The House of Lords Record Office (The Parliamentary Archives) holds the records of both Houses of Parliament which date from 1497.

You can find more information about us on our pages at the Parliamentary website www.parliament.uk

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Supporting Parliament by safeguarding and providing ready access to its records

This annual review of the year that ended on 31 March 2004 describes the work of the House of Lords Record Office (The Parliamentary Archives) in supporting the administrations of each House of Parliament in their core tasks of maintaining the heritage of buildings, objects and documents, and providing the public with information and access.

It is easy to forget when recalling the highlights of any year that it is not just the initiatives and projects that are important, but also what we call business as usual. Our challenge is to maintain the continuity of our Parliamentary and public-facing services whilst pursuing initiatives for their improvement against a background of raised user expectations and change in our managerial and professional environments. This review is intended to provide an insight into these activities for users of our services inside and outside Parliament and our professional colleagues in the United Kingdom and overseas.

Records management and information access

In spite of recruitment difficulties steady progress was made with the application of corporate records management policies, which will assist compliance by the administrations of each House with the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts and deliver business benefits. Roll-out of the Parliament wide file classification scheme is on target for completion later this year and plans for developing and approving disposal practices for records described in the scheme are well advanced. The Office continued to have a prominent role in identifying strategies for Parliamentary use of EDRM (electronic document and records management) and related technologies.

The Freedom of Information Officer is overseeing final preparations for the application of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts to the House of Lords in January 2005. The House of Commons, a separate public authority within the terms of the acts, is responsible for its own arrangements.

Archive services

The Victoria Tower repository has almost completed its second major phase of renovation in the 140 years that it has housed the records of Parliament bringing it up to
modern day standards for the preservation of archives. The effectiveness of our public services were maintained despite the logistical difficulties of providing access to records during the building work and staff changes during the year. Options were considered for improving facilities for onsite users to access online, original and surrogate resources.

The automation project, now moving into the last of the five years set aside for the retrospective conversion of finding aids, has continued to meet its targets and is within budget. Public access to the catalogue (known as Portcullis) was launched successfully in the Search Room and full remote access via the Parliamentary website is due in 2005.

Outreach activities that use the unique documentary resources of the archives to support public understanding of the functions and activities of Parliament included further enhancements to the Office website as a platform for highlighting specific aspects of the collections and for special projects such as Archives Awareness Month in September 2003. Attention was also focused on our own domain including publication of a leaflet about the archives for Members of both Houses and a series of talks for the all party Arts and Heritage Group of Members. With the approval of the relevant House committees the display cases in the Royal Gallery on the public line of route were replaced providing better access for viewing and care for the documents.

**Staff**

Achievements across the range of our activities are a tribute to the individual and collective efforts of our staff, who have applied their skills with their customary dedication and propensity to innovate, augmented by highly competent and willing volunteers and work placements. The latter were indispensable in minimising the impact of several departures and protracted recruitment exercises. Staff of the Office display enthusiasm for their own personal and professional development, but they now benefit from embedded standards of good practice in line with the commitment of the House of Lords to seek Investors in People accreditation.

**Plans for 2004–2005**

- Final preparations for bringing the House of Lords administration under the Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Act in January 2005.

- Completion of the file classification scheme in both Houses; further progress in establishing disposal practices for Parliamentary records; and continued focus on EDRM.

- A revised acquisition policy will be implemented to inform selection of departmental records and to establish criteria for acquiring records from external sources by gift or purchase.

- Launch of internet access to the online archive catalogue Portcullis and implementation of its automated document ordering and management information modules.

- Preparatory work will be undertaken for an exhibition concerning the 1605 Gunpowder Plot to be held in Westminster Hall in 2005 and for a complementary online resource.

Stephen Ellison  
*Clerk of the Records*
The strategic framework for the work of the Parliamentary Archives

Aims

- providing a records management and archive service for each House of Parliament and making the archives accessible to the public.
- ensuring compliance of the House of Lords’ administration with Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation.

Key objectives support delivery of the four core tasks of the Parliamentary Archives:

Records management

- to develop, implement and sustain policies for a best practice and corporate approach to the management of the current records of each House of Parliament.
- to develop, implement and sustain policies for compliance of the House of Lords’ administration with the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act, and to provide advice about their application.

Selection and acquisition

- to ensure that records created or held by Parliament which are worthy of permanent preservation are selected for archiving.
- to acquire other records that contribute significantly to the understanding of the history and workings of Parliament.

Preservation

- to provide sufficient suitable repository storage to preserve the archives in accordance with recognised professional standards.
- to assist preservation of the archives by their conservation and the provision of surrogate copies.

Access and outreach

- to provide an up-to-date catalogue of the archives conforming to recognised professional standards.
- to provide a public service for the inspection and copying of records, and the answering of enquiries.
- to promote awareness of the archives and history of Parliament as a core resource for research, lifelong learning and leisure.
Records Management

Records management brings business benefits to offices and departments and creates an effective culture in which to manage electronic records, as well as assisting compliance with information access legislation.

In recognition of its value to the everyday work of Parliament records management is, as the following declarations of intent show, a corporate priority for the administrations of both Houses:

“To ensure that records in all media are created, used and disposed of in accordance with the business, legal, evidential and archival needs of the House by applying recognised standards and best practice in records management”
- a primary task identified in the House of Lords Strategic Plan 2003-2008

“To develop an integrated approach to information management in paper and electronic formats which supports business processes, complies with Freedom of Information and Data Protection requirements and guarantees effective management of records”
- a corporate goal of the House of Commons administration

In support of these aims, and following on the previous year’s approval of new posts, two Assistant Records Managers were appointed, thus bringing Parliament the benefit of a team to support records management implementation in both Houses.

The main activities of the records management team in developing and implementing agreed joint policies for Lords and Commons have been:

Classification scheme for Parliamentary records
The Office has continued to support the implementation and maintenance of the classification scheme which will provide an essential linkage for the operation of records disposal policies and the management of electronic records. The scheme is based on Keyword AAA, a functional thesaurus and classification scheme developed by the State Authority of New South Wales, and used widely in the public sector in Australia. Implementation of the scheme in both Houses is due to be completed in 2004.

