection, including several ministry reports and laws of Guyana. Assembly proceedings and debates from the period 1963 to present have not been transcribed into the *Hansard* and are located in another area of the parliament building. Copies of the new publication, *Inside Parliament*, are usually kept in the clerk's personal office. Also, there are virtually no books or periodicals of general interest, and no librarian to catalogue existing resources or update the collection. The following is a list of items stored in this room.<sup>3</sup>

- Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, 1980 revision  
(It is not known what or where prior constitutional documents are specifically housed or located.)
- Standing Orders
- Order Papers
- Supplementary Order Papers
- Minutes
- Bills
- Budget Speeches
- Estimates (Fiscal Budget)
- Financial Papers (Supplementary Estimates)
- Notice Papers
- Reports
- Other Documents Laid
- Official Gazettes
- Statements by Ministers
- Replies to Questions
- Laws of Guyana
- *Hansard/Inside Parliament*

#### Environment

Built to accommodate an expanding collection, the storage room space measures roughly 20 feet by 25 feet. The ceiling is low (6.6 feet) and one end of the room is under 5.5 feet. All wooden shelves and cabinets built into the surrounding walls, and are at full capacity. There are no working desks and chairs for document room patrons. One wooden desk and a few wooden chairs appear to be used by parliamentary staff only.

In addition, the room is not climatically controlled and is always warm (mid-80s) due to its proximity to the roof, which acts as a solar oven for the documents. Present ventilation occurs

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<sup>3</sup> *A Handbook for Members of the National Assembly*, Frank Narain, October 1992. pp. 41-46.

via window openings, which also allows moisture to enter the premises. Lighting is dim and limited to centrally located sections of the room.

However, the room's most striking feature is the apparent lack of orderliness and cleanliness of all the documents. There is widespread bookworm and water damage to portions of the existing collection. A corner section of the roof suffers from a major leakage problem. As a result, there are *British Hansards* (from the 1800s to the early 1900s) that are so water damaged they are black with mold and cannot be persevered at any price or with any modern technology.

## **Condition**

The bound sets of Government Estimates, from 1953 to present, and the *Guyana Hansard* from Guyana's colonial era to 1962 are in relatively good condition. However, there is limited catalogue management of the aforementioned documents. There are no catalogue publications that list past documents, nor is there any catalogue of the existing collection.

The sergeant-at-arms bears the major responsibility for overseeing parliamentary documents. Despite little formal training in the administration of such material, he has organized the room into sections and locates needed documents principally by memory. This room is not habitually used by anyone other than the Sergeant and his immediate subordinate.

The *Guyana Hansard* can be found in two principal sites within the parliament building. As reported previously, the historical bound volumes are located in the loft document room. A collection of untranscribed notes, dating from 1963 to present, is located in the back room of the Parliament Office's Reportorial Section. It is subdivided along chronological lines and housed in a wall unit similar to a postal office arrangement, small shelf openings containing legal-size documents. Unfortunately, poor storage and the ravages of time has taken their toll on these 30 years worth of parliamentary records, all of which may be lost unless they are cataloged and protected.

Although the *Guyana Hansard* has not been published for several years, a private business was granted a contract by the Parliament Office and has begun producing issues of *Inside Parliament* for the Parliament and public. The only difference between these issues and the traditional *Hansard* is the format. Publishers of *Inside Parliament* (called the "new *Hansard*") claim that its format is more appealing to the younger generation of Guyanese. The publication is available in most major bookstores. The company appears to be under no regulation or contractual mandate to maintain, conserve or index any electronic data tapes or records for future use or parliamentary archival purposes.

According to the clerk, issues of *Inside Parliament* are intermittently collected and stored. Thus, the Parliament Office does not keep under its supervision a complete set of recent *Inside Parliament* issues and may have to search elsewhere should a member request information located in such documents. The lack of a central location for all parliamentary documents and other pertinent government publications impedes efforts of the Parliament Office to deliver

information to MPs.

