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Partnering at the Canadian Library of Parliament

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ABSTRACT:

This paper discusses various types of partnerships and raises basic issues and questions for parliamentary libraries when considering partnering. It provides a compendium of formal and informal partnerships engaged in by the Canadian Library of Parliament and includes information on how the Library works with other organizations --- other libraries, consortia, government departments, private organizations, parliamentary partners, etc -- in carrying out various tasks and assisting others. While much of the partnering is done on an informal basis, the paper illustrates how the Library provides services and works in conjunction with others -- cooperating with other organizations inside and outside Parliament. It points to the Library's efforts to assist others through library, research and public outreach programs. The paper also suggests ideas for other partnering opportunities.

PARTNERING AT THE CANADIAN LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

PART A. INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Excerpts adapted and revised from a preliminary report prepared for the Canadian Library of Parliament by SynParSys Consulting Inc. Ottawa, April 21, 2007

WHAT IS PARTNERING

A “partner” is defined as “a person who takes part in some activity in common with another or others”¹.

“Partnering” is a general term that may also include sponsorship, collaboration, or a strategic alliance.

Common characteristics of partnerships are:

- joint programs, activities or transactions
- two or more independent organizations
- an agreement
- combining inputs
- sharing risks
- sharing benefits.

A “sponsorship” is a business relationship in which two entities exchange things of value. This value can be financial, in-kind, or benefits related to visibility/exposure, publicity or market reach. It also involves a display of affiliation that stops short of product endorsement. That is, the two parties to a sponsorship visibly associate their “good name” with each other.

In terms of publicity, sponsorship aims at having a deeper and longer-lasting impact than mere advertising. Sponsorship is often managed as a long-term relationship that aims at “branding” of the sponsor in a new way. Associating with another’s good name could carry strong positive connotations; at the same time, there is a high level of risk if one of the associated parties loses its status, or if the clientele decide that the association is inappropriate.

Partners have shared objectives whereas in a *sponsorship*, there is no intrinsic relationship between the partners’ objectives. Partnering is a two-sided relationship; it assumes an agreement has been reached.

Partnering also occurs in other ways -- examples include providing expertise to sister institutions in other jurisdictions; participating in national and international networks and professional organizations; supporting educational efforts and providing programming for general and specialist visitors to Parliament.

The term “partnership” also has legal implications which involve a business enterprise and the sharing of profits and liabilities. For our discussion, it may be preferable to use the term “partnership” as meaning a *collaborative arrangement*.

¹ *Webster’s New World Dictionary* 2nd edition

WHY PARTNER

Partnering can add value to services while controlling costs. Libraries should consider partnering to achieve results relevant to their strategic objectives and priorities in situations where partnering offers distinct advantages in terms of results compared with other approaches and can be carried out in a prudent manner with respect to resources and risks. Partnering can:

- improve, enhance and extend services in ways that are important to our Parliamentary clients
- reduce the cost of providing services; that is, improve the ratio between costs and benefits
- enhance links with stakeholders, networks, knowledge communities and others
- improve, enhance and extend services in ways that are important to clients
- improve visibility and credibility with clients
- improve staff well-being and professional development
- strengthen national and international networks
- add valuable information and historical documents, books, manuscripts etc to holdings
- increase technical capacities and expertise
- foster leadership role in areas such as the preservation and retrieval of legislative documents and in promoting understanding of parliamentary democracy
- gain access to critical information.

Partnering should

- enhance service to clients.
- increase visibility and credibility among clients.
- achieve access to specialized information more economically than by other means
- facilitate playing a leadership role in the national and international networks.

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES

For parliamentary libraries, some of the key characteristics that need to be taken into account in developing partnerships include:

- separation of the legislative from the executive branch of government
- political impartiality, non-partisanship, neutrality
- ability to take full responsibility for the quality of the services provided to Parliamentarians
- ability to take full responsibility for the information and programs provided to Canadians on behalf of Parliamentarians
- stewardship of unique information and artefacts on behalf of Parliamentarians and Canadians

In addition, the Library respects values and principles that apply to institutions serving the public interest and expending public funds. Some are cited in policy instruments; for instance, transparency, prudence, accountability and propriety in contracting and hospitality matters.