Disposal policy for Parliamentary records
Work has continued on drafting and approving the Authorised Records Disposal Practice, which will be the published policy of both Houses of Parliament on the disposal and retention of records. It will be produced in 28 volumes each covering records created by
the business activities of the Parliamentary functions represented in the classification scheme. To ensure that the regulatory and business needs of both Houses are met each volume is researched by the records management team and receives extensive consultation amongst the key staff primarily engaged in exercising the function and activities under consideration.

The volumes setting out authorised practice for how and when staff should dispose of records (that is destroy or transfer records to the Archives) are approved by the Clerks of each House on the recommendation of a Parliamentary Records Disposal Panel. Each panel is chaired by the Clerk of the Records and comprises standing members representing the interests of the Clerks of both Houses and their respective administrations, and for each separate function under consideration they are joined by specialists in those areas. Panels are assisted in an advisory capacity by one or more members of the records management team. By the end of the year the first volume, which covers a large number of series of financial records, had been approved and issued to staff, and another four volumes had been drafted for approval. Full implementation of the disposal practice is due in 2005.

**Training**

Training for staff and advice to offices and departments transferring their records to the classification scheme is provided at all stages of implementation. Twenty-eight training courses in use of the scheme were held and over 850 Parliamentary staff have now received training. The Office also presents a half-hour section of the staff induction programmes for each House, which has been revised and now includes more information about the implications of Freedom of Information and Data Protection, and on the issue of managing records electronically.

**Electronic records management**

The Houses are examining the corporate and departmental business benefits of electronic document, record and content management systems. During the year the Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRM) Group, on which the Office is represented, oversaw the production of a strategy and business case for EDRM with the aim of implementing pilot projects in each House.

A revised functional specification for Electronic Records Management (ERM) reflecting the specific needs of the House administrations and a records management metadata model were produced.

**Freedom of Information and Data Protection**

Preparations for the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act and the extension of the Data Protection Act to the House of Lords in January 2005 have continued to be led by the House's Freedom of Information Officer who is based in the Record Office. The main developments during the year have been the identification of additional information to be added to the House’s Publication Scheme; further work associated with the House’s decision to publish information relating to Members’ expenses in Autumn 2004 and establishing the requirements for a tracking system for Freedom of Information requests based upon generic requirements produced by the Department for Constitutional Affairs.
A commonality of approach with the House of Commons has been adopted for information covered by parliamentary privilege. A Freedom of Information and Data Protection Implementation Group has been established to assist the Freedom of Information Officer in overseeing final preparations for the application of the Acts to the House.
Selection and Acquisition

During the year, a new acquisition policy was drafted based on recent developments in records management and the appraisal of records undertaken as part of the automation project. The draft policy is being circulated to key stakeholders for comment, and will be finalised and published next year.

Measures for the identification and safeguarding of records of long term value in offices will also be improved in conjunction with the implementation of volumes of the disposal practice and the new acquisition policy. In total this means that the material received from offices for archiving is fully representative of the work of both Houses and is suitable for permanent preservation. From 1 April 2003, new intake arrangements were put in place to ensure the smooth transfer of records from offices. In all cases offices now liaise with the records management team which manages the transfer of material to the Record Office. Material for archiving is transferred to the public services team which is responsible for accessioning these deposits and cataloguing them.

Deposits of Departmental records

Departmental records selected for archiving continued to include both the records produced by those offices involved with the core business activities of Parliament such as the Public Bill and Committee offices, and those which provide administrative support. The House of Lords Public Bill Office deposited 26 boxes of records, and 20 boxes of main papers - papers which are laid on the table of the House of Lords - were received from the Printed Paper Office. A large volume of records - 130 boxes plus a quantity of files - were transferred from the House of Commons Committee Office.

Recent work by the Records Management team in the Clerk of the Parliaments’ Office was reflected by the accession of 74 boxes of office files, some of which dated back to 1934, together with a wig worn by a recent Clerk. Office files (dating from 1879) were also received from the House of Lords Accountant’s Office, the Human Resources Office and the Reading Clerk (including records relating to early experiments with information technology).
The Department of the Serjeant at Arms in the House of Commons deposited 11 volumes of Domestic Committee papers dating from 1770 and the Speaker’s Office transferred 28 boxes of office files.

The office was able to purchase further sessions of House of Commons sessional papers in microfiche.

**Other acquisitions**

Provision will be made in the new acquisitions policy for the office to acquire records from sources other than the offices within Parliament. The value of doing this has been recognised for some time. Such records can provide a different perspective on the events recorded in the official records but can also relate to aspects of Parliament and the Palace of Westminster which do not feature in the departmental deposits. They can also include records which have strayed from our official collections. During the year a range of acquisitions reflected these types of records. The Parliamentary Press Gallery deposited a quantity of material dating from 1919 including gallery minutes and correspondence and minutes of the Parliamentary branch of the National Union of Journalists. This complements earlier deposits made by the Gallery. In the context of stray items, two items were acquired which had once been part of the official collections. One was a letter which has been added to the Braye Manuscripts, a collection of official records amassed by John Browne, a Clerk of the Parliaments in the seventeenth century. The other was a commission for the prorogation of Parliament in October 1701.

Items that provide a different perspective on official events included some letters concerning the Great Reform Act of 1832 and a record of Charles I’s speech to the Short Parliament in 1640.

As part of a review of its collections the House of Commons Library offered the Office a collection of volumes of autographs of members of both Houses and other individuals of eighteenth and nineteenth century date.

A full list of accessions is provided in Appendix 1.
Exactly 140 years since records had first been transferred to the repository the major building works in the Victoria Tower that were commenced in summer 2001 were completed.

The Victoria Tower has housed the records of Parliament since 1864 but the records created by Parliament have been kept at Westminster since 1497. Andrew Thrush in a recent article (‘The House of Lords Records Repository and the Clerk of the Parliaments’ House: A Tudor Achievement’, Parliamentary History, Vol. 21, Part 3, 2002) has confirmed that the Lords had a record repository almost certainly located in the Jewel Tower from the late 1590s, with the possibility, requiring further research, that it was founded many years before. Following the great fire of 1834 that destroyed most of the Old Palace of Westminster, and almost the entire accumulation of Commons records, the Lords specification for ‘fireproof’ repositories for Papers and Documents was met by Charles Barry’s design for a Record Tower. By 1860 the design had been executed and from 1864 the Victoria Tower began to be populated with records brought together from various sites at the Lords end of the Palace.

