Friends or fences: relationships matter more than structures

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Parliament
- 120 MPs
- Mixed Member Proportional Representation introduced in 1996
- Strong Select Committee structure
- National & local government
- Unicameral Parliament
- Westminster based

The Library
- Most beautiful library in NZ
- Collection established 1850’s
- Over 50 staff
- Legal deposit Library
- Had National Library functions before NL was created in 1965
- Part of National Library from 1965-1987
- Heritage building that has been used continuously for the purpose for which it was built

The Librarian
- Moira Fraser, Parliamentary Librarian, New Zealand
Appointed January 2000
Background in leading information services in special libraries in public and private sectors for 15 years
Previous position as National Director of Knowledge for Ernst & Young

Parliamentary Library, Jan 2000
- Very high levels of customer satisfaction
- Beloved by MPs and seen as a "good thing"
- Increasing emphasis on client services
- Just-in-case collection rather than just-in-time
- Developing desktop resources
- Fledgling research service
- Authoritative
- Impartial

Where are we heading
- Deeper understanding of client needs
- Stronger focus on targeted analytical information
- Expertise in wider range of subjects recognised by clients
- More staff in direct client delivery and fewer staff managing collections
- More desktop resources so that more document delivery is self-service
- A just-in-time approach to collection management

What did that mean
- Restructuring to increase client focus and deliver future capability
- Client liaison programme
- Projects focussed on desktop resources
- Strengthening research capability
- Strengthening subject expertise

Implications for restructuring
- Structures are theoretical
- And then you add people who don’t always fit tidily
- But who are absolutely central to your success
- It’s important to make a decision and give it a reasonable time to run before assessing it’s usefulness
**Tensions for Parliamentary Libraries**

A one-stop shop where
- we focus on making it easy to do business with us
- all our services are integrated
- one service point which directs customers on
- like a call centre where every customer gets treated the same
- an anonymous group delivering services

A group of experts who
- are differentiated by our areas of expertise
- expect our customers to find out who knows most about which subject
- treat groups of customers differently
- are known individually to our customers

*We can be......*
- Authoritative
- Impartial
- Reliable
- Credible
- Close to our customers
- Understanding of their needs
- Providers of personalised, targeted information
Outputs of Parliamentary Library

Client Liaison

- Understand client needs
- Training and promotion
- Maori liaison

Responsive Information Services
- Information Requests
- Specialist advice
- Retrieve & supply identified items
- Books/items
- TV/Radio programmes
- Ongoing current awareness of issues
- Ongoing supply of a particular resource

Pro-active Information Services
- Bills Digest
- Background Notes/papers
- Economics & Statistical publications
- Profile bulletins
- Desktop resources
- Electorate profiles
- Links to connected Parliamentary information
- Information packages
- Expand videotape compilations

Information Resources

- Selection
- Acquisitions
- Cataloguing/indexing
- Physical organisation
More tensions

Aligned by outputs
- Split accountabilities for people between responsive and proactive outputs
- Different work environments and training needs for researchers from reference librarians

Aligned by teams
- Split accountabilities for output across reference and research
- Allocation of work
- Management of central enquiry point

Framework for structure decision
- When thinking about structures what are the most important criteria we use for making decisions?

Criteria
- Improving services to clients
- Administrative convenience
- Staff management

Client relationships
- Most important group of relationships
- How well do we understand their information needs
- How well do we understand how they use information in their work
- What are our clients information gaps
- How can we best fill those information gaps

What affected reference/research structure
- Distribution of resources between reactive and proactive work
- What kind of specialists do we need
- Balance of human resources between research services and reference services
- What research products and services do we offer
- Size of the research team

My expectations about structure
- A structure that matched the output diagram
- Too simplistic
- Meant some individuals would report to 2 managers
- Too much change, too quickly
- Still too small for subject based structure
**Our solution**

What will happen in the future

- More subject specialisation
- More targeting requires more expertise from us
- More staff in reference & research
- Probably subject teams
- Continue to work on boundaries between reference & research

Structure vs relationships

- What matters most of all is the working relationship between reference and research
- There are mixed accountabilities between reference and research
- Researchers and reference librarians have different cultures and ways of working
- We must seek always to improve how they work together
- The decision we made to separate reference and research may change in the future