

BIPRA 2015, HOSTED BY THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Session 1 – A Year in the Life

The Scottish Parliament - Stuart Kay and Clare Maddox

The referendum was the biggest event of the year in Scotland, and the Scottish public was very engaged. Turnout was 84.5% and more than three and a half million people voted. Lowering the voting age to include 16 and 17-year-olds led to a high level of youth engagement and the Official Report has been informing groups of young people about their work and ways in which they can become involved.

The referendum period coincided with Bronwyn becoming the temporary editor of the Official Report, and Elizabeth McVeigh has taken on the role of sub-editor for a year. More agency staff have been recruited and trained in order to respond to increasing levels of business, including legislation, which is leading to frequent extensions to Plenary business.

Following the commitment to further devolution for Scotland during the referendum campaign, the commission chaired by Lord Smith of Kelvin set up to seek agreement on these powers reported in November 2014, and, in January, the UK Government published draft proposals for legislation, based on the Smith Commission agreement. The Scotland Bill was introduced at Westminster following the election and includes further changes to powers in relation to income tax, VAT and welfare powers.

There has been considerable debate among the Labour Party in Scotland in particular about its future following the general election, and both Jim Murphy and Jeremy Corbyn have recently visited the Scottish Parliament. This year has also seen Nicola Sturgeon become First Minister.

Two reporters, Kenny Reid and Elizabeth McVeigh, visited the Hague in June to look at the IT set-up and to promote engagement with parliamentary reporters in other legislatures. The visit was funded through the Scottish Parliament's innovation fund. A Dutch reporter will be visiting the Scottish Parliament next week. A visit was also made by Clare Maddox, Stuart Kay and Janet Foster to Westminster in October, and Rob Littlejohn and Bronwyn will be attending the Commonwealth Hansard Editors Association conference in Canada in August.

Lydia Davis provided some help to the OR in June.

Clare Maddox has recently celebrated her engagement, Simon Eilbeck has celebrated his wedding to Sergio, and Paul Nicholson has joined the office as part of the administrative team.

The Scottish Parliament is in the process of rolling out its new Sharepoint system, to connect all offices in the Parliament and promote and enable the sharing of documents and data across the Parliament. In general, the Scottish Parliament is focusing heavily on digital technology as part of its Digital Parliament programme. The Official Report's website function is now much better, with the capacity for Members and others to share specific speeches and questions on social media and an Editor's Picks feature to highlight interesting debates and contributions from Members.

Lastly, but by no means least, Stuart and Clare provided an update on the Scottish Parliament's resident bees.

Tynwald – Lottie Ray

There have been no staff changes this year. Ellen Callister is still the head of the team, with Deborah Pilkington as her deputy.

Due to staff sickness and new international work being taken on, reports were hitting a bottleneck at the start of the year, and so working practices have been changed and new targets have been introduced to tackle this. The new way of working has been successful thus far, although this week's sitting has the largest Order Paper of the year and some staff are out of the office, and it could therefore prove challenging.

There has been better communication with Members over the last year, and an increase in the use of technology.

Reporting work is now being done by Tynwald reporting staff for Gibraltar, Guernsey, Alderney and Sark. It's possible that this will be supplemented by work from the Turks and Caicos Islands, the Northwest Territories of Canada, and the Falkland Islands as the Clerk is keen to take on further reporting work from overseas. In order to take on this work, it has been necessary to recruit homeworkers, who will type and edit the audio before it is proofread and finalised by Hansard staff. The homeworkers are also helping to manage the backlog of work that has accumulated and are being trained in a way that will allow them to undertake work from any of the jurisdictions with which the Isle of Man works.

The annual Junior Tynwald took place last Monday, and following the success and popularity of the Hansard produced of the session last year, the same will be done for this year's event. A similar sitting will be reported for the WI in October.

The House of Lords - Mark Blackaby

It has been a year of transition for the House of Lords, with a new reporting suite, new catering arrangements and a new Government.

The general election has brought considerable ministerial changes, with some new Peers making their maiden speeches as Ministers responding on behalf of the Government. This has provided a challenge for reporting staff with regard to recognition, particularly given that the HoL is the largest upper Chamber in the world and the second-largest legislative Chamber, with 850 Members.

A new retirement system has also been introduced, and some Peers have decided to retire.

There have been two new members of staff – Gráinne and Barry, who have come from the Northern Ireland Assembly and the House of Commons respectively.

The National Assembly for Wales – Meinir Harris

In March 2014, the Assembly Commission initiated a review to explore new opportunities for reporting proceedings and to consider how the report could be used to increase engagement and understanding of the work of the Assembly. Work was undertaken to review existing work practices, collate users' needs and benchmark against other organisations. Meinir led on the consultation with stakeholders, including Members and their staff, to understand their use of the Record and their future needs.

As a result, it was recommended that reports be published using XML, with links to the audiovisual version, and in Word so that the text is usable, in light of problems with the current XML format. An improved search facility is an urgent requirement, as transcripts are difficult to find online. As well as

improving signposting, it was recommended that notification be given to Assembly staff and Members, through Twitter or email, when records are published as a subscription-only service.

The Assembly Commission sought a new editing style that reflects the spoken word more closely. The aim was to move to a more verbatim editing style that will enable the written record to sit more comfortably alongside the AV version. A group, led by Siân Richards, met during the autumn term to discuss how this could be done and the new editing style was introduced in January 2015. Staff adapted to it well and the Assembly Commission is satisfied. Grammatical errors are corrected, but sentences are not reordered and contractions are now used.

