

# **Reference Service for Members of Parliament of India**

**Abstract:** The article discusses the need for, methodology and analysis of the reference service provided to Members of Parliament by Members' Reference Service Division of Parliament Library of India.

**Keywords:** Reference service, Parliament Library of India.

## **Introduction:**

Access to authentic information is an important requirement for a Member of Parliament if he has to effectively take part in the proceedings of the House as Parliament is the supreme deliberative body of the country. Apart from specific legislative measures that are considered for enactment, a wide range of subjects and issues covering all spheres of national and international activity come up for discussion before the two Houses of Parliament. It has rightly been said that a good Government requires not only "an informed electorate" but an "an informed legislature" as well for effective control of the Executive. Thus, members of Parliament do need independent, reliable and non-partisan sources of information if their evaluation of Government policies or critical appraisal of Government activities to be effective.

## **Need for Reference Service:**

The Members of Parliament have a wide variety of functions to perform in addition to their parliamentary activities. Naturally, they are to a certain extent handicapped for lack of time and also for not having expert knowledge about the source of information on a particular subject. The main problem of a Member of Parliament in relation to his parliamentary duties, however, is not that there is any dearth of literature available to him, but that he is unable to cope with the constant flow of an enormous volume of literature reaching him from various agencies. Besides, members would like to glance through journals, magazines and newspapers to satisfy their quest for information but on quite a few occasions, he is unable to do this for want of time.

## **Functions of Reference Division:**

The Members' Reference Service(Reference Division), of LARRDIS(Library And Reference, Research, Documentation and Information Service), Lok Sabha Secretariat which was set up in 1950 organizes the dissemination of factual, objective and latest information to Members of Parliament, Presiding Officers and Committees on important legislative measures and other subjects of economic, political, constitutional and judicial interests. The main function of the Division is to keep members informed of important developments in India and abroad. Thus, the services provided by the Members' Reference Service fall under the following categories:

- I. Supply of on-the-spot references to members from published documents
- II. Collection and dissemination of latest information, factual data, statistics, etc. in response to Member's written reference requisitions
- III. Preparation of reference notes on important topics.
- IV. Preparation of Background Notes, Fact Sheets, Information Folders, Study Boxes and Information Bulletins on topical issues by anticipating reference needs
- V. Preparation of bibliographies on important Bills.
- VI. Updating and printing of publications from time to time.
- VII. Setting up of Reference Desk during Conferences/Seminars

## **Organisational set-up**

In order to streamline the work to ensure supply of latest and precise information to members within the stipulated time, Reference Division is divided into two sections

A. Legal, Constitutional, Social and Political Affairs Section

A.1 Legal & Constitutional Affairs Desk

A.2 International and Parliamentary Affairs and Defence Desk

A.3 National Affairs Desk

A.4 Human Resource Development Desk

A.5 Social Affairs Desk

B. Economic, Financial & Infrastructure Section.

B.1 Economic, Financial and International Trade Desk

B.2 Industry & Labour Desk

B.3 Agriculture & Rural Development Desk

B.4 Infrastructure Desk

Each Desk endeavours to collect and make available latest information pertaining to the subjects allotted to it and to brief the members as and when called for. However, the work of the Wing is planned in such a way as to ensure timely disposal of members' reference requests.

## **Methodology:**

The scope of material to be collected in response to members' reference is normally limited to subjects connected with the immediate business before the two Houses of Parliament. Members are required to hand in written requisition to the Reference Division indicating clearly and precisely the subjects and the specific points on which information is desired and the date and the time by which it should be furnished to them. They can also convey their requirements on telephone or by fax or personally to Members Assistance Desks located inside Members Reading Room in the Parliament Library Building. The requisitions, wherever and whenever handed in, are promptly passed on to the Members Reference Service where the concerned officer or the subject Desk starts processing it. The desired information is culled out from authentic sources, arranged and edited in the form of notes or tables, as required, and passed on to the member concerned. The desired information is provided both in Hindi or in English as per Members' choice. The reference sources consists of the Library collection, Government publications, publications of National/International Agencies, Periodicals, Press clippings, CD-ROM and online databases, internet etc. References on which information is readily available in published documents and which do not involve preparation of any detailed analysis or compilation are shown to members' on-the-spot by the library staff at the counter. In case members desired to have copies of any particular document or press clippings, arrangements are made to furnish them photo copies thereof. Reprography facilities at nominal charges are available in the Parliament House as well as in the Parliament Library Building. In cases where information is not available in the published documents, a reference is made to the concerned Ministry/Department or agency to supply the required information as early as possible and the concerned Member is informed accordingly.