## V. DELIVERY OF INFORMATION

### **Parliamentary Libraries in the Commonwealth: an Overview**

The library is the primary agent for the provision of comparative information to its users on facts, events and the latest results of academic research. The parliamentary library is a special library serving a particular and well-defined clientele that is, Members and their staff. In addition, it usually supports the institution as a whole and sometimes plays a curatorial role with regard to its archives. A library allows an MP to obtain relevant information and use it in plenary debate, committee sessions or in party meetings to articulate his or her vision for a particular policy.

In some of the larger or wealthier countries of the Commonwealth, namely Canada, Great Britain and India, the libraries that have been established for the use of parliamentarians, both at the federal and provincial levels, are well stocked and organized, offering reference and research services. For instance, in Ottawa, Canada the parliamentary library contains a comprehensive collection in which material can be found on almost any topic under debate. The Parliament of India in New Delhi enjoys the best stocked library in the Commonwealth, and has established the world's most extensive bureau for training of parliamentarians. Parliamentary staff of all the state legislatures in India and as well as from other Commonwealth countries are trained here. The House of Commons Library at Westminster in London, England holds an extensive collection and it conducts training for parliamentarians from other Commonwealth countries.

Mid-range parliamentary libraries exist in Africa and some other developing countries where the colonial powers built fairly substantial buildings to house parliamentary offices. The best stocked and arranged of these libraries is probably in Zimbabwe. Other countries such as the United Republic of Tanzania are also trying to improve their collections. The parliamentary library in Tanzania is well stocked, with books on parliamentary procedure, periodicals both of general interest and of special interest to parliamentarians, complete sets of the country's statutes and parliamentary records. Typically, the mid-range libraries have small budgets. Therefore, much of their collection development is through gifts. These libraries emphasize the acquisition and use of local materials -- collections of *Hansards* and of legislation.

The smaller parliamentary libraries, such as those in the Commonwealth Caribbean and the South Sea Islands, usually comprises a few works on parliamentary procedure and the Parliament's own publications. The parliamentary library in the Red House, Port of Spain, Trinidad contains among the largest collection of books in the Commonwealth Caribbean, about 10,000 volumes. Jamaica probably holds the next largest collection, comprising books on parliamentary procedure and periodicals, many of which are gifts from other parliaments and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Britain. In Barbados, the library, like many others in the Caribbean is small and is full of books and magazines.

Most of the parliaments in which these libraries are located cannot boast their own



buildings: in Guyana, Parliament shares its building with departments of government and various statutory organizations; in St. Lucia and Grenada the two houses of Parliament share a single chamber and only occupy part of the building; in St. Vincent, the unicameral chamber shares the Court House building with the judiciary and the Supreme Court Registry; in Bermuda the Parliament and the Supreme Court share a building; and in Trinidad the Parliament and its library are located in Red House, along with other offices, including those of the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs. In Barbados, the Cayman Islands and Jamaica, the parliaments do not share their quarters with other government offices, but this was not always the case.

### *Staff*

Each of the larger libraries maintains staff to match its size and services. The House of Commons library has a staff of about 170, which include economists, statisticians and lawyers. The same is true of Canada where a large research staff respond to specific requests for information by parliamentarians and prepare papers on topics that are likely to be debated. The library in India performs identical services.

However, few of the mid-range and smaller libraries have trained librarians, library assistants, or specialists on the staff. Most are in the hands of untrained clerks or office attendants who are regarded as "good" because they have memorized where documents are shelved. These officers usually report to the clerk of Parliament.

In countries with smaller libraries, it is customary for government ministry staff to perform research for government ministries while opposition parliamentarians are left to fend for themselves. The library in Tanzania is probably atypical as two trained librarians and about two library assistants manage the parliamentary collection. The chief librarian holds a Masters in Library Science and has received training in parliamentary libraries in Canada and Great Britain. Trinidad employs two librarians and two assistants in the parliamentary library. In Barbados, the parliamentary library is staffed by three persons, two of whom are trained library assistants, but none is a qualified librarian. These library assistants report that the most popular requests solicit copies of government departmental reports and previous proceedings of the Houses of Parliament.

### *Organization of Collections*

Most of the larger libraries have developed their own schemes for the organization of the collections. The House of Commons Library uses both the Dewey Decimal System and an in-house classification scheme. In India and Africa there is a fondness for the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme, which is also evident in the parliamentary libraries.

