

Compiled from the results of a survey conducted during 2010-2011 for the Association of Australasian Parliamentary Libraries (APLA), supplemented by personal enquiry and empirical observation of parliamentary websites, the Table below shows the pattern of spread of key digital technologies among 16 English speaking parliaments in Australia and overseas. Technologies studied ranged from established technologies such as teleconferencing through to relatively new “Web 2.0” applications. Respondent parliaments included both established and younger parliaments (such as the United Kingdom Parliament, the seat of the Westminster system and the Scottish Parliament, established in 1998), together with parliaments of varying sizes (from the Yukon Legislative Assembly with a staff contingent of 5 permanent officers to the Canadian House of Commons with 2,617).

Survey participants were also asked a range of questions about the challenges and opportunities new digital technology presents for parliaments.

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Used for one year or less	✓	Used for more than one year	✓	In use but timeframe unknown	✓
Legislative Assembly	LA	Legislative Council	LC	whole of Parliament	WOP
Department of Parliamentary Services	DPS	Australian Parliamentary Library	APL	full time equivalents	FTEs
Electorate Officers	EOs	Law, Justice and Safety Committee	LJSC	Prince Edward Island	PEI

This paper is adapted and updated from:

K Sampford, “Adoption of digital technologies by Australasian and other Westminster Parliaments – A study of parliaments in transition”, paper prepared as inaugural APLA scholarship holder 2010-11. The full text of the APLA research paper can be obtained upon request from the author.

What’s Web 2.0?

Web 2.0 technologies include:

- Social media such as social networking sites (eg Facebook) which allow users to construct online profiles and establish connections) or microblogging services (eg Twitter)
- Content sharing sites (such as YouTube and Flickr) which host and distribute user created or uploaded multimedia content (eg videos, photos)
- RSS feeds, social bookmarking, news sharing and ranking, blogs, podcasts and wikis.

Key characteristics which define Web 2.0 technologies include interactivity, information sharing and collaboration, and the ability for users to actually generate content and/or control its receipt. Many Web 2.0 sites and tools display more than one key feature.

Technologies in use by respondent parliaments 2010-2011

	Jurisdiction															
	Queensland	New South Wales	Victoria	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	ACT	NT	Australia federal Parliament	New Zealand	United Kingdom	Scotland	Canada, House of Commons	Legislative Assembly of Ontario	PEI	Yukon
	185 (Parliament House); 220 (EOs)	53 (LA) 39 (LC) 185 (DPS)	374	125	120 (WOP) 30 (LC) 31 (LA)	65	40	46	158 (Dept. House of Reps) 158 (Dept. Senate) 848 (DPS)	610 (Parliamentary Service) 120 (Office of the Clerk)	2,500	500	2,617	409	<70	<10
Technology																
e-petitioning	✓					✓		✓			Approved by the House of Commons but not implemented at the time of the survey, e-petitioning subsequently commenced in mid 2011	✓				
RSS feeds			✓			✓	✓		✓ (both chambers)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Social networking sites such as Facebook , MySpace , Bebo	✓ LJSC on Facebook				✓ LC on Facebook					✓	✓ UK Parliament on Facebook	✓ (Facebook)				
Microblogging services such as Twitter or equivalents eg Jaiku ; Qaiku ; identi.ca			✓ VicParlLibrary on Twitter		✓ LC on Twitter		✓ ACT Assembly on Twitter		✓ APL on Twitter ✓ AUS Hansard on Twitter	✓	✓ UK Parliament on Twitter & FriendFeed	✓ ScotParl on Twitter			✓ (PEI on Twitter)	
Podcasts/vodcasts – ie audio or audio-video					✓ (LA)		✓		✓ audio & video podcasts (both chambers)		✓	✓				✓ (a-v archives of sitting days)
Audioboo (enables posting and sharing of short sound files)												✓				
Photo sharing sites such as Flickr , TwitPic , Photobucket , Picasa										✓	✓	✓				
Video sharing sites such as YouTube or Flickr			✓ Parliament of							✓	✓	✓	✓			

Number of staff (FTEs)→	Jurisdiction															
	Queensland	New South Wales	Victoria	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	ACT	NT	Australia federal Parliament	New Zealand	United Kingdom	Scotland	Canada, House of Commons	Legislative Assembly of Ontario	PEI	Yukon
	185 (Parliament House); 220 (EOs)	53 (LA) 39 (LC) 185 (DPS)	374	125	120 (WOP) 30 (LC) 31 (LA)	65	40	46	158 (Dept. House of Reps) 158 (Dept. Senate) 848 (DPS)	610 (Parliamentary Service) 120 (Office of the Clerk)	2,500	500	2,617	409	<70	<10
Technology			Victoria on YouTube													
Blogs (external/public-facing or internal)			✓ (internal Library blog)					✓ APL FlagPost ✓ Hansard	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Wikis (internal or external)			✓ (internal Library staff development wiki)					✓ (internal) (Senate)	✓ (internal)	✓			✓	✓ (internal)		
Social bookmarking sites (such as Delicious , Diigo) or search powered bookmarking services (such as Historious)										✓						
Online forums/e-consultation										✓	✓	✓				
Online submissions (taking of and/or publishing) (includes submissions made via email or online proforma)	✓	✓ (for both taking & publishing submissions)	✓ (taking & publishing)	✓	✓ (both chambers) (taking &/or publishing)		✓ (for publishing submissions)		✓ (both chambers)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teleconferencing and/or videoconferencing	✓ Teleconferencing is used by Qld's parliamentary committees; an isolated past instance of videoconferencing has been identified.	✓	✓	✓ (limited use of teleconferencing; rare use of videoconferencing)	✓	✓ (teleconferencing)	✓	✓	✓ (teleconferencing) (both chambers)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓ (teleconferencing only, restricted to Committee members and advisors)
Webcasting	✓	✓	✓ Victorian Parliament live webstreaming		✓ LC Live Broadcast ✓ LA Proceedings Live Online	✓	✓	✓	✓ (both chambers)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
e-readers (eg Kindle , Kobo , Nook)	✓ (Library)					✓ (Ipad)								✓		