One of the initial recommendations made by the new director responsible for the Translation and Reporting Service and the Commission and Member Support Services, Craig Stephenson, was to create an editor's post for the Record. Previously there were editors, 5 senior editors, and then Mair Parry-Jones as head of service. The director has introduced a managing editor's post. After an internal competition, Meinir was appointed to the post of managing editor and is now responsible for the Record of Proceedings and editorial decisions.

Another change introduced by the director includes the removal of proofreading of committee transcripts in order to delivery efficiency savings and enable staff who are multi-skilled in editing and translating to return to translation work.

The main change that Meinir has made to date relates to the publication of the early RoP, during Plenary afternoons, so that the first version of the RoP is published internally within a couple of hours of it being spoken. Transcripts are now published up to 5.30 p.m. for that evening's business whereas, previously, the standard was to publish business to 4 p.m. in this way. The transcripts for 5.30 p.m. onwards are still published the following morning.

As part of the review, consideration was given to the possibility of not logging committees or Plenary meetings. After a two-week trial, it was agreed that this was not feasible for committee meetings, but a further six-week trial of not logging Plenary meetings will be undertaken in September. However, even if the decision is made to stop logging Plenary, it will still be possible to do so when Members are discussing and voting on amendments to a Bill in Plenary.

A couple of different methods of electronic logging have been trialled in order to eliminate the need for reporters to wait for the PDF to be scanned. Unfortunately, although Surface tablets using both FTR Log Notes and an Excel log were trialled, neither was felt to be sufficiently useful to trial in a committee meeting. Meinir will hold further discussions with IT in the autumn regarding alternative keyboards, tablets, et cetera, to see whether any progress can be made.

It is hoped that the display of RoP and the AV broadcast can be integrated to deliver a more searchable and accessible Record, and to make the Record of Proceedings available as open data on the website for others to use. The searchability of the Record also needs to be improved, and an early draft Record will be then be published on the Assembly website as well as the intranet.

The Northern Ireland Assembly – Rónan O'Reilly

The implementation of welfare reforms has led to stagnation and uncertainty for certain institutions. On 23 December, the Stormont House Agreement was signed, which includes provisions relating to flags and parades and welfare reform, although there has been subsequent disagreement on what exactly has been agreed.

In the past year, six Bills have become Acts, and there are a further 24 currently working their way through the legislative process. The current session will end in March 2016. At the last general election, six Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly were elected as MPs. Two are currently holding both jobs, but will have to choose between them.

There are two new reporters, Jonathan and Stephen, who will be replacing Gráinne, who is currently on secondment to the House of Lords. One reporting post has been lost, as one member of staff has moved to the Bill team. It is not certain at present whether the two administrative posts will be filled, as there is a £2 million reduction to the budget.

The number of media mentions of the Official Report have increased, with mentions on the *Stephen Nolan Show* among others.

The States of Jersey – Tom McMinigal

An election was held to the States of Jersey last October. While there have been some new Members, many current Members were re-elected. Turnout has always been relatively low, and turnout for the most recent election was only 30%. A new website, vote.je, has been established to try to encourage voters to turn out. Some 30-35 of Members are from centre-right parties, while the rest come from the left-leaning reform party.

The work of reporting proceedings in Jersey is outsourced to New Zealand, and the transcript is then checked in Jersey.

The Chief Clerk, Michael de la Haye, will be retiring in the autumn.

The current session has been reasonably quiet with less business than usual.

A £150 million shortfall has been identified in Jersey's finances, which has led to some public sector efficiencies to be implemented. There has been no reduction in staff numbers to date.

Members have agreed to webstream proceedings, and it's hoped that this will increase awareness of business and the work of Jersey's politicians.

States Assembly reform has been ongoing for 15 years. There are currently three types of Member: Senators, with an island-wide remit; Deputies, elected by Parish; and Connétables. A board of four members is looking into this and it's hoped that progress will be made.

The next election will be held in 2018.

Houses of the Oireachtas – David Cass

New staff have been appointed for the first time in some eight years, following the panel recruitment in 2005-7. There are three new reporters, and there have been changes at the editorial level. The Official Report now has 39 staff for the first time in six or seven years. The recruitment was undertaken by two separate panels to consider English language and Irish language needs. Two people with good levels of Irish were recruited. The vacant Deputy Editor post has been filled by one of the Assistant Editors, and there are two new Assistant Editors.

An inquiry into the banking crisis has been established. Two companies applied for the contract during the tender process, and the first phase of this inquiry will be reported with the help of 12

agency reporters, who will provide a verbatim transcription. Four Editors will be required to oversee that work, and three of those posts will be filled by Reporters deputising in that role.

It was noted that some parts of the UK media are becoming aware of speeches made by Deputies that are not covered by the Irish media. With an election on the horizon, levels of interaction with the media may increase.

The House of Commons – Lorraine Sutherland

Lorraine noted that discretionary leave has now come to an end and that the practice of time recording was brought in on 1 November. Therefore, during non-sitting times, work has to be found for Reporters, which has led to some interesting and worthwhile projects being undertaken in partnership with other teams, such as the publications and library teams, as well as providing training for Reporters from legislatures from within the Commonwealth.

