

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Budget Estimates Hearing—May 2011

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Indexing in the Parliamentary Library**

Question: **12**

Hansard reference **F&PA p.30, 23 May 2011**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 8 July 2011

Senator FAULKNER: So you not only have current stats but you have a pattern?

Ms Missingham: Yes.

Senator FAULKNER: Can you take on notice to provide the current statistics at the last time you took out statistics—I do not want you to create special statistics—and perhaps you might give us some historical information, say for six months. That should be a pretty easy thing to do, shouldn't it?

Ms Missingham: We have just updated the statistics and we have several years worth in the pattern that we monitor. So we can give you the last six months information and information up-to-date to the end of last month.

Answer

1 Backlogs exist in adding Parliamentary Library Thesaurus subject headings to items already in ParInfo Search. The following table gives the **subject indexing backlogs** for the past six months to the end of April 2011.

	Nov 2010	Dec 2010	Jan 2011	Feb 2011	Mar 2011	Apr 2011
News clips	28,242	28,865	28,426	28,488	28,338	28,270
Journal articles	5,201	5,067	4,876	4,493	4,405	4,106
Total	33,443	33,932	33,302	32,981	32,743	32,376

2 However, all of these items were loaded into ParInfo in a timely manner and, when loaded, these items became searchable using title, author(s), source (that is, name of newspaper, or journal) and date of publication. The full text of each item is also immediately available for keyword or phrase searching. Since January 2011, the backlog has been trending slightly downward.

3 The indexing backlogs had built up over a period of 15 months due to shortages of skilled staff in the workforce, combined with labour-intensive selection and subject-indexing processes.

4 The Parliamentary Library is strongly committed to reducing the backlogs and commenced new approaches in 2010.

5 **A three-part action plan has been implemented.**

- (a) Recruitment and training of three indexers to fill vacant positions in Database Services.
- (b) On 28 August 2010, LAST (Library Authoring System and Thesaurus) system went into production. It helps prevent the build-up of indexing backlogs because it automates selection processes and suggests subject terms from the thesaurus.
- (c) In the next two months, there will be a bulk upload of the articles in the backlog, which will enable indexers to more efficiently process this material using the LAST system.