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Perhaps in contrast to John Power, I will start with an apology. I feel quite humbled being amongst so many people from library services. I am but a mere Committee Clerk from the Economic Development Committee of the National Assembly, and I'll perhaps talk slightly from that perspective, and perhaps as a good Civil Servant offer a disclaimer that what I am offering are my own personal views rather than necessarily those of the National Assembly for Wales.

The National Assembly was founded on the basis of it being a modern democracy based on openness and inclusivity. The intention was to get away from the old adversarial style of Westminster, away from practices which wasted people's time and energy, being at each other's throats, and to get to work together for the common good of the people of Wales. It was to involve the public, the voters, the people of Wales in decisions that affect them, and for that reason the legislation that underlies the National Assembly for Wales is quite different from that for Scotland and Northern Ireland. It establishes the Assembly as a corporate body. Obviously, though, there are similarities, and the Assembly recognised very early the importance of information for Members to be able to do their jobs, and so systems to deliver this were needed.

First and foremost we are based almost entirely on electronic systems for the transmission of information. We have an internal Intranet which provides background information, general briefings and other information for Members and staff throughout the system. It is a system that serves the whole of the Assembly: both the Assembly Government and the Presiding Officer, the Parliamentary side of the Assembly. It holds all papers and supporting information for Assembly plenary sessions, and the Committee sessions, which are held in public. It's also available in constituencies and indeed in the Chamber for Members during plenary sessions. Alongside this all the proceedings of the Assembly, all the formal committee meetings and the plenary sessions are broadcast. We also have an external website, which makes available as much information as possible to the public throughout Wales, throughout Britain, throughout the world. We use email as the main means of transmitting information between our libraries, between Members and sources. We shall talk about papers (and that's a touch of 'old world' there), but whether you have your papers on paper is a matter for the individual. The main means of communication is by email and as I said before, even into the Assembly Chamber. Members can receive

lobbying during plenary debates if people are so minded and indeed they can be watching the debate on television and be lobbying their Member at the same time.

Alongside this we have a library service to provide support through research services for Members. I shall come back to that in a moment. Also like many democracies there are formal mechanisms for seeking information through Assembly questions and correspondence with Assembly Ministers, but it was the intention that Members should only need to use these mechanisms when they wish to attract publicity or to have a clear statement of policy on the record. The aim is that the culture of the Assembly should encourage a free flow of information between the Executive and Assembly Members and that formal mechanisms would not be needed simply to acquire factual information. And at the heart of this, of course, is the library. It was intended that this should be the principal means for Assembly Members obtaining information and it would have access to a pool of information sources to deliver this service. First and foremost it would be the main library for the Assembly; the library for the Welsh Government, and its paper and online holdings, would be on the Assembly Intranet. The library could also contact Executive Officials of the Assembly for information and act as a link between Assembly Members and Officials. And it has direct access to resources of other parliamentary libraries, the National Library of Wales, and it is developing wider links. Ultimately the aim was that we should have a common basis of information for the whole Assembly. But, of course there are restrictions. Inevitably Government cannot release all information, there will be commercial information, personal information that it needs to hold in confidence, and so there are safeguards for that kind of information.

So what has happened? Are we a modern Assembly? Well yes, I think we are. We have electronic systems that transmit information rapidly between Members, Officials and the public. As an observation maybe Members and Officials need to know how to use it a little better. Maybe there is too much paper being generated in this paperless office that we have, and perhaps the classic dilemma of all electronic systems is finding the stuff. You can put it on the system but do you know where to find it? Not everybody, Members and Officials alike, understands the IT. Is it open? Yes. Information clearly is published, although maybe we could be better at organising it. Maybe we could be quicker getting things out. But I think what is interesting is the way that is fundamentally changing the way that government is done in Wales. It's going to take time, but attitudes are quite different from the way they were before in the days of the old Welsh Office.

Are we an inclusive Assembly? I think this is the area where it's proved much harder to reconcile the information systems. Politicians, despite noble aspirations, are beginning to make an inclusive Assembly to work together for the common good. Politicians are also under a remit to scrutinise each other, but the elected Members scrutinise the Government, and I think one of the difficulties is trying to reconcile those two aspects of the politicians' role. The way we are developing at the moment is to look to develop better information systems for Committees. Perhaps not so much the fundamental information that goes into it - I think we'd like to remain with the common source of information - but to develop the research and analytical services. It could be argued that this is a failure of the inclusivity principle, but I think, it is probably not. I think it recognises that as you try and be more open, as you try and be more constructive and productive in the way you do things, then there is need to look more widely and differently at the information you have available. It goes wider than simply sharing the base of information that underlies your system. Who knows? It is early days. The UK Parliament has hundreds of years behind it, we have three, so let's see how it goes.

The motion says parliamentary democracies get the information services they deserve. I think as a Civil Servant I am inclined to say, well of course they do. It is our job to deliver them as they requested. But in the changing world I think it's very difficult to know precisely what information services parliamentary democracies do deserve. Thank you.