In most Commonwealth Caribbean libraries, the collections are not organized according to any internationally known classification scheme and do not have card catalogues. Book lists of books and card indexes to the *Hansard* are often the only guides to materials in the collections, and the books and other documents are arranged on shelves alphabetically or by type of publication. In Barbados, older parliamentary records are sent to the archives department, which

is housed in a relatively spacious complex. In most other countries in the region, older materials are housed in the parliamentary library, often in the most unsuitable of conditions. This is the case in Guyana.

### **Services Provided in Guyana**

The Parliament Office, under the direction of the clerk, provides support services to the members of the Guyana National Assembly and its select committees. From maintaining the physical structure of the parliament building to overseeing the binding of parliamentary documents, the staff seem to do it all. In many ways, they function as a *de facto* staff for the MPs providing clerical support, gathering information and serving as parliamentary historians.

However, given the clerk's expanding duties, limited technical and professional staff, and fiscal restraints, parliamentary duties may soon overwhelm him and his staff. The clerk's office may have to choose between providing clerical support and operating a documentation depository, which coordinates and oversees the printing of various parliamentary documents; distributes/sells such documents; and maintains an archival record of such documents. Currently, the clerk's office has neither the technical and professional staff nor the fiscal support successfully perform all of these duties.

### **Providing Information to Parliamentarians**

Few mechanisms are in place for providing parliamentarians with information. Currently, MPs request information directly from the clerk. The clerk, who also handles requests from lawyers, judges and university students in addition to his already burdensome workload, relies on the sergeant-at-arms to locate historical documents stored in the loft of the parliament building. Recent legislation and parliamentary reports are often reserved in the clerk's personal office for quick retrieval. There are no procedures, however, for researching detailed background or comparative information.

To acquire information outside the Parliament Office, non-cabinet members must rely on other professional sources or friends. Ministers benefit from information provided by their staff members and advisory groups.

## **VI. LIBRARIES WITHIN GUYANA**

To determine those resources that are available for parliamentarians to research and develop legislation in Guyana, NDI's assessment team collected information on the collections located in the Attorney General's Chambers, the Court of Appeal, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Supreme Court Complex, the Bank of Guyana, the CARICOM Documentation Center, the National Archives, the National Library and the University of Guyana

Library.<sup>4</sup>

In general libraries in Guyana are underfunded and understaffed. As a result, cataloging of collections is limited, and acquisitions have been restricted in recent years. Most libraries use the Dewey Decimal system or the U.S. Library of Congress cataloging system. The USAID-sponsored Caribbean Justice Improvement Project is working to enhance the availability of legal reference material in Guyana.

## **VII. THE PROPOSED LIBRARY**

The following recommendations are based on conclusions reached by the international librarians who conducted the assessment mission. These suggestions represent the ideal solutions and are subject to revision and amendment.

### **Physical Location and Layout**

The best location for the library is the western wing, ground floor of the parliamentary building. At present, most of this wing is unoccupied; the remainder houses National Congress of Local Democratic Organ's (NCLDO) offices. It is proposed that the NCLDO be allowed to continue using two of the rooms that it now occupies until an alternative location is found for its operations.

Before housing the library in this part of the building, arrangements must be made to repair the roof and flooring and an architect and/or engineer must certify that the floor can support a load of 180 pounds per square foot. The Fire Service Department should be asked to recommend the appropriate number of powder and water extinguishers to be acquired. Windows should be secured, but with provision that shutters, and probably the windows themselves be able to be opened during blackout periods. Another exit other than the main exit/entrance should be provided for emergencies. An existing exit at the back of the wing should be clearly identified as an emergency exit. In addition, the area to be used for the library should be air-conditioned, electrical outlets placed in all the rooms, with several in the reading room, and adequate lighting provided throughout the premises.

Space is needed for the following: a librarian's office; a workroom in which new and other unprocessed items can be temporarily shelved; an area for shelving pre-1970 items now housed in a loft of the upper floor of the parliament building; an area for shelving new and post-1970 materials; a large reading room; a newsroom for parliamentarians; a book repair room; and two bathrooms.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>See appendix 3 for descriptions of each library.

<sup>5</sup>See appendix 4 for measurements.