Last summer, there was a pause in the process of recruiting the new Clerk to the House of Commons. The post has now been split in two, with David Natzler being appointed to the position of Clerk of the House, and negotiations ongoing in relation to the position of Director General. The post of Director General has been funded via a review of senior staff.

It is possible that more services will be shared between the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

For the second tranche of students for the postgraduate diploma course, two were from the House of Commons and one from the House of Lords.

There has been a reduction in the number of applications for reporting posts – falling from 800, to 400 and then to 200. The posts will be amended and may be 36-week, term-time-only contracts.

Previously, Word 2003 was being used in HoC, but a new developer has upgraded the system to Word 2013 and training is currently being undertaken.

There will be a gradual roll-out of electronic logging in the autumn.

The recent general election has resulted in a number of new Members being elected. Some 50% of outgoing Members responded to Hansard's call for feedback, with the ability to search the Official Report being identified as an issue. It is likely to be an interesting parliament, given the Government's small majority.

Session 2: Audiovisual Developments

Presented by John Angeli, Director of Audio/Visual Services, House of Commons

John Angeli began by asking the fundamental question of whether it is clear why we televise debates. He indicated by saying there were letters asking to do it in post-war years but debates still did not resonate with the public until television cameras were let in.

Mr. Angeli showed a picture of camera being used in the Lords in 1968, with studio equipment and lighting particularly noticeable. He noted that this was a brave step as it opened parliamentary business to a new front in satire. The initial picture from 1968 was followed by more images from 1985 in the Lords and 1989 in the Commons, illustrating the evolution of television broadcasting at Westminster.

Mr. Angeli then detailed the current broadcasting process, indicating that on busier days there are 18 concurrent streams and up to 75 hours of video. He argued that despite this, it felt that television was “being done” to Parliament; it seemed that Parliament was a reluctant participant as broadcasting was agreed as something television wanted to do rather than Parliament wanting to do it. He noted there were similarities between the evolution of both Hansard and parliamentary broadcasting in this respect.

Mr. Angeli detailed the current website offering for Westminster and contrasted this to the fixed television broadcasting of the House of Lords and House of Commons. He stated that the website offered access to everything in Parliament, which was better. He indicated that sometimes the broadcasting of certain sections of a debate that were sparsely attended many have given an impression that this was reflective of work done in Parliament and the website broadcasts look to fix this. He demonstrated an example of committees being laid out visually and features of the player, including marks at the start of each contribution from a Member, leading to easier non-linear navigation of a debate.

He progressed with the example to demonstrate the mixing of video with other types of information. He indicated that Parliament is not the first to do this, demonstrating that the U.S. Senate mixes substantial text alongside video and showing an example of the Scottish Parliament using YouTube as a broadcast platform. He contrasted the broadcast of the 2007 budget speech with a current view of how debates are broadcast using multiple media types. He also demonstrated use of subtitling.

Mr. Angeli argued that when print was the primary source of parliamentary information, there was a fear of radio broadcasting parliamentary matters, with a similar fear evident when television broadcasting became the norm. He contends that the the Internet levels access and asked if the user experience changed as a result.

Mr. Angeli asked if “Hansard Karaoke”, the simultaneous display of subtitled text in a live debate, is a good thing. He argued that it is not, as people work with the different formats in different ways. He contended that the Internet is efficient and others will develop the platform. He concluded that we need to work out how such developments can be helpful if debates are to be broadcast simultaneously with text and video being juxtaposed, with Parliament’s process being unique or different to what other developers do.

Questions

How big is the operation?

It has a small back end and the operation is outsourced to Dalet, a French company, because of the size of the operation. Names are logged manually. There could be use for technologies like facial recognition.

How advantageous could this be?

There is a conflict between what said and written and there is always a strength in readability. On a more practical note, people who are deaf would like to see text.

Other issues

Are the systems for this and Hansard different?

Some people are trying to label this as Hansard and some may see the audio and visual as “the record”.

Is there such a thing as “too much access”?

What about news pulling out “juicy bits”, leading to television news filtering access to Parliament?

Our job is to make it accessible in a way that is useful to the public. There is the idea of actively helping one person versus having a passive TV audience of 5 million; “targeted access” is laudable.

Did we like *Inside the Commons*?

Session 3

Unconference: Future Challenges

In the opening session after lunch on Wednesday, delegates reflected on future challenges facing the official report in each legislature. The four discussion groups assessed the impact on, and importance to, our work of values, cuts, verbatim reporting and ICT respectively.

The first group identified the core values of an official report as: currency, accuracy, impartiality, readability, reliability, trustworthiness and accessibility. The Hansard family, which invariably has a common love of language, aims to support members in holding Government to account and support the public in holding their elected representatives to account.

Group 1 felt that we should better market what we do and make it seem more relevant and current. To this end, we should have a closer and stronger link with social media/web team colleagues. Greater use could be made of Twitter, for example, to reach a big audience. It is always helpful to be referenced in the media, as happened in Northern Ireland recently when Stephen Nolan mentioned Hansard on his TV show and, in Scotland, where Brian Taylor talked about us in his blog.