Trends in government thinking, particularly on broad social objectives (such as reflecting demographic diversity in the public service) and on best practices in management and governance (such as the emphasis on results, accountability and ethics) will have a real albeit informal impact on the issue of partnering. They contribute thinking about the wider mission and status of public institutions:

- providing services in both official languages and support to official language minority groups
- increasing workforce participation by members of employment equity groups
- fostering accountability and transparency
- measuring performance with an emphasis on results, and reporting results

There are best practices elsewhere that may be found helpful. Two of them in our immediate milieu are the *Statement of Public Services Values and Ethics* and an adaptation and expansion of that *Statement* for working in partnership.

QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ASK

1. How does the partnering proposal fit with the strategic objectives and priorities of the Library?
2. Is the proposal acceptable as a matter of fundamental principles? Does the proposal pose unacceptable risks for any of the essential characteristics or relationships of the Library?
3. What sorts of advantages would the proposed collaboration generate in relation to the organization's strategic objectives? How important are those advantages in terms of the institution's strategic priorities?
4. Ownership: will the Library be ultimately responsible for the partnered activity in question which is carried out with the partner's assistance? Or will the partner be responsible for the partnered activity? Or will the partnered activity be jointly 'owned'?

OWNING THE PARTNERSHIP

Everyone needs to know "who is in charge", who takes the lead. That role carries greater control, and extra burdens of managerial and operating costs and extra issues of managing visibility and risk. The 'owner' calls meeting, keeps track of the overall budget, ensures internal communications within the group of partners, and so on.

True joint ownership is the most complicated arrangement. It usually requires establishment of a shared governance structure.

Because of the relationships the Library has with the Senate and the House of Commons, ownership is a key factor in agreements among the parliamentary partners. Apart from costs, the key considerations with regard to ownership are whether or not Library is able to and wishes to retain or acquire the lead role for the activity in question. For example, certain sorts of seminars that require a partnering might be appropriate as a longer term offering of "Library of Parliament in partnership with X and Y"; others might be inappropriate, or too costly, or of lesser benefit to be carried out with that degree of focus (and burden).

Partnering does not dilute the requirement to be accountable. If the Library contributes 25% of the resources to a partnered activity, it needs to be able to show that the results achieved were reasonable and proportional to that investment and relevant to the Library's strategic objectives and priorities.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR PARTNERS

Are they stable, sound and responsible as an organisation? Is there good reason to believe that they will be willing and able to meet their commitments? Is there good reason to believe that they will be a credit to **your** organization?

Partnering with parliamentary partners (the Senate and House of Commons) is the most natural choice, since the three parliamentary entities serve the same clients and operate within the same culture. A frequent challenge in partnering is the learning curve to get the other entities to understand each others' language and habits. In the case of parliamentary partners, this learning has already happened, and it continues every day. There is also an ease to partnering with related bodies such as the Canadian Study of Parliament Group, the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, and the Parliamentary Centre.

An important caution: even if there is a 'natural fit' with a partner, one still needs to have as much clarity around the nature, values and conditions of the exchanges – as clear and well-reasoned an agreement – as if the agreement were with a less closely related entity. Some of the important lessons on careful partnering arise from loose or incomplete agreements with 'friends' that have evolved into an excessive burden for one of the partners.

Regarding other potential partners, you need to check to see if possible partners are lobbyists. If they are, then the collaboration would need to be designed in a manner that shields the Library's neutrality, both in fact and in perception. The same applies for organizations such as CARL that engage in lobbying activities.

"Fit" is critical for the immediate proposed joint activities. But it is also important for the long term. First, the reputation of the partner will still be an issue for LOP after the activity has ended. Second, part of the pay-off of partnering is that partners get to know each other and find new ways over time to collaborate for mutual advantage; all partnering should be thought of as a long-term investment, even if the concrete results are short-term.