## **Governance**

### ***Library Committee***

While it is anticipated that lawmakers will comprise the primary clientele of the parliamentary library, others, especially University of Guyana students, may seek permission to use it as well. Since decisions regarding any library that may serve a variety of users should not be made by one individual, it is recommended that a library committee be established to oversee the library's direction and render major policy decisions. The committee would comprise members from the parties represented in Parliament, the clerk of Parliament and the librarian.

The library committee would: prepare an annual budget; make recommendations regarding staffing; and establish operating policies to include opening hours, categories of users, maintenance of library facilities and inventory, penalties for breach of regulations, book selection and ordering, and photocopying charges. The clerk of Parliament and the librarian should be *ex-officio* members of the library committee.

### ***Rules and regulations***

Every library should establish its own operating rules and regulations. Regulations should be made by the library committee, and should provide hours of operation, procedures for categories of users, loans, general discipline (*e.g.* no smoking, no carrying of large bags in the library) and charges for photocopying services for non-parliamentary members or staff where these are provided. In addition, the regulations could provide penalties for their breach. The regulations should be posted in the library for all patrons to see.

### ***Reference***

As a general rule, parliamentary libraries are reference libraries only. Sole copies of many items are consulted by too many, too often to be allowed to be checked out. Even photocopying is prohibitively expensive in a government-funded library operating under financial constraints. However, the librarian should have the discretion to make short-term, overnight loans in very special cases. The guidelines for defining a special case should be determined by the library committee.

### **Staff**

The level of staffing in a library depends on the volume of books, number of users, hours of operation, layout and level of service provided. A minimum of two persons is usually recommended. Most of the parliamentarians interviewed believed that the person in charge of the proposed library should be a trained librarian.

Legislative libraries tend to be labor intensive because of their active role as information centers. Therefore when possible, these types of libraries should be staffed by: a librarian to oversee the library's research assistant with a degree in the social sciences, but who is not

necessarily a qualified librarian; a library assistant; a library attendant; and cleaning staff. In this case, it is recommended that an initial staff consist of five persons, including: a qualified librarian; a library assistant/stenographer clerk; a library attendant; a part-time custodian and a book repair assistant who, initially, could work on a part-time basis. Another research assistant may be subsequently added if the librarian and library assistant cannot handle all the requests for information.

### ***Librarian***

The librarian should be an *ex-officio* member of the library committee, and in this capacity would assist in policy making. He/she would make recommendations for book purchases to the library committee through the clerk of Parliament, to whom the librarian should report on a day-to-day basis. The librarian would be responsible for establishing systems for serials control; designing the physical form of the catalogues; subject headings and filing rules; maintaining authority files; classifying and cataloguing new additions; creating policies on binding procedures and the provision of reference services; indexing parliamentary publications; monitoring expenditure; determining guidelines on storing or disposing of records and statistics; and preparing the annual report on the library's activities. Undertaking research for MPs would form an important part of his/her duties.

The librarian should possess a recognized qualification in librarianship such as the Bachelor in Library Science (BLS), the Associateship of the Library Association of Great Britain or a diploma in Librarianship. He/she should have at least three years experience working in a library, preferably in the reference division and under the supervision of a qualified and experienced librarian.

In choosing the chief librarian, due consideration must be given to those personal qualities beyond professional fitness as well. The ideal person should not only possess the necessary academic qualifications, he/she should be pro-active, energetic, flexible, resourceful, and exhibit a great deal of initiative when seeking to answer patron inquiries. Knowledge of computer applications in libraries would be an asset.

### ***Library assistant***

The library assistant's duties would include: assisting visitors; typing correspondence and catalogue cards; undertaking simple, descriptive cataloguing; filing and affixing book pockets and labels; listing books and incoming serials; and distributing mail.

The library assistant should possess a minimum of 3 Caribbean Examination Certificates (CXC), including English language, and should be able to type or wordprocess, be familiar with spreadsheets, perform simple accounts and ensure the maintenance of accurate records. In addition, he/she should be willing to learn how to operate any equipment acquired for the library.