The group expressed frustration that it is difficult for a parliamentary reporter/editor to explain what we do in one or two sentences and wondered how we could best get over people's lack of understanding in this regard. To demonstrate the value of an official record, our websites could contain a list of all the people who use our product. We must get allies to fight for us. For instance, we should try to make special interest groups realise that we're a useful resource for them in monitoring what their representatives are doing. We also ought to make politicians aware of how beneficial we are to them and explain what's in it for them to have an official report. We could win over such decision makers by, for example, presenting them with a bound copy of their first speech and show them how to share their parliamentary contributions with constituents. We need to actively solicit opinions about how good the official report is and then pass those on to the relevant people/bodies. After all, we are writing the history of our various regions.

Finally on values, group 1 said that we could take better advantage of promotional opportunities. For instance, when a school group visits the parliament, all the pupils could be presented with a Hansard report. Our websites could have a "How do you become a reporter?" section that outlines the qualifications that we need to have achieved and the tests we need to have passed — this would reaffirm the message that, "We are not just typists!" We are the experts in what we do, so we have to be the ambassadors of it and be accountable in that role.

The second group assessed the impact of cuts, both those already made and those likely to come further down the line. A key theme explored under this heading was uncertainty — about the comprehensive spending review, devolution, a lack of consultation, and workloads that vary and are controlled by politicians and not us. Cuts could eventually mean that there are no official reports, and they seem to be made without consideration being given to the obligation to facilitate scrutiny. We are facing an increased workload with fewer staff, so when do we say, "Stop, we can't keep doing more with less"?

On a slightly more positive note, group 2 also considered what we can do to improve the situation in a climate of cuts. They posed the following questions. Would more working from home improve things and give people a better work-life balance? If there is a problem of Members valuing our service but not understanding how it's done, what can be done about this? Could we have a formula for identifying business need? Savings often mean stopping something; for example, paper copies, bound volumes, certain business. Would an increased use of TOIL rather than overtime be a satisfactory and feasible cost-saving measure? Finally, the second group pondered the potential clash between revenue-raising on one hand and outsourcing on the other and the fact that, once again, it is politicians who have control in this matter.

Group 3 looked at the concept of verbatim reporting, an issue of particular relevance to the Welsh Assembly's Hansard team. Verbatim reporting has an effect on other departments and Members. It is a form of de-skilling, even though different skills are required to produce a verbatim report, and makes the record much less readable. The stated justification for any moves in this direction has always been efficiency savings. The group conceded that any such changes have probably been partially driven by the introduction of live streaming video, but could they also be a reaction to too much editing in the past?

Group 4 reported on our relationship with ICT. A common problem seems to be that IT departments don't have expertise in Hansard systems and how we use them. Developing better relationships with our IT teams could lead to better implementation of new systems and a smoother process in fixing faults with existing systems. Scotland and Northern Ireland are no longer providing hard copies of plenary reports. The general feeling in group 4 was that there are few benefits to this move other than financial and environmental ones. The group finished by noting that, due to cuts, ICT problems are likely to get worse as people leave and that we must, therefore, find some way of retaining as much expertise and knowledge as possible.

Session 4

Quality Assurance and Statistics

by Jonathan Hoare, Managing Editor, Hansard, House of Commons

The House of Commons took over the production of Select Committee transcripts in 2010, before which one company, Gurneys, had the contract for many years. When the Commons took on the responsibility of managing their own transcripts they outsourced to three companies, so they decided to develop a quality assurance process founded on performance statistics to rate performance.

There are a large number of Select Committees and Select Committee sittings, therefore there is a huge amount of data to manage. In the year 2013/14 there were 828 Select Committees sittings in the Commons (400 in the Lords) and that has increased from just 216 in 2010/11. Most of the transcripts have 24- or 48-hour deadlines, but 38 of them have an overnight deadline.

In the Commons almost a quarter of the Committee transcripts are done in-house by Hansard but all the rest are done by outside contractors before going through Hansard for proofreading; although, in the next year Hansard plans to take on more Committee transcripts in-house. The contractors record and log their own Committees before then transcribing them.

A quality control form was devised so that Hansard could hold the contractors to account for their performance. It was a way to consistently measure their performance. The form has three error category tickboxes: Category 1 is for wrong ID or omissions; Category 2 – mishear or misreport errors; and Category 3 – typo, inconsistency or proofing errors. Quality reports are completed by subeditors for each Committee sitting. A sample of the transcripts is checked against the audio.

There are certain error thresholds the companies cannot go over before a financial deduction is made in their pay. There only needs to be one Category 1 error to make a financial deduction. This has been a way for the Commons to claw back some money from the companies for errors made. The QC form allows them to prove what the errors were – to list and count all the genuine errors. General comments are also given.

As a result, in 2009/10 transcripts cost £545,767 but in 2014/15 they only cost £257,967 – less than half – so across the board they have both increased in quality and reduced their costs.

All three contractors have improved their performance massively over the last five years. They particularly improved in the first year. During the first three months they needed lots of work as the quality was very variable. There is still quite a lot of variation in quality.

The purpose of giving feedback is to let the companies know the Commons are managing the project very closely, that quality is important and it gives them an incentive to maintain their performance. The Commons also have to show that they have achieved good value for money.

Regarding training, the contractors had to go through a rigorous process during the tendering process, where their transcription ability was assessed. Then there was a training day for all of them where they were given demonstrations of different transcripts and editing. But the most important training was the first three months on the job, getting critical feedback with long lists of errors. They were on a 'steep learning curve'. Most issues have now been ironed out and are not really a problem now.