BALANCING BENEFITS AND COSTS

A key question: "What would it cost us to do it by ourselves?" Not infrequently, organizations realise that partnering is more expensive in the short run, even though the enthusiasts talk about how partnering 'leverages' resources from other sources. But even in these cases, partnering may be advantageous because

- there are legal, jurisdictional or operational barriers to 'doing it ourselves'
- the partnership is seen as a long term relationship, in which the benefits over the longer period will outweigh the costs
- the partnered activity is new territory for the Library and the risks of investing in something new are lower if the Library teams up with an organization that is already expert in the area
- the partnership gains profile for the Library with its clients

THE RISKS

Certain activities might be prone to attracting unfriendly media attention. An initiative might be very worthwhile at low volume, but there might be overwhelming demand as this initiative grows over time, and as other potential partners cite it as a precedent to ask for similar arrangements. Therefore, it is important to limit demand from the start. For example, the Library might assist a province by sending four of its expert staff for four weeks to organise and set up mechanisms to preserve documents in their

legislative library. How one approaches this leadership/assistance role is very important. If there is no resource recovery because you were able to absorb the costs, you may have set a precedent for the next client. If that client is a larger province and you need 25 people and 12 weeks to organise their records and put in place mechanisms to preserve documents, you may jeopardize regular service to your clients or strain the budget so that something else must be cut. It is always best to estimate the worst case scenario before doing something and then ensure you act with that in mind.

The full extent of an action should be looked at and measures taken to ensure no irreparable damage. In the case above, one could have charged the first province for the salaries of the expert staff; then when another province made a similar request, the precedent of cost recovery would be there.

PART B: CURRENT PARTNERSHIPS

The Canadian Library of Parliament like many parliamentary libraries has a variety of arrangements that could be considered “partnerships”. In some cases they are concluded by (1) a formal written agreement such as a Memorandum of Understanding or a contract so responsibilities and roles are clear. In other cases there may be (2) an informal understanding. Below is a catalogue of these arrangements at the Canadian Library of Parliament organized by these two classes.

**PARTNERSHIPS AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT (LOP)
AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

Title	LOP Partner(s)	Description
Formal Agreements/Partnerships		
Parliamentary Information and Research Service (PIRS)		
GLIN - Global Legal Information Network. International database of laws.	Law Library of the Library of Congress	International database of laws, regulations, judicial decisions, and other complementary legal sources. GLIN members contribute the official full texts of published documents to the database in their original language, plus a summary in English and subject terms selected from the multilingual index to GLIN. This system gives the public and GLIN contributors access to this legal information through a web browser interface, greatly facilitating comparative legal research.
PIRS Internship Program -- Trip to Washington	Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians (CAFP)	CAFP funds the Library interns' trip to Washington to experience inner workings of the US Congress. Interns prepare an article to be published in the quarterly journal of the CAFP and deliver a "lunch and learn" session to Library staff and members of CAFP
Working agreement on managing Infonet queries	House of Commons (HOC) and Senate	Working document that sets out procedures for managing enquiries from the public that are submitted through web forms on the Parliament of Canada website.
Office of the Ethics Commissioner (MOU)	Office of the Ethics Commissioner	MOU of 2005 – reference and information services are covered in an annex to the agreement.
Privy Council Office Library	PCO	LOP offers consultation, borrowing, assistance with reference strategy and limited searching of databases not available at PCO Library.
Licensing Agreement between PWGSC and Federal Publications.	Department of Public Works & Government Services Canada (PWGSC)	PWGSC grants licensee the right to reproduce the PIRS publications in order to distribute the products on a commercial basis. LOP is the author department and participates in the drafting of the agreement.
Special Education Program	Ridgemont High School, Ottawa	Provides clerical assistance to the Library's Central Enquiry Section. First work experience for these special education students, who may move on to join the Friends or Buddies programs run by the HOC and the Senate.
Depository Service Program (DSP)	PWGSC	DSP acquires catalogues and distributes, free of charge, federal government publications in all formats to a network of depository libraries as well as to federal parliamentarians. All new and revised publications prepared by PIRS for distribution to its parliamentary clients are sent to DPS in electronic format and are published on their site. The Library