### ***Library attendant***

The main duties of the library attendant are re-shelving books and staffing the desk at the entrance to ensure that only legitimate patrons enter and that departing clientele are not leaving the premises with unauthorized material. The library attendant should possess an aptitude for operating equipment, and should be prepared to learn to handle any equipment acquired for the library. The library attendant's qualifications should be the same as those of an office assistant within the Guyana public service -- a primary school diploma.

### ***Part-time custodian***

Often libraries neglect conventional maintenance chores, such as cleaning and dusting. A part-time cleaner should be provided to regularly clean library floors, bathrooms and offices, and dust the books. This person could be someone already on the parliament building's staff who is assigned to assist in the library for a few hours each day. The part-time maid could also run errands for the library.

### ***Book repair assistant***

A book repair assistant could bind volumes of the laws of Guyana, *Hansards*, other parliamentary records and pamphlet material for the library and undertake book repairs. The qualifications for this position parallel those for the library attendant, but would also include training in binding and book repairs.

### **Staff Selection and Training**

In Guyana, the low salaries accorded government workers often propel qualified personnel to seek jobs in the local private sector, thus depriving government of a skilled pool of human resources. While not a condition peculiar to Guyana, it is a particularly serious problem here. At present, the Parliament Office has a staff of 32, although positions are available for 38. Some of the clerk's staff may be interested in working in the proposed parliamentary library, but they would require training. Both the library assistant and library attendant could be recruited from this source and trained locally. In the event that existing staff are uninterested in working in the proposed library, the posts, when confirmed, should be advertised.

If no suitable candidates apply for the positions, a likely event given the shortage of trained librarians in the country, consideration should be given to recruiting a person qualified to enter a library school, and to providing financial assistance for training him/her as a librarian. The BLS or MLS courses offered at the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies, Jamaica offer the most economical route to obtaining library qualifications. Courses are also offered at a number of library schools in Canada, Great Britain and the United States.

The government of Guyana may find that it is not in the position to hire a qualified librarian and otherwise fund the position of librarian immediately or obtain assistance in finding a

trained librarian from overseas. In such a case, the government should consider hiring a Guyanese who would easily qualify as a library assistant, paying that person comparable to one of the higher salaries provided within the Parliament Office. While this would provide a short-term solution, the long-term objective should be to provide training in librarianship at an overseas institution for the incumbent.

## **The Collection**

### ***Recommended stock***

Staff and collection form the foundation of a library. The collection of a parliamentary library should mirror the information needs of legislators, and must be organized in such a manner that relevant materials are available to readily respond to parliamentary inquiries.

The five primary categories of materials that must be represented are: parliamentary documents, official publications, reference books, current affairs material and general books on subjects germane to the legislature's statutory responsibilities.

### ***Parliamentary documents***

Parliamentary documents are generated by the Parliament of Guyana itself, including: rules of procedure and conduct of business; the record of the proceedings of debates or *Hansards*; copies of questions addressed to Ministers that are "taken as read" on the floor and may not appear in the printed records of debates; booklets about the structure, operations and facilities of the legislature; a directory of members (currently unavailable); and copies of any reports laid in the National Assembly.

Larger parliamentary libraries customarily acquire the records of other parliaments on an exchange basis. However, these collections grow rapidly and often take up more space than is justified by their utility to the library. Newton recommends that the parliamentary library concentrate initially on assembling its own materials and later the library committee can decide whether or not to acquire records of other selected parliaments.

### ***Official publications***

When considering the collection of official documents, priority should be given to assembling a complete set of the country's laws -- both acts and subsidiary legislation, and copies of the *Official Gazette* of Guyana. The legislation should be collected and bound into annual volumes, affixed with typed tables of content.

On a selective basis, the legislation of Commonwealth countries, especially Great Britain and the Caribbean may be acquired. For Caribbean legislation, it may be easier, and more economical in terms of space, to purchase indexes to laws, which are published annually by the Faculty of Law Library in Barbados rather than to try to acquire the revised laws and updates. Once indexes are held, it is easy to obtain information on legislation passed. Copies can then be

acquired, possibly from the CARICOM Documentation Center or from the Faculty of Law Library.

