



PARLIAMENTS UNITED TO ACHIEVE E AND D EXCELLENCE

Over 90 parliamentary library and research staff from around the world met in the first week on May in Canberra to talk about challenges, innovative activities and their future at was the first international parliamentary symposium in Australia. Roxanne Missingham reports.

With support from the International Federation of International Library Associations (IFLA) Section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments, Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Australasia, Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) Australian National University, AusAID, NZAID, and the Department of the House of Representatives, funded attendance to the symposium was offered to all Pacific Parliaments, ensuring that the maximum regional impact.

The event proved a fabulous opportunity to work with many organisations and experience a rich and diverse program, including the *Good Governance and Freedom From Corruption* workshop held by the IFLA Committee on Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression and another workshop focused on the United Nations Depository Program for the region (see separate story).

We also enjoyed a trade fair, enabling participants to talk directly to resource and technology vendors, capacity building sessions focusing on client communication, web cataloguing and intranet and website management.

The program featured presentations by more than 25 speakers from parliaments around the world and meetings of the Association of Parliamentary Librarians of Asia and the Pacific (APLAP) and the Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Australasia (APLA).

By the end of three action-packed days, we felt enthused and invigorated. Parliamentary libraries and research services were strengthened through increased knowledge and skills by providing an opportunity for sharing information, knowledge and experiences and, in particular, Pacific parliamentary staff built a stronger network through working together.

We agreed the capacity of parliamentary staff had been increased through training in information technology and service delivery and that sharing this information would directly encourage innovation in these areas in parliaments around the world.

Another important benefit is that cooperation between the IFLA Section and the Global Centre for ICT in Parliaments and Inter-Parliamentary Union was increased, particularly in support for the Pacific Parliamentary Network.

Importantly, APLAP was reactivated after not meeting for six years with a new committee headed by Widya Chalid from Indonesia. The next meeting will be in Malaysia, with a strong commitment to continue to build skills and support member libraries.

Future activities following the symposium will include publication of a manual on the capacity building sessions and a CD-ROM of all presentations to be supplied to attendees. Support will also be given to the organisers of the next Pacific parliamentary library and research event.

For all of us the opportunity to talk to colleagues and share experiences provides a wonderful opportunity to grow by 'standing on the shoulders of others'. Perhaps more importantly, it builds relationships where we can continue to support each other. Already since the symposium plans are afoot to implement a web catalogue session in the Pacific.

Many library and research services have developed innovative ways of delivering services using the online environment – be it blogs, facebook, online training, online mapping or other services. You can see the papers and presentations online at symposium2011.aph.gov.au/program.htm and photos from the event can be viewed at picasaweb.google.com/the.library.world.

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