		of Parliament receives a copy of all publications distributed through the Program.
Transfer of the Public Information and Education Service (MOU)	HOC	Agreement between the HOC and the LOP on the transfer of the House of Commons Information and Education Service to the Library. Under the agreement, the LOP provides information and education to the general public about the HOC and Parliament, and the HOC provides technical and internal support services to the Public Information and Education Service at the same level as they were provided prior to the agreement.
Information and Document Resource Service(IDRS)		
Resource sharing agreement	Canadiana.org	LOP donated the electronic files of reconstituted debates for use by Canadiana.org in the Canada in the Making project.
Resources Sharing	LAC	In return for maintaining full depository status for OECD publications, the LOP helps defray costs for LAC to subscribe to certain series.
Exchange and deposit agreements	Provincial and foreign legislatures; international bodies e.g. Unites Nations	LOP receives and exchanges parliamentary publications with several other legislatures and organizations
Data sharing agreements	McGill University	Data on bills from the Chronology of Legislation compiled for years by the Library was shared with McGill to enable advanced studies in political science. In return they tag the data with subject heading and return it to us, to be added as an archive to Legisinfo.
Administrative	Senate	LOP acquires information resources for Senate Administration and reading room.
Administrative	HOC	HOC provides high volume printing services and distribution of certain Library publications.
Moveable Cultural Properties	Committee composed of officials from HOC, Senate, Library and PWGSC	To establish a common approach to manage the Hill's moveable cultural properties (statues, paintings, furnishings and the like)
Building Components and Connectivity	PWGSC, Senate and HOC	Building Components and Connectivity (BCC) program of the Long Term Vision and Plan for the Parliamentary precinct
Parliamentary Public Programs (PPP)		
Welcome to Parliament Hill Brochure (annual MOU)	National Capital Commission (NCC) & Senate	NCC in collaboration with LOP develops and prints the Welcome to Parliament Hill Brochure; LOP contributes toward distribution costs; the Senate reimburses LOP distribution costs.
Discover the Hill Brochure (annual MOU)	NCC	LOP provides proofing of material related to tours, etc. and agrees to pay for a portion of the distribution of the Discover the Hill Brochure

Info-Tent Interpretive Panels	NCC	Joint project with NCC; cost sharing
Parliament Hill Visitor Centre Feasibility Study and others	NCC & PWGSC	To complete feasibility study for the Parliament Hill Visitors Centre –financial contribution from LOP as well as being members of the committee
e-Commerce site (Boutique)	HOC & PWGSC	PWGSC looks after the payment portion of the Web site; HOC helps with maintenance and makes required changes
Funding for extra parliamentary guide (MOU to be completed soon)	PWGSC	PWGSC has agreed to fund the salary for an extra parliamentary guide so that one is posted at the Memorial Chamber full-time
Book for Children about Parliament	British Columbia Legislative Assembly	Joint project; cost-sharing
Boutique Products (contracts)	Manufacturers	Work with over 125 different manufacturers to develop and produce products for sale in the Boutique.
Prime Ministers of Canada Posters	Cable Public Affairs Channel (CPAC)	Formal agreement – LOP to purchase a number of copies of the PM Posters produced by CPAC
MPTV Videos/DVDs	CPAC & Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)	Partnership to co-produce the video; continued partnership to secure updates and duplication of the DVDs
Teachers Institute (TI) & Teacher Leader Program	CAFP	Formal contribution agreement: CAFP offers bursaries for teachers so they can attend TI
Teachers Institute	CPAC	Formal agreements to have CPAC tape various sessions during TI
Educational Programs	Churchill Society for the Advancement of Parliamentary Democracy	1) Churchill Society provides funding toward various programs 2) Churchill Society offers bursaries for teachers so they can attend TI 3) LOP agrees to provide profile on various educational products
Teachers Institute (TI)	Elections Canada	Formal contribution agreement – each year Elections Canada contributes \$3000 to TI also provide speaker for “Elections” session during TI
Informal Agreements/Partnerships		
Parliamentary Information and Research Service (PIRS)		
Michigan State University (MSU) Student Placements at PIRS.	MSU	Provides law students with an educational experience and an understanding of the Canadian political and legal systems at work. The interns foster an appreciation of Canadian social, cultural, and political institutions and character. The students work on a variety of legal issues in PIRS.