Reconstruction in the 1950s and 1960s
As a Victorian structure the tower was less than ideal as an archive store and periodic concern about the state of the records came to a head in 1947 when a severe outbreak of mould led an expert technical committee to advise the House that control of temperature and humidity was necessary to safeguard the records, but on investigation rather more substantial works were found to be required. The original structure of the tower was seriously deficient for its loading and would require substantial re-engineering to install seven light-weight floors in the upper part of the tower and to transfer to the outside walls the weight of the 276 ton roof and half of the weight from the original iron girders supporting the upper floors. The outcome in 1963 of this first substantial renovation, or rather reconstruction, of the tower was a structurally sound and modern air conditioned repository with new metal racking, decent lighting and the necessary convenience of a lift to link the strongrooms on each of the 12 floors.

Divergence from standards in the 1980s and 1990s
The air conditioning system installed in the 1950s, which comprised humidification, dehumidification and heating, but not cooling, was 25 to 30 years past its design life by 2000 and environmental conditions had become increasingly divergent from British Standard 5454: Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents (revised in 2000). There were serious extremes...
in seasonal temperatures and wild fluctuations in both temperature and relative humidity. Malfunctioning of the five plants and poor siting of pipework in strongroom areas had increased the risk of water damage to the archives. Urgent work was needed, but detailed planning for further renovation of the tower had to await the outcome of a value for money review of record storage in 1996.

This concluded that the archives should be retained in the Victoria Tower if (as it subsequently turned out) it were decided to meet the additional accommodation requirements of Members and offices outside the Palace.

**Raising standards of preservation for the 21st century**

Although the need to replace the air conditioning system was the primary driver for the present project, an essential upgrade of the fire precautions was due together with necessary safety enhancements including a full rewiring of the electric lighting circuits. The case for tackling the work as an integrated project was made on the grounds of cost, logistics and avoiding repeated disruption to the work of the Office and risk to the protection of the records. The replacement of the fire main was subsequently added to the project objectives. Following a feasibility study launched in 1997 detailed design and planning was commenced in 1999 and the contractors for the project came on site in July 2001.

For air conditioning the construction work involved installing the main air handling and conditioning plant on the 13th and 14th floors of the tower, outside the record keeping areas, and from there running supply ducts to serve small plant rooms containing the local conditioning and recirculation equipment on each of the twelve repository floors. The five existing plant rooms and associated ducting were removed, but only after records had been decanted from the floors served. The following design criteria have been met: temperature is controlled at 16.5°C +/- 1°C permitted variation in 24 hours; relative humidity is controlled at 55% +/- 5% permitted variation in 24 hours; synthetic filters and activated carbon filters are provided for dust filtration and reduction of harmful sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen in the air supply; supply and extract ductwork is co-ordinated with the layout of racking to provide appropriate air circulation.

For fire precautions and enhanced safety the following design criteria have been met: the early smoke detection and alarm system adopted for the whole of the Palace has been extended to the repository; the fire main has been replaced; new fire safety exits have been constructed; safety lighting and escape route illumination have been installed; and all lighting circuits have been renewed.
The exacting task of repatriating the records from off-site storage and restoring areas to archival use is in progress and work also continues on establishing separate ambient conditions in storage for different special media. The disaster recovery supplies have been reviewed and the provision of materials for use in a disaster have been upgraded.

New Document Display Cases

In March new document display cases were installed in the Royal Gallery. Designed by Ivor Heal Design Ltd, the cases had been approved by the House of Lords Works of Art Committee during the previous summer and a specification subsequently put out to tender. The contract to build the cases was awarded to Click Systems Ltd.

The new cases, which are of metal construction and meet the requirements of BS:5454 for the temporary display of documents, were designed in a contemporary style sensitive to the requirements of an historic environment. They are mobile, so as to be easily moved when the Royal Gallery is prepared for the state opening or other functions, and form two units which can be used back to back or apart. They also incorporate a canopy for use in reducing the amount of light falling on the display area and a passive system of environmental control. In contrast to the previous cases they can be easily maintained by staff and meet the increased expectations of visitors on line of route tours in terms of visual accessibility.

The design of the cases facilitates the display of documents which it has not been possible to exhibit in the past, such as large volumes and plans. In future displays will be changed
regularly, in order to reduce exposure to light. In keeping with this new policy the death warrant of Charles I, which had been on display for many years, has been returned to the repository.

Conservation

Conservation priorities were informed by last year’s British Library report, but development of a strategic policy was deferred pending management changes at the British Library that will have implications for the conservation unit. The programme of limited treatment for nineteenth century plans continued as has the work of the NADFAS volunteers. The latter have provided valuable assistance in undertaking non-specialist basic preservation work on both departmental and non-official records.

In a new initiative Eleanor Russell, a work experience student at Camberwell College of Arts, spent two weeks with the unit as part of her course.

Preservation microfilming

The microfilm survey was completed and the filming of specific series for surrogate use and in case of disaster continued.

Digitisation of the images collection also continued and it is hoped to begin their attachment to the catalogue during 2004.
Access

The five-year automation project reached its penultimate year, on time and within budget.

The number of records in the catalogue at the end of March 2004 was approximately 267,000 (some 132,500 were added during the year). The retrospective conversion team continued to migrate our paper catalogues to an online environment, and as scheduled, Portcullis, our online public catalogue, was launched in the Search Room in June 2003. Comments from users have been very positive, and included: ‘I feel the availability of such search tools on the internet encourages thorough research planning and co-ordination’, ‘An excellent Resource - please expand it’ and ‘I am about as close to computer illiterate as it is possible to be. I found Portcullis incredibly easy to use’.

Catalogues relating to the records of the Parliamentary departments dealing principally with legislative, judicial and scrutiny functions have been researched, edited, imported and enhanced during the year.

Simultaneous appraisal and destruction of records not worthy of permanent preservation has freed 100m of shelf space in the Victoria Tower repository this year.
The retrospective conversion team includes four assistant archivists, two typists and an ever-changing array of short-term contract staff, work placements and volunteers.