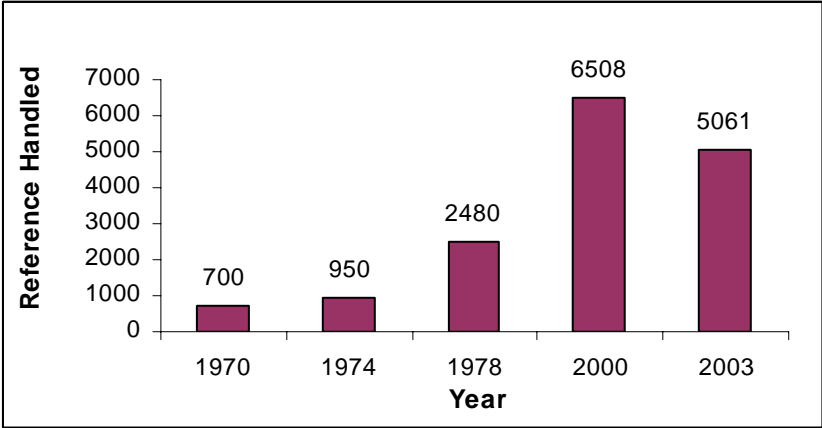
## **Publications**

- I. President's Rule in the States and Union Territories
- II. Council of Ministers since 1947
- III. Parliament of India
- IV. Information services in Legislature
- V. Presidential Ordinance since 1950
- VI. India: some facts
- VII. Ad hoc publications like Background Notes, Information Bulletins/Fact Sheets, Study Boxes etc are published on contemporary issues.

# Statistical Analysis of Reference Service

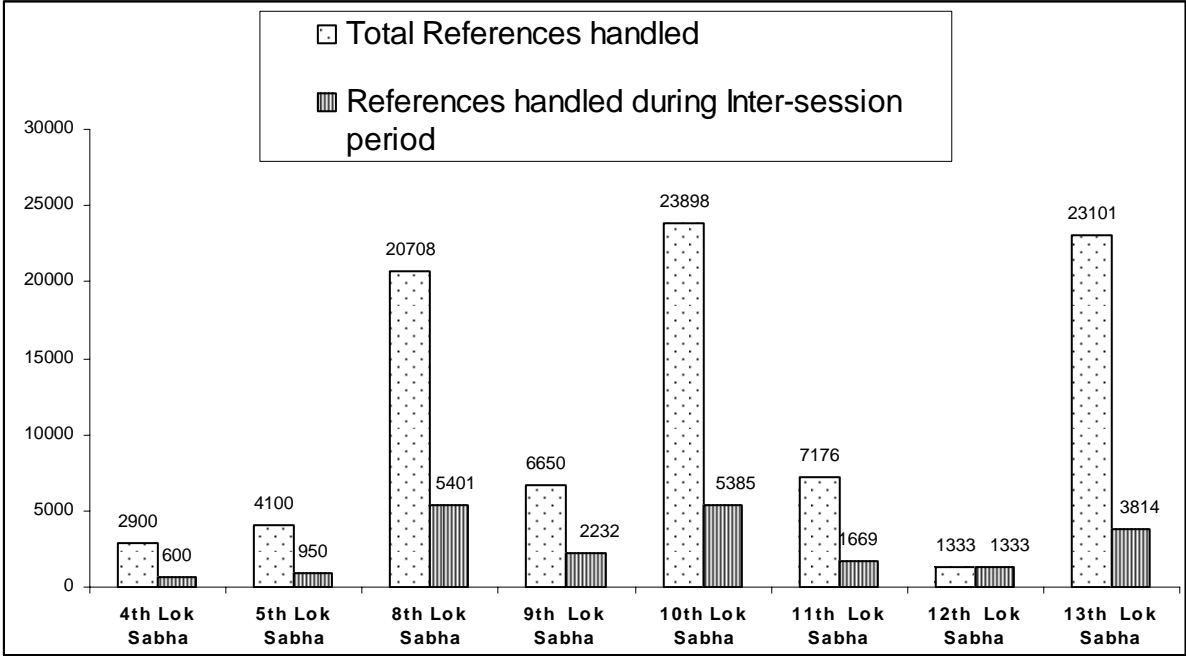
## 1. Magnitude of references handled

Year	Number of References handled
1970	700
1974	950
1978	2480
2000	6508
2003	5061