Parliamentary Officers Study Program (POSP)	HOC and Senate	Designed as an opportunity for senior parliamentary staff from foreign legislatures and Canadian jurisdictions to learn about the functioning of the Parliament of Canada and, in turn, to reflect on their own practices.
The Many Facets of Parliament Hill Programme	HOC and Senate	Parliamentary employees have the opportunity to learn more about the legislative process and how their work in the Senate, the HOC and the LOP supports the work of parliamentarians in their duties representing the interests of Canadians. Employees have the opportunity to exchange ideas and to create networking and learning opportunities to enhance communications and partnerships among the three institutions. As well, participants may exchange ideas with the Speakers and Clerks of both Houses as well as the Parliamentary Librarian and other officials.
Library and Archives Canada	LAC	There are working level procedures in place for LAC to occasionally send researchers to consult unique items in the LOP collections. LOP regularly refers information queries from the public to LAC when the requests are beyond the scope of the information service mandate. There are frequent working level communications between various units of the two institutions.
International visits programmed by the Parliamentary Centre	Parliamentary Centre	LOP meets with various international delegations to discuss its main services.
Information and Document Resource Service		
Resource sharing - other	Canadiana.org	LOP loaned C.org documents for scanning for the same project (altogether over 2000 rare items). Examples are pre-confederation budget speeches, or first reading of bills. They gave us the e-files of pre-1900 Debates and Journals to help complete our parliamentary preservation project.
Resource Sharing	Library and Archives Canada (LAC)	LOP shares parliamentary documents such as Journals and committee proceedings with LAC for digitization projects.
Resource Sharing	Nunavut Legislative Library	LOP is scanning a collection of key reports that document the creation of the territory of Nunavut for the Nunavut legislature. Copies of these files will be added to our collection and shared with LAC.
Data sharing agreements	Elections Canada	LOP and Elections Canada share electoral data, including our historical data on electoral districts.
Reconstituted Debates of the House of Commons and Senate	HOC	HOC provides text editing, layout, and publishing support for this project
Records Management	HOC	Managing software product Foremost for use in records management. HOC supports, upgrades, trains, resolves technical problems for the Library's own copy. We pay administration and maintenance costs.

Orientation programs	HOC and Senate	Library participates actively as an equal partner in Many Facets program for parliamentary staff and New Parliament preparations
Binding	HOC	HOC prints the Debates and the Library binds a number of copies to return to the House for distribution to senior officials
Parliamentary Public Programs (PPP)		
Web site related issues	Senate & HOC	Handles Web site related issues
Parliamentary Tours	Ottawa Tourism, Tourisme Outaouais & other tourist organizations	Working to provide tours and other materials that will assist them and assist LOP in managing visitors' expectations
Teachers Institute (TI)	Rideau Hall, Senate, HOC, Supreme Court of Canada	All contribute in some way – meetings/tour of Rideau Hall every year – possibility of meeting with Governor General, Speakers and Clerks as well as other Hill staff participate in various events during TI; tour of Supreme Court and teaching materials
Teachers Institute (TI)	Canadian Study of Parliament Group (CSPG)	CSPG provides 1 year free membership and subscription to its quarterly magazine to all TI participants
Teachers Institute (TI)	Federal and other partners	Participate in resource fair and/or provide free resources for teachers
Visitor Studies Association (VSA) Host Committee	VSA, NCC, all national museums in NCR, Parks Canada	Partnerships to host and organize the annual VSA conference that will be held in Ottawa this year
National Capital Interpreters Network	National, regional and municipal museums and heritage organizations in the NCR	Bi-monthly meetings to discuss interpretation issues: i.e. recruitment, programming, evaluation, training techniques, etc.
Parliamentary Visitors Services Association	Legislatures across Canada & NCC	Participate in meetings annually (hosted by different legislature or Parliament) to discuss like concerns, and ideas. Ongoing networking throughout the year. Ottawa has hosted meetings in 1994 and 2000.