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Technology																
Other, such as feed aggregators or mashups eg xFruits ; Yahoo Pipes ; waves eg Google Wave																

Key Findings		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All respondent parliaments were making use of digital technology in some form or another, but to quite varying extents. The majority of respondents had been using those technologies they had implemented for more than, rather than under, one year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key examples of parliaments with multiple interfaces, including a marked social media presence were, from overseas (excluding New Zealand), the United Kingdom Parliament (an older, historic parliament with whose Westminster traditions all other respondents to this survey have a connection) and the national devolved Scottish Parliament (now only a little over 10 years old, but whose establishment was underpinned by the intent that IT should be utilised to support the Parliament's founding principles of openness and participation). In Australasia, the New Zealand Parliament and the Australian Parliament demonstrated the greatest range of technology use, although it was still not as extensive as that employed by the UK and Scottish Parliaments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is still an emphasis on older, more established technologies over newer Web 2.0 technologies, and on one-way and information dissemination tools over bi-directional and more interactive technologies. Such findings are similar to the results reported on a global scale in the 2010 World e-Parliament's Report and which are based on its 2009 survey. They are also consistent with the classic pattern of the diffusion of technology (characterised by initial slow uptake, which then gathers momentum as more becomes known about a technology's capabilities and as more choose to follow the lead of earlier adopters (the "snowball" effect)).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all respondents had yet begun to use <i>Web 2.0</i> technologies. However, the majority did have at least one such application in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The inclusion of the United Kingdom Parliament in the list above may serve to illustrate that it is not inevitable that the weight of tradition referred to in the literature, and in responses to this survey, will slow technology adoption. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respondents generally were of the view that new digital technologies will extend the range of options open to parliaments, rather than displace older, more traditional forms of communication entirely.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even fewer respondents had a specific <i>social media</i> presence; where they did, and specified a service (or I was able to ascertain one from website information or prior knowledge), Facebook and Twitter were clearly the popular choices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considered against any of the following criteria (willingness to implement new technologies; the stage in the diffusion process at which a technology is adopted; and as innovators themselves), smaller parliaments should not be discounted. To cite some key examples, the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island had recently begun to use microblogging (November 2010); Scotland led the world in trialling the implementation of e-petitioning, followed very closely by Queensland. The ACT Legislative Assembly implemented what it believes to be the first indexed replay of parliamentary proceedings - in 2010, while the Queensland Legislative Assembly launched what it believed was the first searchable archive of broadcast proceedings - in February 2011. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of new digital technology was limited, and ad hoc rather than systematic.

Recent developments: Queensland as a case study

Based on respondent parliaments' reported intentions about future adoption of technologies in the near future, it appeared that at least some of the gaps between parliaments seen in this survey might be beginning to narrow.

As a case in point, Queensland, at the time of the survey, was not a high adopter of digital technology. However, subsequently, the Queensland Parliamentary Library (now the Queensland Parliamentary Library and Research Service) established a **Twitter** feed (September 2011). Subsequently, in November 2011, the Parliament itself established an official [Twitter](#) account (@QldParliament) and set up a [Facebook](#) page, on a trial basis which has now ended; the Queensland Parliament has no immediate plans to continue. In March 2012 the Library launched its research blog, [QPL Post](#), at <http://qplpost.blogspot.com.au/>.

By creating a Web 2.0 platform for the proactive delivery of key information in a concise, timely form (around 1,000 words), **QPL Post** aims to provide an early lead in to issues that are or may be the subject of legislative review (complementing the Library's in-house *Legislation Forecasting Alert*.) Our hope is that this will serve to facilitate the assistance the Library can provide to the new Parliamentary Committee system, formally established in mid 2011 and to which all Bills are now, by default, sent. The creation of a Library blog may also serve to show that individual parliaments may be early adopters in particular areas of activity, even if not always across the board, and also reminds us of the role that change agents can play in the diffusion process. At the date of our launch, the only other Australian parliament to host a research blog in the public domain was FlagPost: <http://parliamentflagpost.blogspot.com/>, implemented in 2010 by the Australian Parliamentary Library (APL) with whose colleagues we held a number of discussions during our planning and implementation phases.

On a final note, the Queensland Parliament is considering a social media policy and is watching with interest the progress in other jurisdictions.