### ***Reference books***

Members of Parliament require accurate, relevant and timely data; outdated sources are useless. Thus, it is of critical importance that the reference collection be comprehensively and systematically updated. It should include encyclopedias, dictionaries, parliamentary handbooks, and procedural manuals as well as other sorts of handbooks and manuals, directories, yearbooks and almanacs, indexes and catalogues, statistical compilations, legal source materials, biographical works, quotation source books, standard bibliographies, atlases and travel guides.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Current affairs materials***

In order to legislate, members must stay abreast of the latest national and world news. Consequently, current affairs material is among the most popular reference material sought by MPs. Parliamentarians usually find national and regional newspapers, local magazines and professional journals, news digests and law reviews particularly informative. To the extent permitted by budgetary constraints, legislative libraries should subscribe to foreign newspapers and journals. However, these are expensive options, and consideration should be given to exploring resources available on the Internet. It is hoped the establishment of a parliamentary library will coincide with access to Internet, thus opening for the librarian a wealth of resource and reference material to provide library patrons.

### ***General books***

Books, though less topical than materials identified above, should form an integral part of a basic collection in a parliamentary library. Books on parliamentary procedure, national and world history, law and constitutions, economic and social development and political science, foreign affairs and international trade should be collected in a fairly comprehensive way. The library should also try to provide complementary reading for Members of Parliament. Current periodicals and newspapers could be displayed.

### **Commentary on Collection Establishment**

One of the greatest challenges facing the librarian organizing the collection will be acquiring, assembling, listing and binding the volumes of laws that constitute the country's entire statute book. Collecting published annual departmental reports will also pose a challenge, and may necessitate researching government departments and the holdings of several libraries to obtain a complete record.

In light of frequent electrical black-outs in Guyana, purchasing materials in audiovisual

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<sup>6</sup> See appendix 5 for a list of recommended reference books.



format is not recommended at this stage, but as a long-term objective the library must consider maintaining parliamentary records *i.e.*, the *Hansards* in non-print format for archival purpose. Should the Archives Department obtain financial assistance for microfilming some of its collection, older volumes of *Hansards* will be included. In relation to current volumes of *Hansards*, copies of the diskettes used to produce the printed copies could be stored in the library.

### **Classification and Cataloguing**

Most libraries classify their non-fiction collection by subject using several well-known classification schemes. The National Library of Guyana, like many public libraries in the Commonwealth, use the Dewey decimal classification system, which is a general categorization design covering the whole field of knowledge. The libraries at the University of Guyana and the Bank of Guyana use the Library of Congress classification scheme, which is also a general system that is more flexible than Dewey. It is also used in more academic libraries than Dewey. No special scheme has been developed for parliamentary libraries; most of these libraries employ designs devised by their staff, or use these arrangements along with one of the international system such as Dewey or Library of Congress. The assessment team recommends that the parliamentary library use the more flexible Library of Congress scheme. This method is initially expensive, but is relatively easy to use, and need not be replaced annually.

Catalogues and indexes are records created by librarians to enable readers to survey the library's resources and to locate the information needed. Classification, described above, ensures that books on the same subject are shelved together for easy access. Cataloguing provides information on important attributes of the book such as its author, title, edition, date of publication, whether it is part of a series, number of pages, etc. The "call number" of a book, which is determined by the classification scheme, usually forms part of the data found in a catalogue entry. Very small libraries often use a catalogue in book form for space reasons, but a book catalogue presents serious drawbacks in that it is difficult to estimate the amount of space that will be needed between each book entry for new volumes on the same subject. Card catalogues are much better than book format in that they are easily expanded, and the information can be typed and neatly presented.

Normally, the catalogue in a library comprises two parts -- author/title and subject. Without a comprehensive catalogue, a large portion of the information contained in the collection is lost because its existence is unknown. Library staff will not always remember whether a library has a certain book, and they will definitely not recall all of the topics contained in that book unless it has been catalogued and classified.

Alternatively, a decision may be made to choose a computerized retrieval system such as Micro ISIS software for cataloguing materials. In this case, the staff or users familiar with the program can search the library's collection through a database. In a country with frequent power outages, a card catalogue is also maintained, even if items are available on an on-line database. The CARICOM Documentation Center can provide the pros and cons of establishing an on-line catalogue using Micro ISIS, or a manual system within the Guyana context.