Records migrated to the catalogue this year were:

**House of Lords**

- HL/PO/CO Committee Office records
- HL/PO/DC Domestic Committees (including peerage claim records)
- HL/PO/JU Judicial Office
- HL/PO/PB Private Bill Office (including all local, personal and private Acts, deposited plans, evidence and bill files)
- HL/PO/PU Public Bill Office (including all public and general Acts, and bill files)
- HL/PO/OF Official Report (Hansard)
- HL/BR Black Rod’s Department: State Opening of Parliament Files

**House of Commons**

- HC/CL/CO Committee Office records
- HC/CL/OO Overseas Office
- HC/CL/PB Private Bill Office (including plans, evidence and bill files)
- HC/CL/PU Public Bill Office
- HC/OF Department of the Official Report (Hansard)

**Other Collections**

- AV Audio Visual Records
- BOOK Record Office Reference Books
- FEL Papers of Sir Bryan Fell
- PWO Records of the Parliamentary Works Office

The benefits for staff of having a single online catalogue conforming to international standards has become increasingly evident through the year. Searches undertaken during the answering of remote enquiries are now far quicker and more comprehensive. The identification of material for exhibitions is much easier, and searches often produce little-known records of interest which it would have been impossible to track down before.

Towards the end of the year we began to plan for the introduction of automated enquiry tracking and invoicing, user registration and document ordering modules which will realise the full benefits of the new system.
Public Services

Facilities for searchers

In response to the needs of searchers who have for long bemoaned the lack of anywhere convenient to take a break from their research to eat a packed lunch or to have a drink, self-service tea and coffee facilities were made available in the Office’s kitchen and have proved very popular. Other improvements included the installation in the Search Room of a much needed second microfilm/fiche reader-printer.

Searchers

The number of Search Room users rose for the second year in succession to 1030, which was encouraging. The Search Room was closed for the usual fortnight for stocktaking in November, and occasionally for staff meetings and filming. It was also closed a couple of times to accommodate group visits, until the new lecture room in the Victoria Tower was opened in May.

A total of 5607 items – volumes, boxes, files, original Acts, plans, microfilm and other items – were produced for searchers. This represents an average of 5.44 orderable units per visit. There were 33 requests from parliamentary offices for loans of documents and 133 requests for records to be brought from the London Metropolitan Archives where some records are stored during the Victoria Tower building work.

There were 451 new searchers of whom 3% were from the media, 28% came for official and business purposes and 69% were pursuing research for academic or personal reasons. 48% were conducting research into the 20th and 21st centuries, 31% the 19th century, and the remaining 21% used pre-1800 sources or did not specify.

Subjects being researched included genealogy (6% of new applicants), and legal matters (10%). 4% were researching architectural issues, including ornamental lions, windows in the Palace of Westminster, stained glass in St Stephen's Chapel, and the interior and layout of the chambers 1660–1680. 12% declared an interest in parliamentary history, which included ceremonial Parliamentary robes in the 17th century, the Palace of Westminster munitions factory, the Parliamentary Press Gallery, and the Speaker’s Coach. 11% were interested in local and transport issues, including Spitalfields Market development history, public parks and walks in the 19th century, the construction of Blackfriars Bridge, and tube railways in the early 20th century. 10% were researching contemporary issues, including devolution and its constitutional consequences, Split Capital Investment Trusts, greyhound racing, the extradition of General Pinochet, and cigarette advertising legislation laws. The remaining 47% pursued general historical subjects. Twentieth century topics included debates after the screening of ‘Cathy Come Home’, attitudes to Britain’s return to the Gold Standard in 1925, Roger Casement’s ‘Congo Report’ in 1903, British economic relations with sub-Saharan Africa, the employment of black troops 1916–1922, British evaluation of Soviet War Aims 1941–1945, an Anglo–German comparison of right wing intellectuals, the German Home Front and the 1918 Armistice, and Lord Beaverbrook and the Dolly Sisters.

A broad range of topics from earlier periods included the international bullion trade 1600–1800, fireworks c1749, Huguenot immigration in the 1680s, the 18th century brass trade for scientific instruments, the Duchess of Kingston bigamy trial in 1776, women petitioners in the civil war period,
Tennyson’s elevation to the peerage, the history of paper mills, medicine in 18th century Caribbean slave societies, and women’s financial networks in the 18th century. Subjects for biographical studies included Oswald Mosley, Michael Foot, C. P. Scott, Master of the Rolls Sir Joseph Jekyll, Charles Bradlaugh, Edmund Burke, Czech émigré Josef Jasten, T. C. Hansard, and Catholic landscape gardener Richard Woods.

**Searcher profiles**

Caroline Stanford, an historian for The Landmark Trust, was a regular visitor to the Search Room whilst undertaking research for the restoration of The Grange, the house of the architect and designer Augustus Welby Pugin in Ramsgate, Kent. The Trust is a buildings conservation charity which rescues and restores buildings, and then promotes and lets them to resource their maintenance and conservation. Caroline’s job is to research the history of the buildings which the Trust is restoring.

Pugin designed The Grange as his family residence and in his library overlooking the sea he completed his celebrated designs for the interior of the Houses of Parliament. The Grange, a grade 1 listed building, had stood empty and derelict for years until 1997 when the Trust was awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to buy it. Work was begun on its restoration in January 2004 after a lengthy fundraising campaign and should be completed at the end of 2005.

Pugin’s papers are scattered in various repositories, but Caroline found important resources for her research at the Record Office. Of particular value was a copy of the journal of Pugin’s third wife Jane, from which she identified domestic details which will assist the interior restoration of the house. ‘I have a genuine admiration for what Jane coped with during her marriage to Pugin and feel her part in his life deserves to be properly recognised and documented within the growing body of literature about the Pugin family’ said Caroline. Dearest Augustus and I: The Journal of Jane Pugin edited by Caroline Stanford was published by Spire Books Ltd in 2004.
Gillian Stevenson was accompanied by Bertie, her Hearing Dog, when she visited the Record Office. As a deafened person Gillian relies on Bertie to alert her to everyday sounds, and like other assistance dogs for disabled people he accompanies her wherever she goes. This includes places where animals are normally not permitted, such as archives.