There hasn't been any serious quality control on in-house Hansard work so there aren't really any statistics to make a comparison, although 20 transcripts were checked in 2010/11 and there were half the number of errors than in the contractors' work.

There are now four companies working on Commons Committees transcripts.

Session 5 “Training other Parliaments”

Presentation by Joanna Lipkowska, Managing Editor, House of Commons

Overview

The House of Commons programme to train other Parliaments began in 2011, with a UK-based course for the Rajya Sabha — the upper house in the Indian Parliament. Joanna explained that, since then, the course has been extended to include other Commonwealth Hansards, including Rwanda, Nigeria and Kenya, and has dramatically altered in its structure and intent.

Pre-2013, the programme operated on a show-and-tell model with an introduction to Westminster structures and politics. But Joanna told of the “epochal” visits to Guyana and Abuja, which brought home to all those involved the reality of the situation in these other Hansards and just how far removed they were from our idea of a functioning Hansard department — editing was the least of their worries!

It was time for a rethink, and the focus shifted to providing training to help staff in other Hansards help themselves. Joanna outlined the many, many challenges facing these teams — a massive backlog of work, corruption, limited or no IT systems — as well as some problems that may be more familiar to us, such as personality clashes among staff!

Although Joanna’s presentation was made with great humour, there was no doubting the hard work that she and the rest of the team did in moving beyond editorial tips to getting their hands dirty doing everything they could to help create functioning Hansard offices.

Implications for “our” Hansards

Joanna’s presentation was perhaps a timely reminder for us all to try to regain some perspective. Having previously discussed at the conference the problems facing Hansard in the British and Irish Parliaments, suddenly our IT troubles and isolation from other departments seemed somehow more manageable. Joanna also reinforced that our practices are best practice and lead the way, and that therefore we already have the knowledge and tools to tackle local problems.

Overall, Joanna’s thoroughly engaging and enjoyable presentation helped us understand our role in the global network of the extended Hansard family.

Session 6: Self-publishing and versioning

By Bronwyn Brady, Acting Editor, Scottish Assembly

Bronwyn Brady outlined how the Scottish Parliament had moved out of the darkness and into the light of a system of self-publishing, which removed the need to use an external company for publishing the Official Report. This move had come about due to the rest of the Scottish Parliament pursuing a digital agenda. Part of this included replacing the existing print contract with an electronic archive, which had necessitated discussion on how to replace the publishing services provided by the external publisher.

The publishing services provided by the external contractor included: providing ISBNs; advertising publications; and ensuring a legal deposit of the report was delivered to a legal deposit library. The use of ISBNs had been complicated in particular, since three had been needed for each report: one for the paper copy, one for the web and another for the archived electronic version. By the Official Report's own admission, this had not always been well managed. Any errors could be fixed and republished easily, but this required a new ISBN. The legal deposits effectively ended up being uncorrected proof versions.

The first question asked about the move to self-publishing was whether the publishing services provided by the external publisher should be replaced at all. The answer was yes, as publishing delivers accountability and transparency, and provides a number of benefits. Publishing is also a legal requirement, since the Official Report is defined as a publisher by law. This therefore required the Official Report to publish in-house.

The first decision on how to replace the publishing services was not to use ISBNs, since *Hansard* publications are effectively serials and easily searchable by markers such as date and session. All the publications are also freely available on a searchable website. Secondly, new publications would be advertised both daily, on the "latest publications" page on the Scottish Parliament website, and weekly in an email that interested parties could opt in to. Thirdly, the National Library of Scotland would act as the Scottish Parliament's legal deposit agent and would catalogue everything deposited.

This new system had implications for version control. Historically, the Scottish Parliament Official Report had had a bound volume for only a brief period. The decision to have an electronic archive had been made in 2004. This meant that three versions of the Official Report would eventually be available: the first online publication; a paper version of the first publication; and an archived report online. The paper copy was the only one that had an ISBN. This first paper copy would be sent for legal deposit. Reports would subsequently be proofread and corrected Word files were sent to the print contractor, which posted them online some years later in html format. No electronic versions were deposited.

When the Official Report moved to a new database production system it began to provide a PDF version. It also republished the archived version in house. The PDF version allowed the Official Report to allocate three ISBNs: one for the paper first publish, one for the online first publish and a third for the archive edition. The print contractor continued to deposit the first paper edition, and began to collect archive PDFs for legal deposit.

This was the point at which the digital Parliament programme and version control collided, as from September 2015 a paper copy of the Official Report would no longer be printed. However, since

there would also be no ISBNs, the Official Report also could not claim that the print contractor provided version control. The Official Report therefore had to look into the best way to balance the requirement to produce an accurate report with a product that could be provided quickly for interested parties. There was also a need to consider what constituted a “final” product if there was to be no bound volume.

It was decided that the first publication of the Official Report would be a draft version, with the word “draft” included in the title. There would then be a 31-day correction period, which would take into account a 20-day correction period for MSPs and other proofreading requirements, following which the report would be archived and the word “draft” removed from the title. In the interests of transparency, the online version of the report would have an advisory text to explain the difference between the draft and the final reports.

Session 7

“Samuel Johnson, Parliamentary Reporter” by John Vice, Editor of Debates, House of Lords

John described Samuel Johnson’s background and how he approached the *Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1734 but was not successful. He then described Johnson’s education, other people’s impressions of him and his journey with David Garrick to London in March 1737. Johnson then secured work with the *Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1738, and John described what the magazine was like, and Johnson’s relationship with Edward Cave, the magazine’s editor and proprietor.