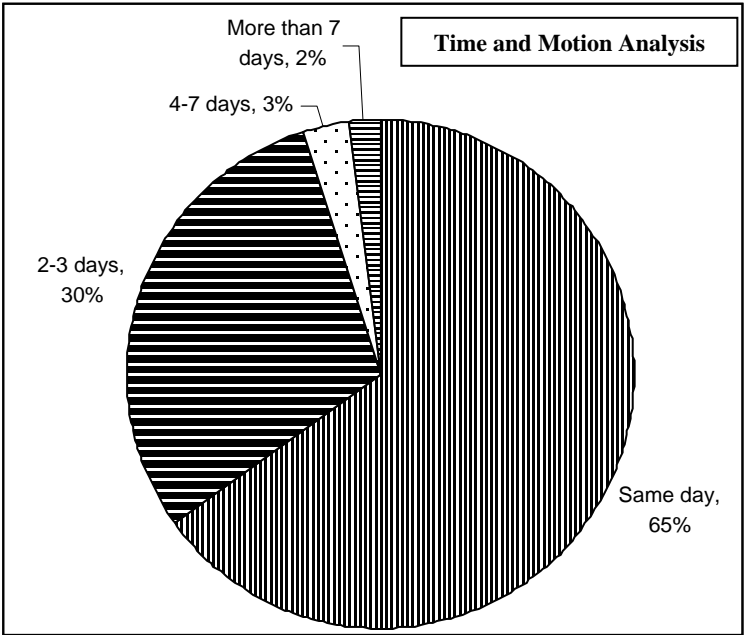
## 2 Flow of References during Inter-session Period

Session of Lok Sabha	Total References handled	References handled during Inter-session period
4 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha	2900	600
5 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha	4100	950
8 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha	20708	5401
9 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha	6650	2232
10 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha	23898	5385
11 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha	7176	1669
12 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha	1333	1333
13 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha	23101	3814



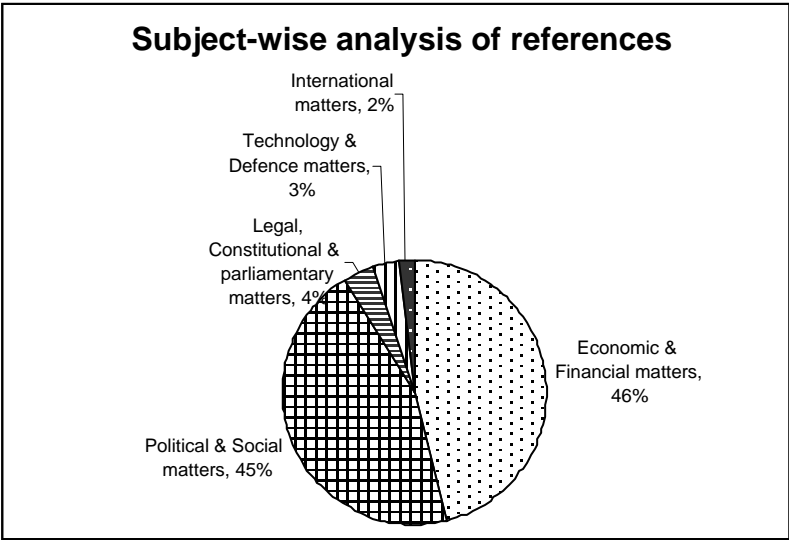
3. Time and Motion Analysis

Time taken to disposed of references	% of total no. of references
Same day	65 %
2-3 days	30 %
4-7 days	3 %
More than 7 days	2 %



4. Subject-wise analysis of references

Subjects	% of total references
Economic & Financial matters	46%
Political & Social matters	45%
Legal, Constitutional & parliamentary matters	4%
Technology & Defence matters	3%
International matters	2%



## **Conclusion**

Today, Members' Reference Service is perhaps one service which is the most sought after by Members, especially during session days. Though the scope of material to be collected in response to Members' references is normally limited to subjects connected with the immediate business before the two Houses of Parliament but in actual practice, the members demand information on virtually anything and everything of interest to them, thus keeping the staff on their toes all the time. However, in all cases information is tailored to the requirement of members and given within the time stipulated by them which very often is quite challenging.

## **References:**

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