Gillian undertook research on Colonel John Jones, one of the signatories to the death warrant of Charles I, whom she believes may be a distant relation. She researched entries concerning Colonel Jones in the Journals of the House of Commons, and examined the record of the trial of Charles I. Summing up her visit, Gillian said that she had felt privileged to study the original manuscripts, and had learnt a lot about a man who could be part of her family tree.

National Survey of Visitors to British Archives

This survey, conducted by the Public Services Quality Group, was carried out in October/November 2002, but the results and analysis only became available this year. The results placed the Office amongst the best performing archive services in London and nationwide and showed that it has maintained the high satisfaction levels achieved in three earlier surveys. Respondents gave a top rating of ‘very good’ for the following areas of strength: quality of advice given by staff 84% (compared to average ratings for London of 49%, national 63%); document delivery 88% (London 49%, national 50%); friendliness and helpfulness of staff 91% (London 59%, national 72%); quality of advance information 71% (London 39%, national 46%); and service overall 76% (London 44%, national 53%).

Remote enquiries

Staff answered a total of 2,869 remote enquiries, which were logged on the office enquiry database. This represented a slight drop from last year’s figure of 2,919. The office was open for a total of 245 days, which represents an average of 11.7 enquiries per day. Logged enquiries comprised 1,344 (last year 1,222) requests by e-mail, 31 (44) by fax, 728 (795) by letter, and 766 (858) by telephone. In addition there were 1,493 ‘quick’ enquiries handled by telephone at a daily average of 6.1.

During the year a review of the management of remote enquiries was conducted in order to ascertain the effectiveness of the system established following the last review in 1999. The Review established that the system is working effectively and that enquiries are
being answered at the appropriate level in the office. The aim of providing answers to enquiries within 10 working days remains our target. Of particular note is the increase in the total number of logged enquiries, from 2093 in 1999–2000 to 2869 in 2003–2004. The number of e-mails has risen dramatically over the same period, from 496 to 1344. As part of the review evaluation forms were sent out with enquiries answered by letter and e-mail over six weeks during November and December 2003. A survey of enquiries had never been attempted before and provides important evidence to stand next to the information we collect about Search Room visitors and to provide some indication of the success of our outreach activities. People were asked how they rated the speed of the response to their enquiry, and the quality and appropriateness of the reply. The resulting ratings were uniformly good with not one rating of ‘disappointing’ or ‘poor’. ‘Excellent’ ratings were given for speed of response by 78% of respondents and for quality and appropriateness of response by 82% of respondents.

Comments included:

- ‘The reply was detailed and quite specific – it enabled me to locate the material I am interested in with great accuracy’

- ‘This is a particularly important service that is invariably rendered quickly, accurately and courteously. Congratulations’

- ‘I have always found the HLRO service excellent in all respects. Response to inquiries has always been prompt… and when I visited the HLRO the staff could not have been more helpful and polite. Top marks on all counts!’

- ‘as a blind post graduate researcher the service is an excellent way of acquiring archive material for my topic ‘blind workers organisations in the 19th and 20th centuries’. The assistance I have received on this and previous enquiries is most appreciated.’

The survey also attempted to collect information about the ‘discovery’ tools used by our customers to find out about our services. This revealed that the most common way for enquirers to find us is by internet searching, with 42% of respondents citing this method. The importance of having a presence on the Web is underlined by the further 11% of enquirers who used the information on either our web pages or those maintained by other institutions prior to contacting us. The remaining enquirers were either directed to us by other offices within both Houses (10%) or by word of mouth (14%) or obtained our details from our leaflet or publications (5%). 18% cited other means such as advice given by local libraries.
In common with surveys of visitors to our search room the survey indicated that the majority (74%) of enquirers were contacting us for the first time and most of these were doing so by e-mail. 32% of enquirers were approaching us in connection with their employment, but 45% were motivated by personal reasons, such as research for leisure purposes or legal issues. Enquiries from individuals pursuing research in higher or further education totaled 19%. As with search room visitors, the challenge for us remains an expansion both in the numbers of enquirers from teachers and schoolchildren and in the numbers of return visitors. Our commitment to providing web based materials is however justified by the results of the survey and it is apparent that we are successfully promoting the Office as a resource for personal research activities.

Of particular satisfaction is the range of age groups using our enquiry service. Although the number of people under the age of 18 is small, there is a balance of people in the remaining age ranges up to 65 plus. Of note is the fact that 40% of enquirers are over the age of 55.

**Use of records**

**Media use**

We continued to receive requests for the filming of documents and were able to contribute to a number of television and radio programmes which were invaluable in assisting in raising the profile of the office.

116 Films filmed Jonathan Miller in the Search Room with the Blasphemy Act of 1697.

Darlow Smithson Productions filmed Simon Thurley, the Chief Executive of English Heritage, with an Act of Parliament and a *Hansard* entry about Millbank Prison, previously on the site of Tate Britain, for a Channel 4 programme *Lost Buildings of Britain*.

BBC Four filmed the First Sea Lord in the Search Room with an Act of 1677 about
ship building for its programme about the diary of Samuel Pepys.

TV Choice filmed the Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867 for an education video.

BBC Westminster Hour interviewed Sir Michael Davies, the retiring Clerk of the Parliaments, in the Victoria Tower, and recorded Monica Halpin reading an extract from Hansard in 1858 about the ‘great stink’.

Books and offprints received

John Greenaway, Drink and British Politics since 1830: a Study in Policy Making (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003)

André Gren, The development of Isambard Kingdom Brunel’s Great Western Railway (Silver Link, Kettering, 2003)


Promoting the archives and history of Parliament

Archive Awareness Month

In September the Office participated in the national campaign to raise awareness of archives amongst the public. The national theme of ‘Love and Hate’ was adopted and for the ‘love’ element members and staff of both Houses together with children from local schools were asked to nominate things that they particularly liked about Parliament, with the promise that the Record Office
would try and match the nominations to items in the archives. The nominations that were received were grouped into four sections: architecture and interior; ceremonial and Westminster Hall; longevity, continuity and democracy; and Parliament reflecting and affecting Society. Staff then faced up to the challenge of identifying archival items to support the nominations and the results together with the text supplied were mounted on the office’s web pages. Lord Renton told us that he liked Parliament’s ‘continuity for over 700 years and people’s chance to be influential by electing the House of Commons.’ Lord Renton was elected as an MP in 1945 and an image of the Return Book recording the names of MPs returned to the House of Commons was accordingly displayed, complete with his name. Jason, from Cyril Jackson Primary School, Tower Hamlets, said that ‘In the House of Lords I loved the woolsack because it looked so cosy. I wondered how long the woolsack has been there. Is it worth a lot of money?’ In this case a photograph of the woolsack taken in 1897 was used as an illustration. The ‘hate’ element in the campaign was supported by an examination of divorce Acts and in particular the Addison/Campbell divorce Act of 1801 which was the first such Act to be obtained by a woman. In response to the campaign Westminster Hour featured the work of the Office on the BBC website.