Below are excerpts from John’s talk.

“A staple of Cave’s success – the magazine was selling about 10,000 copies when Johnson joined, and circulation rose to 15,000 in the next few years – was his publication of debates in Parliament. Cave had started publishing them in 1732, and the debates brought an immediate success. At first, Cave lifted copy wholesale from another publication, Abel Boyer’s *The Political State of Great Britain*. This publication, which had been produced since 1711, included reports of proceedings in Parliament, with speakers sometimes thinly disguised as “Lord H—x” or “Sir J—n P—y”, sometimes identified by their initials, particularly for debates in the Lords, and sometimes reported directly, as with MPs, for some politicians saw the value of his work and supplied him with copies of their speeches. Boyer says he occasionally obtained ‘ear-witness’ accounts of debates, and his output is remarkable for being the first time that debates in Parliament were reported with some regularity. *The Political State* ended shortly after Boyer’s death in 1729 but this was a gift to Cave, who started recycling some of the later material – conveniently there would be no accusation of plagiarism since Boyer had passed away.

“The addition of parliamentary reports to Cave’s magazine was an immediate success, and within a few issues Cave moved his parliamentary reporting to the front of his magazine, where it stayed until the late 1740s, when public demand started fading. Cave also finessed the way he obtained reports. When Boyer’s reports ended, Cave did his best to get note-takers in Parliament and had one member of his staff, William Guthrie, write them out. It is a way of working that is familiar to all of us, using a log as the structure of a turn, and adding the sentences later, except that our work isn’t illegal, and we have shorthand notes or an audio recording as backup. Johnson’s log writers had another tool at their disposal: Boswell says that Guthrie’s memory “though surpassed by others who have since followed him in the same department, was very quick and tenacious”. Boswell was here acknowledging the reputation of Memory Woodfall, another parliamentary reporter who attended debates and, standing softly at the Bar of the Chamber for hours with his eyes closed could memorise who spoke and much of what was said; Guthrie was his precursor, and the first to report parliamentary debates in this way ...

“So what was the relationship between publishers and parliament? By publishing parliamentary debates, Cave was treading an extremely dangerous path, for Parliament was highly protective of its privacy and would prosecute publishers for breach of privilege if debates were reported; Cave had been arrested in 1727 for breach of privilege in the political news stories he published in the *Gloucester Journal*.

Parliament had been prosecuting parliamentary reporters for at least a century before Cave's publication. The first record in the *Commons Journals* of action being taken against unauthorised disclosure was in 1626, when "one Turnor, dwelling without Westminster Hall door", was alleged to have sold a copy of Charles I's remonstrance before the king had delivered it. He was sent for by the Serjeant at Arms, but "answer brought he was not within". Another offender was caught in 1640, summoned to kneel at the bar and given a "sharp reprehension" by the Speaker. Harsher treatment was given to Lord Digby the following year, who had printed his speech on the Bill of Attainder, and the Commons decreed that it should be "burnt publickly by the hands of the common hangman". The demand for news was intense, as Parliament and the monarch battled through the civil war, and reports of speeches started appearing from 1642 onwards."

"When Johnson joined the ragbag collection of writers and poets who worked with Cave, in 1738, his work included editing Guthrie's output, though sometimes he did so a little too lightly, in Cave's estimation; Johnson wrote testily to Cave: "If I made fewer alterations than usual in the Debates, it was only because there appeared, and still appears to be, less need of alteration." I'm reminded of HG Wells' statement that "There is no stronger urge known to man than the desire to change someone else's copy"; Johnson was above the urge at least sometimes when he edited Guthrie's work. He also wrote poems – his first published work was a poem, *Ad Urbanum* – book reviews, essays."

"Recollections are circumstantial evidence, but we also have evidence from Johnson's speeches themselves that he was doing much more than inventing speeches. This is a complicated and technical area of literary criticism, and we need to delve into Johnson's reports and those published elsewhere to do this detective work properly, but literary scholars have done a lot of work comparing Johnson's speeches with those published in the *London Magazine* and the notes taken during debates by other Members, such as Thomas Secker, Bishop of Oxford. These comparisons show similarities of speaker, though Cave was proud of the greater number of speakers reported in his magazine, and similarities of argument, even of phrases. The argument is, if sources are independent and say the same, they are accurate.

"Sometimes magazines copied each other – Cave copied the *London Magazine* in the early years particularly – but similarities between the Bishop of Oxford's notes and Johnson's reports, down to phrases is firm evidence that Johnson was working from reliable notes and producing more than imaginary arguments; his work is as accurate as it could be when notetaking was banned and reporting was illegal. To give two examples, in the debate to remove Walpole from office, Johnson bases Lord Carteret's argument that "common fame" was the basis for accusing Walpole of corruption; the phrase is repeated in the speeches of the Earl of Abingdon and Lord Hardwicke – and so it is in the notes taken by the Bishop of Oxford too, which were unpublished and unavailable to Johnson. Likewise, notes taken by Lord Hardwicke include the phrase. Similarly, in a debate on prosecuting Robert Walpole, Johnson has Lord Carteret refer to "corpus suspicionis rather than corpus delicti"; The Bishop of Oxford reports the same argument. Similar matchings can be found in many of the other debates reported by Johnson, which suggests that the notes he worked from were accurate and reliable, and his speeches are as authentic and accurate as they could be in the context in which he worked. One scholar, Hoover, rightly raps earlier critics on the knuckles for presenting one or two isolated passages and finding striking similarity or remarkable and amusing

disparity, and goes on to provide the detailed analysis. You're spared that, you'll be glad to hear, but Hoover's conclusion is the same; Johnson's speeches are more reliable than he led us to believe."