## **Records and Procedures**

Advice on records and procedures is available in standard books on librarianship, and include establishing a visible index to record serials, and keeping accounting records, order records, cataloguing statistics, user statistics and inter-library loan records. The accounting records are of particular importance, because the library often has to comply with the guidelines stipulated by its parent institution, and those of the companies from which it purchases materials. The preparation of a library procedures manual should be among the library's first orders of business followed by an orientation for new staff members. Training could be conducted by the Guyana Library Association or a Caribbean library institution.

## **Equipment**

Recommended equipment includes a typewriter, computer, printer and other items needed for the efficient functioning of the library. A manual typewriter is an absolute necessity in a country that experiences frequent power outages and it performs many tasks that a computer cannot accomplish. However, it is strongly recommended that the library obtain at least one computer, high-grade printer and a protective virus software package. Laptop computers (also known as "notebooks") should not be considered; they are not as durable as desktop computers and they are too easily "misplaced."

A photocopier would also be a valuable addition to the library and could generate enough income to pay for its maintenance. Of course, procedures would have to be established to ensure the proper accounting of copying jobs. Copying should be authorized by a designated officer, and should be initialed by the staff member who requests it. However, before purchasing any library equipment the library must evaluate its reliability and level of difficulty to operate. In addition, local technical support and a maintenance contract should be in place.

Environmental concerns play a major part in equipment purchase deliberations. Electronic equipment (*e.g.*, personal computers, photocopiers, printers) function excellently for extended periods in a reasonable and constant environment. Thus, any wide fluctuations in temperature, relative humidity and sunlight can greatly compromise the reliability such equipment. Air conditioners or air fans can improve the existing conditions. Also, in order to protect equipment against damages caused by power outages, consideration should be given to purchasing items such as surge protectors, stabilizers and uninterruptible power supply (UPS) units, and investigating insurance coverage.

Equipment manuals should be placed in one central location and loan cards completed for anyone removing the manuals. Also, anyone receiving official or professional advice regarding equipment should be encouraged to type a simple summary of learned key facts to share with management and fellow staff.

Future resources to be considered include: a computer network, commercial databases, Internet access, regional (West Indies) library/information networking, facsimile machines with

international lines and electronic modems.<sup>7</sup>

### **Supplies and Furniture**

The recommended supplies are basic to daily operations of a small library. Furniture includes chairs, desks and tables for readers and staff, catalogue cabinets and filing cabinets.<sup>8</sup>

### **Budget Requirements**

Budget components comprise the costs of acquiring and binding local parliamentary and other documents, and purchasing books from overseas, office supplies, equipment and furniture, to which should be added 25 percent for inflation, postage and other contingencies.

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<sup>7</sup> See appendix 6 for a list of recommended equipment.

<sup>8</sup> See appendices 7 and 8 for lists of recommended supplies and furniture.

**Estimated Costs for Proposed Parliamentary Library  
Collection and Equipment – Year One**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Guyanese dollars</b>	<b>US dollars</b>
Books	2,800,000	20,000
Shipping and handling	420,000	3,000
Photocopying and binding	560,000	4,000
Subscriptions and memberships	196,000	1,400
Library supplies	490,000	3,500
Equipment:		
2 Desktop computers	560,000	4,000
1 LaserJet printer	70,000	500
1 Fax machine	28,000	200
1 Photocopier	168,000	1,200
1 Typewriter	14,000	100
4 Airconditioning units	350,000	2,500
8 Standing fans	44,800	320
4 5000VA stabilizers	159,600	1,140
1 600VA-900VA stabilizer	23,100	165
1 350VA stabilizer	14,000	100
1 UPS unit (650 watts)	70,000	500
1 Generator (5500 watts)	420,000	3,000
Equipment supplies	84,000	600
Furniture	560,000	4,000
Shelving	420,000	3,000
<b>APPROXIMATE COST</b>	<b>7,451,500</b>	<b>53,225</b>

Add 25% for price increases:  $6,288,465 \times 0,25 = 1,572,116$  Guyanese dollars (US\$10,995)

The exchange rate used is US\$1 = G\$140

For more information and breakdown of the figures see appendices 5-8.