Local Schools Week

Last year’s joint venture with the Parliamentary Education Unit was repeated and we supplied copies of documents and images on the theme of people and places for sessions with schools from the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Southwark. In addition to the documentary resources the children also had the opportunity to try out quill pens in order to copy Royal signatures and dress up in robes worn by clerks at the table.

Exhibitions and displays

In anticipation of the replacement of the display cases in the Royal Gallery a programme of document displays reflecting certain themes was launched. These were changed on a quarterly basis and included displays which reflected our Archive Awareness month contribution and the acquisition of the Erskine May papers. The first displays in the new cases featured some early nineteenth century plans of turnpike roads and records of the first Parliament of James I.

Documents were loaned to an exhibition within the Palace to mark the bicentenary of the Press Gallery. Our portable display stand featured at the ‘Meet the Neighbours’ event at the Family Records Centre and in Westminster Hall during ‘Open House’ weekend.
Website

During the year we continued to develop our pages on the Parliamentary website in line with the House of Lords’ commitment to e-delivery of its services. As well as providing practical information about visiting and using our services, the pages increasingly support key elements of our outreach programme in the form of online exhibitions and interactive educational features. Additions this year have included galleries on William Gladstone, Erskine May, and the State Opening of Parliament. A selection of important constitutional documents, such as the death warrant of Charles I, are also accessible online, as well as details of our architectural holdings. Statistics for the site continue to rise with over 24,000 hits being registered in March 2004.

Citizenship: a history of people, rights and power in Britain (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways) which was launched last year jointly with The National Archives as part of its Pathways to the Past online resources for lifelong learners, has generated much interest and over 100,000 page views were recorded in March 2004.

Talks

Owing to the siting of new plant rooms in the north-east quadrant of each floor of the Victoria Tower the lecture room on the eighth floor has had to be relocated to the north-west corner. This relocation has enabled a full upgrade of facilities and a change of scenery: the South Bank is now obscured, but the Jewel Tower and Westminster Abbey have come into view.

Staff gave talks to the following groups of postgraduate archivists, historians, societies and others:

- BBC Heritage staff
- British Library public services staff
- CIBSE (Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers) heritage group
- Epsom & Ewell Local History Centre
- Friends of the Public Record Office
- History of Parliament Trust
- Institute of Historical Research
- Liverpool University Centre for Archive Studies
Visits

Amongst parliamentarians who visited the archives were Baroness Amos, the Leader of the House of Lords; members of the House of Lords Information Committee; members of the All Party Arts and Heritage Group of MPs and Peers (4 groups); and Robert Key MP, Chairman of the House of Commons Information Committee. Visitors from overseas Parliaments included Paul Sarens, Librarian of the Belgian Senate; a delegation of Members of the Thai Parliament; and overseas clerks on short-term attachments to the House of Commons and House of Lords.

Fact finding visits made by archivists and records managers from overseas included Richard Lowry, Records Officer of the Bermuda Government Archives, and Leslie A. Morris, Curator of Manuscripts, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Professional activities


Sarah Coombs served as Secretary of the Society of Archivists Specialist Repositories Group. She is working towards professional registration.

Stephen Ellison served on the UK Political Parties and Parliamentary Archives Group and on the steering committee of the Section
of Archives and Archivists of Parliaments and Political Parties of the International Council on Archives. He gave papers on the selection of records and websites at the annual meeting of the Section in Madrid.

Monica Halpin served as Secretary of the Society of Archivists’ Archives for Education and Learning Group and representative for the London, South-East and Eastern region of the group.

Jennie Lynch served as Secretary of the Society of Archivists Regions and Groups Training and Development Sub-Committee and as the London Region representative for the Specialist Repositories Group committee. She is working towards professional registration.

David Prior was re-elected as one of the two representatives of the Society of Archivists’ London Region on the London Archives Regional Council and continued as Treasurer of the Council. He was a member of the steering groups established to co-ordinate Archive Awareness Month events in London and to consider options for a new London archives body. He also served on the executive committee of the Greater London Archives Network.

Caroline Shenton continued to do occasional lecturing on courses for the Archive Skills Consultancy, and is web officer for the EAD/Data Exchange Group of the Society of Archivists. She is also an assessor for the Society of Archivists’ Registration Scheme. During the year she jointly published with Paul Gibbons ‘Implementing a Records Management Strategy for the UK Parliament: the experience of using Keyword AAA’ in the Journal of the Society of Archivists, 24 (2003) 141-157.

Mari Takayanagi served as Professional Registrar for the Society of Archivists, chairing the Registration Sub-Committee which administers the Society’s post-qualification professional development scheme and its professional register.

Louise Todd represented the London Region of the Society of Archivists on the Society’s Committee for the Regions.
The Record Office is one of several offices that constitute the Clerk of the Parliaments’ Department (the Parliament Office) of the House of Lords.

The Office supports the administrations of both Houses and is operated as a joint service of Parliament with its budgeted costs shared by the Lords and Commons in the ratio of 60:40. The Office operates within the discipline of House of Lords’ planning, financial and risk management structures. Each spring it produces a three-year business and financial plan that supports drafting of the administration’s high level business plan which aims to implement initiatives contained in its five-year strategic plan. The House of Lords Information Committee, a Select Committee of the House, has oversight of the work of the Record Office.


**Staff**

Following approval of both Houses the complement of the office was increased by two new posts of Assistant Records Manager. These posts were filled by Leanne Traynor Dutton, who had assisted the automation project, and Sarah Coombs, newly qualified from the University of Liverpool. The revised staff complement was nine archivists/records managers, four temporary archivists working on the automation project, and four support staff. In accordance with service agreements specialist support continued to be provided by staff seconded from the British Library for conservation services and from The Stationery Office for reprographic services.