"There is one last puzzle in *Johnsonian Miscellanies*. The doctor who tended Johnson on his deathbed, says "the only part of his writings which then gave him any compunction, was his account of the debates in the *Magazine*; but that at the time he wrote them he did not think he was imposing on the world." Did he regret the work? This is fairly easy, I think, to unravel. Take this page of the GM; the false names, the cautious lead-in to the speech, "quote it", are not the work of someone "imposing on the world". The imposition came from later printers, who started collecting Johnson's work and included it in volumes of parliamentary speeches. So, this is the same speech in one of those collections, published by Richard Chandler in 1743. But even these collections didn't always worry him. Boswell records Johnson coming across two of the speeches he wrote in a collection of works of Lord Chesterfield: "I staid all this day with him in Streatham. He talked a great deal, in very good humour. Looking a Messrs Dilly's splendid edition of Lord Chesterfield's miscellaneous works, and said, 'Here now are two speeches ascribed to him, both of which were written by me; and the best of it is, they have found out that one is like Demosthenes, and the other is like Cicero.'" There is a conceit that on our deathbed we see our lives with more clarity, but I am happy to take Johnson's view of his work when he was in a good humour in Streatham; he was proud of the work, glad of the comparison – again – with Demosthenes, and comfortable with the imposition."

Session 8

“...the singular office of dispensing rude laws among uncivilized tribes”: Barbarians, Hansard and Parliament’

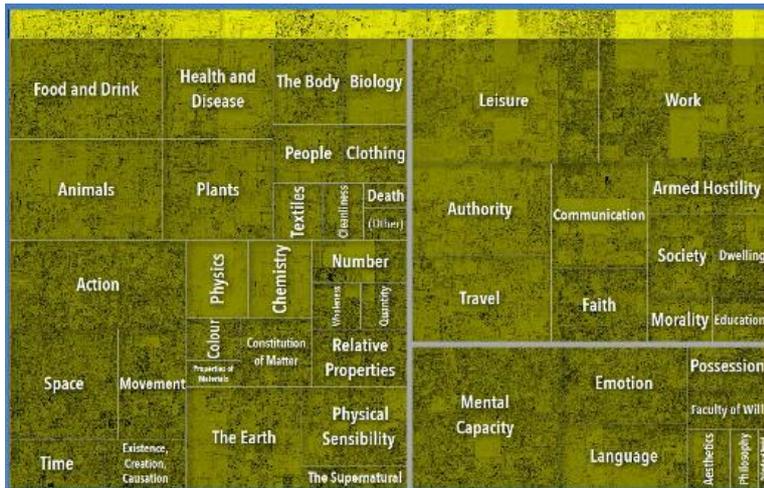
The penultimate event of the conference was a presentation by Dr Andrew Struan. Delegates were joined by colleagues from the Commons and Lords and Emma Woolerton filmed the event for the record.

Dr Struan described the compilation of the *Historical Thesaurus of English*, a massive piece of work begun in 1964 and finally published in 2009. It has been described by Lord Quirk as “a magnificent achievement of quite extraordinary value. It is perhaps the single most significant tool ever devised for investigating semantic, social, and intellectual history”. The work was begun by Professor Michael Samuels at the University of Glasgow and it still goes on, with multiple research projects under Dr Marc Alexander.

The work was begun by hand, with index cards containing every word and definition. All the work had to be saved from a fire which threatened the whole future of the project. There were gasps as we were shown photographs of charred pages.

The thesaurus contains 793,742 words, with 225,131 categories of meaning. The largest category is “immediately”, with an average of 264 synonyms, followed by “dull, stupid” with 248, “excellent” with 224, “die” with 213 and “stupid person, dolt, blockhead” with 203. The words are divided into three levels: the first containing the external world, the mental world and the social world; the second containing 37 major categories; and the third, 377 categories. So, for example, the “External World” category would contain second level words for the world, the earth, life, health and disease, people, animals, plants, food and drink, textiles and clothing, physical sensation and matter, and third level words for alchemy, chemistry, properties of materials, constitution of matter, liquid, gas, physics, light and colour, with a subsection of named colours. Using the data from the project, we can chart how the number of words for different concepts has grown along with the development of modern English. We can also chart the growth of different types of words to describe different concepts.

This was illustrated by a chart showing how we can categorise all words in modern English, as shown below:



We were shown similar charts showing the variety of language in the age of Johnson, the age of Shakespeare and the age of Chaucer, with 247,933, 207,930 and 74,432 words respectively.

Dr Struan moved on to discussion of how words change their meaning. Words can narrow their meaning, broaden their meaning, undergo semantic bleaching, ameliorate and pejorate.

In narrowing, a non-specific meaning will become specific, as with desktop, icon, software, toggle, tools, window, and virus. Actor was not used to mean dramatic performer until 1581, ammunition originally meant all military supplies, and liquor meant any liquid.

Broadening can be illustrated by the word guy, which started with Guy Fawkes, but by 1806 was used to describe a grotesque effigy and, by 1847, was used to describe a person. Docile underwent a similar process, going from meaning teachable in 1843 and manageable in 1795.

Semantic bleaching is a form of broadening when a strong meaning becomes a weak one. For example, awful originally in around 885, meant full of awe, eventually switching to monstrous in 1809. Around 1250, very meant true, but it became an intensifier after 1700. Thing meant a meeting in 685, moving to mean that what one brought to a meeting in 897 and eventually any item or act. In 1425, silly meant pitiable; in 1587, defenceless; in the 1600s, feeble-minded; and finally foolish.

Amelioration is when a word's meaning rises in status. For example, around 893, knight meant a boy or a lad, moving through servant in 950 to a military servant in 1100 and a senior military servant and gentleman by 1399. Sustainable meant enduring in 1611, but by 1980 meant ecologically sound.

Pejoration has the opposite effect, and a word loses status. Hussy meant a woman in charge of a household in 1530, and went on to mean a low and improper woman by 1738. Brutal meant animal in 1540, and didn't take on the meaning of cruel and savage until 1641.

After this background had been given, Dr Struan moved on to discuss the enriched text of the Hansard corpus, which has been set up to analyse parliamentary debate using the historical thesaurus. He began by tackling the obvious question of why we should analyse political debate in this way. It provides a comprehensive overview of the development of ideas and investigation of the full range of options available to any given speaker over time, limits the misinterpretation of meaning, intention, or content and places the researcher within the contemporary understanding of the issues debated. He showed how the corpus can be used to demonstrate the words most often used by eminent MPs, from Gladstone's "doctrine", "conformity" and "freedom" to Blair's "cut", "private sector" and "Israel".

Using Eric Hobsbawm's six complexes of questions around which the study of history revolves and quoting Quentin Skinner, who said "there are in fact no such timeless concepts, but only the various different concepts which have gone with various different societies", Dr Struan demonstrated how the concepts that go with the word-groups for wild, crude, barbar-, civility and "the other" had changed over time, and in their use in parliamentary proceedings. This included the development of the word rude as used in the title of his talk.

Dr Struan used examples from literature, from the enriched text of historical *Hansards* and from other forms of writing to show how word use had changed over time and how using the thesaurus can help us to understand what was meant. The 1860 Commons reference to the "wild people" of New Zealand differed from the 1485 reference to William Wallace, who "set throuch with our ennemys wilde" and differed again from the 1908 quotation, "I never said that the people of Ireland were West African savages".

The presentation was greatly appreciated by all involved.

Session 9 Conference Round-up

Chaired by Lorraine Sutherland

At the end of the conference, Lorraine provided a helpful summary:

Tuesday evening

An excellent reception at Dr Johnson's house. Guests included Jacob Rees-Mogg, who is single-handedly attempting to reintroduce 16th and 17th century words to modern-day Hansard.

Wednesday

The traditional "year in the life" talks

Scotland got things off to a great start with a picture quiz, with entertaining guesses from different teams about what each picture stood for. Lottie from the Isle of Man intrigued us with her account of providing services for small islands and huge wild territories.

Mark gave a marvellously laconic account of events in the House of Lords. Meinir told us about a shift to a more verbatim style of reporting in the Welsh Assembly. Tom from Jersey highlighted the news that the long-serving clerk was about to retire, which prompted speculation about who might move into the job. Northern Ireland's year had, as usual, been dominated by politics.

In cheering news, in Dublin, some posts were no longer being suppressed, leading to the first new recruits for many years. The banking commission was big news. The House of Commons highlighted a shift to time recording and changes to discretionary leave. Staff have been involved in the History of Parliament Trust [oral history project](#) with the British Library.

Quiz

Presented by Northern Ireland. Fiendishly difficult—won by a team from the House of Commons and Jersey.

Audiovisual developments

John Angeli encouragingly said that he did not believe that video would ever take the place of Hansard but suggested that we could use Hansard to make the video record more searchable and more content-rich by adding metadata to the video using Hansard.

The unconference: future challenges

Lorraine missed this but understands that there was a good discussion. Common challenges emerged, with no solutions as yet.

Quality assurance and statistics

Jonathan Hoare from the House of Commons spoke about the 3 transcription supplier companies used and the categorisation of, and feedback on, errors.

Training other Parliaments

Joanna Lipkowska from the House of Commons gave an illuminating talk about training Hansard departments in other Parliaments. Her stories about Nigeria were particularly fascinating.

Thursday

Self-publishing and versioning

Bronwyn Brady talked about the Scottish Parliament's journey from darkness into light in relation to self-publishing and versioning. Shift to no paper version of the Official Report left Lorraine feeling conflicted as she loves paper.

Samuel Johnson

John Vice from the House of Lords gave a talk on Samuel Johnson, which Lorraine had to miss but understands went well.

Networking afternoon

Lovely boat trip and visit to the Museum of London (Docklands) and a really good dinner at the House of Lords—thanks to John Vice for booking the room in the House of Lords.

Friday

Dr Andrew Struan, University of Glasgow

Talk by Andrew Struan, which was awesome.

His description of Professor Samuels' focus on the precise meaning of words without losing sight of the bigger picture could describe those who work in Hansard.

Thanks

The organisers of the conference played a blinder—many thanks for all their hard work in organising a great conference. (*Applause and agreement from all delegates*).