Within the complement there were several staff changes. Paul Gibbons left to join the Greater London Authority and was succeeded as Parliamentary Records Manager by Kimberly Barata, formerly a partner in Missenden Consulting. Vacancies in the automation team were filled by Martin Robson Riley, newly qualified from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, and Louise Todd from the Sainsbury Archive at the Museum of London. Amongst the support staff there were several changes, notably John Breslin’s move after five years’ service to another post in the House. Splendid support was provided by Colin Rudkin and Katie Cassell to the automation project and the public services team when staff resources were depleted.

**Work placements**

The office continued to be able to offer work experience placements to prospective archivists. In addition Laura Bailey, a UCL student, undertook an archive management placement and Laura Ball, a sandwich student, spent part of her year in the House of Lords with us.
APPENDIX 1:

**Accessions**

The list of accessions which follows constitutes the 33rd annual supplement to the Guide to the Records of Parliament (HMSO, 1971). Items marked with an asterisk are subject to public access restrictions.

**Departmental Records**

**HOUSE OF LORDS**

**Accountant’s Office (HL/PO/AC)**
- Office files, 1879-1996 (13 boxes & 3 outsize items)*

**Black Rod’s Office (HL/BR)**
- Office files, 1953-2002 (3 boxes)*

**Chairman of Committees Office (HL/CH)**
- Office files (Parliament Office Accommodation, Accommodation Steering Group, Filming Steering Group, and Offices Committee and Administration Committee) 1968-2002 (10 boxes, 4 volumes)*

**Clerk of the Parliaments Office (HL/PO/CP)**
- Office files, 1934-2003 (74 boxes)*
- Queen’s Speeches, 2000-2002, (1 file)
- Clerk of the Parliaments’ wig, late 20th century (1 box)
- House of Lords Handbook on facilities and services for Members, 2004 (1 volume)*

**Committee Office**
- Records of the following committees: *(except for memoranda reported but not printed)*
  - Animals in Scientific Procedures Committee (HL/CP/3181): Memoranda reported to the House but not printed, 2001-2002 (1 file)
  - Committee on Chinook ZD 576 (HL/PO/CO/CH): Inquiry papers, 2001-2002 (4 boxes)
  - Constitution Committee (HL/PO/CO/CN): Meetings papers, interim circulations and working papers 2000-2002 (4 boxes)
  - Economic Affairs Committee (HL/PO/CO/EA): Meeting papers, 2001-2003 (2 boxes)
  - European Union Committee (HL/PO/CO/EU): EU sub-committee E meeting papers and interim circulars, 2002-2003 (7 boxes); EU sub committee A meeting papers, 2001-2002 (4 boxes); EU sub committee D meeting papers, 2000-2002 (9 boxes); EU sub committee B meeting papers, 2000-2002 (9 boxes); EU sub committee C meeting papers, 2001-2002 (3 boxes)
  - Finance Bill sub committee (HL/PO/CO/EA/FB): Meeting papers, 2003 (3 boxes)
  - Joint Committee on the Draft Civil Contingencies Bill (HL/PO/JT/CC): Meeting papers, 2003 (4 boxes)
  - Joint Committee on the Draft Communications Bill (HL/PO/JT/DC): Meeting papers and working papers, 2000-2003 (9 boxes)
Human Resources Office (HL/PO/HR)
Office files, 1957–1991 (2 boxes)*
Reports from the Select Committee on the House of Lords’ Offices and signed schedules, 1933-1986 (8 volumes)*
Papers of the Finance and Staff Sub-Committee of the Offices Committee, 1991-2002 (8 volumes)*

Journal and Information Office (HL/PO/JO)
Manuscript minutes, divisions and attendance sheets, messages to the Lords and a copy of the Proclamation of the Queen to dissolve Parliament, 1999-2002 (17 boxes)
Sessional Statistics, 2001-2003 (2 files)
Commissions of Royal Assent, 2003–2004 (5 items)
House of Lords Journal, 2001-2002 (1 volume)
Main Papers, 2002–2003 (20 boxes)

Judicial Office (HL/PO/JU)
List of charges for Parliamentary Agents, Solicitors and others for the House of Lords and House of Commons, 1892–1985 (1 file)*
Appeal cases, 2000–2001 (132 volumes)*

Private Bill Office (HL/PO/PB)
Files of the Counsel to the Chairman of Committees relating to contracts, Parliament Office, Private Bills, General Powers Bills and House Bills, 1977–2003 (9 boxes)*
Network Rail (West Coast Main Line) Order 2003 – plans, orders, drawings, planning permission, book of reference and letter, 2003 (2 large folders)
Book of photographs for select committee, concerning Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (promoters’ papers), 1991–1992 (1 volume)*
Transport and Works Act 1992 - Statutory Instrument no. 2829, relating to The Lynn Offshore Wind Farm Order, 2003 (1 order and 4 sections/plans)

Public Bill Office (HL/PO/PU)
Working Group papers relating to Format of the Statute Law, 1998–1999 (1 box)*
Public Bill files, including bills that did not receive Royal Assent, 2001–2003 (26 boxes)*

Reading Clerk
Office files about information technology, 1974–2002 (2 boxes)*
Files about the Management Information Group, Computer Finance, Joint Working party on computer expenditure in Parliament, insurance for laptop computers, first House of Lords publications on the Internet, and computer experiment, 1973–2002 (1 box)*
Record Office (HL/PO/RO)

Record Office Accessions Register, 1950-1992 (1 volume)*
Bound memo relating to the visit of members of the Historical Association to the House of Lords Record Office, January 1953 (1 file)
Bound volume on Irish Peerage Claims [HL/PO/DC/CP/19/2] and 4 bound volumes regarding ‘Short Calendar of Acts’, late 18th century–20th century
Temperature and humidity monitoring in the Victoria Tower and other papers 1969-1996 (1 box)*

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Committee Office

Records of the following Committees: *(except for memoranda reported but not printed)
Culture, Media and Sport Committee (HC/CL/CO/DE): Meeting papers, memoranda reported but not printed, 2001-2004 (1 box, 4 files)
Defence Committee (HC/CL/CO/CU): Meeting papers, memorandum reported but not printed, 1996–2003 (10 boxes, 2 files)
Education and Skills Committee (HC/CL/CO/DY): Memoranda reported but not printed, 2002-2003, (4 files)
Environmental Audit Committee (HC/CL/CO/DG): Inquiry files, memoranda reported but not printed 2001-2003 (2 boxes, 1 file)
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (HC/CL/CO/DT):
Memoranda reported but not printed, 2002-2003, (12 files)
European Scrutiny Committee (HC/CL/EU/2): Scrutiny files, 1990–1998 (40 boxes)
Foreign Affairs Committee (HC/CL/CO/CV): Correspondence and meeting papers, 2002–2003 (6 boxes)
Health Committee (HC/CL/CO/DA): Memoranda reported but not printed, 2002-2003 (3 files)
International Development Committee (HC/CL/CO/DF): Committee files, memoranda reported but not printed, 1996–2004 (4 boxes, 12 files, 3 plans)
Joint Committee on the Draft Corruption Bill (HC/CL/JT/DC): Meeting and enquiry papers, 2003 (4 files)
Joint Committee on the Draft Mental Incapacity Bill (HL/PO/JT/MI): Memoranda reported but not printed, 2003 (3 boxes)
Lord Chancellor’s Department Committee: Memoranda reported but not printed, 2002–2003 (2 files) (HC/CL/CO/DZ/2/1)
Modernisation of the House of Commons Committee (HC/CL/CO/CH):
Committee files, 1997–2001 (4 boxes)
Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (HC/CL/CO/DC): Office files, 1994–2003 (15 boxes)
Public Accounts Committee (HC/CL/CO/DR): Office files, memoranda reported but not printed, 2000-2004 (13 boxes, 4 files)
Public Administration Committee (HC/CL/CO/DS): Meeting papers, memoranda reported but not printed, 1997-2003 (4 boxes, 2 files)
Transport Committee (HC/CL/CO/AR): Meeting papers, memoranda reported but not printed, 1997-2003 (11 boxes, 1 file)
Treasury Committee (HC/CL/CO/DD): Meeting papers, office files, memoranda reported but not printed, 1995-2003 (15 boxes, 2 files)
Welsh Affairs Committee (HC/CL/CO/CY): Meeting papers, memoranda reported but not printed, 2000-2004 (2 boxes, 2 files)
Work and Pensions Committee (HC/CL/CO/DX): Memoranda reported but not printed, 2002 (1 file)

Library
The Barker Family Papers, 1771-1919 (1 box)
Marriage Licence of Ralph Bernal, M.P., c1806 (1 file) (HC/LB/1/129)
Autograph volumes, late 18th century-early 19th century (17 volumes) (AUT)
Furniss cartoon, late 19th-early 20th century (1 item) (HC/LB/1/112/427)
Photographs of M.Ps, 19th century (9 items) (HC/LB/1/128)

Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (HC/CS)
Registers of Members’ Interests, 1992-2001 (16 boxes)

Serjeant at Arms Department (HC/SA/SJ)
Domestic Committee Reports and Estimates and Payments, 1770-1914 (11 volumes)
Office files (HC/SA/SJ/15), 1978-1985 (7 boxes) *

Speaker’s Office (HC/SO)
Office files, 1961-2002 (28 boxes) *

Other records relating to Parliament
Notes on processions to Parliament, 1593-1620. Purchased. (HL/PO/RO/1/164)
A contemporary manuscript of the speech by Charles I to the Short Parliament, 13 April 1640. Purchased. (HL/PO/RO/1/169)
Letter from Parliament to the Commissioners in Scotland, 16 May 1643. Purchased. (BRY/107)
The Constitutional Mirror, Radical broadsheet, (Printer: W. Molineux, Chancery Lane, London), c1820. Purchased. (HL/PO/RO/1/165)
Autograph letters about the 1832 Reform Act, 1832-1833. Purchased. (HL/PO/RO/1/166)
Notebook of Derek Rommel Hudson, 1802-1839’, published in 1939. Purchased. (HL/PO/RO/1/168)
APPENDIX 2:

Staff of the Parliamentary Archives

Clerk of the Records:
Stephen Ellison, BA, MSc

Assistant Clerks of the Records:
David Prior, BA, MPhil, RMSA
(User Services & Preservation)
Caroline Shenton, MA, DPhil, DipARM, RMSA (Cataloguing & Online Services)
Frances Grey, BA (Records Management)

House of Lords Freedom of Information Officer
Frances Grey, BA

Records Manager:
Paul Gibbons, BA, MSc Econ, RMSA
(to 23 November 2003)
Kimberly Barata, BA, MLS
(from 9 February 2004)

Archivist:
Mari Takayanagi, MA (Oxon), MA
(Archives & Records Management), RMSA

Archives Officer:
Robert Harrison, BA

Secretary:
Annie Pinder

Assistant Archivists/Records Managers:
Jennie Lynch, BA, MSc Econ
Leanne Traynor Dutton, BA
Sarah Coombs, BA, MA
(from 14 July 2003)

Assistant Archivists (Automation Project):
Michéle Losse, BA, MA
(to 6 June 2003)
Nick White, BA, MA, DipAA, RMSA
Monica Halpin, BA, MA, RMSA, AKC
Martin Robson Riley, BA, DipAA 77
(from 1 September 2003)
Louise Todd, BA, MA
(from 15 September 2003)

Assistant Archive Officers:
John Breslin
(to 12 October 2003)
Colin Rudkin, BSc
(to 9 May 2003)
Joshua Surtees
(from 6 May 2003 to 8 March 2004)
Richard Ward, BA
(from 13 October 2003)
Katie Cassell, BA
(from 8 March 2004)

Conservation Officers seconded by the British Library:
Paul Slapp (Manager part-time)
Brian Hopkins
Lois Jolly
Ray Rackham
(to 27 January 2004)
Mark Naylor
Fred Pace
Tom McCarthy
Kevan Holland
(from 16 February 2004)

Reprographic Officers seconded by The Stationery Office:
Stephen Chamberlain
Carol Ager
David Trowbridge

Repository Housekeepers:
Gwen Neenham
Madeline Cross
Denise Johnson