

A Brief History of the Legislative Reference Bureau

Why the Bureau?

Today the Legislative Reference Bureau comprises five divisions: Research, Revisors, LRB-SO, Library, and Public Access. But how did we get to this state from the original 1943 conception of the Bureau, a modest research office within the University of Hawai'i?

The impetus for the creation of the Legislative Reference Bureau seems to have been a desire to provide the Governor and the Legislature with a reliable source of information to use for bill drafting and devising Territorial policy. The Bureau's enabling legislation, adopted in 1943, lists seven specific duties of the Bureau:

- (1) To assist the Governor and the Legislature by providing impartial and accurate information and reports;
- (2) To provide a comprehensive research and reference service on legislative and administrative problems;
- (3) To secure reports from Territorial and other state offices "as will furnish the fullest information practicable on all matters pertaining to current or proposed legislation and to legislative and administrative problems";
- (4) To secure information by

cooperation with sister agencies in the United States;

- (5) To furnish the Governor



*George Hall at the University of Hawai'i,
Manoa - the Bureau's first home*

and the Legislators a digest of information and material pertaining to legislative problems;

- (6) To draft bills for the Governor and Legislators; and

- (7) To make available reference materials to Territorial agencies and to citizens.

The Bureau contained only the equivalent of today's research division. Interestingly, the Bureau was not placed within the legislature, but found its home in the University of Hawai'i. Its professional staff members were appointed by the president of the university, and confirmed by the board of regents. Their pay scale was tied to that of the UH faculty.

Why was the LRB made a part of UH? According to former assistant director for research Rick Kahle, it was to insulate the

Bureau from legislative politics. But was UH the best programmatic placement for the Bureau?

Some thought not: as early as 1949, legislation was introduced to place the Bureau under the attorney general. According to the 1949 Advertiser, Attorney General, Walter Ackerman Jr., said that the Bureau was doing "a marvelous piece of work" and was at a loss as to why anyone would want to transfer it to his department.

In 1951, legislation was introduced to move the Bureau out of UH and make it a separate territorial agency, with a director appointed by legislative leaders. An Advertiser editorial of that time weighed the "political peril" of placing it under legislative control with the danger of having it subsumed within the UH structure, saying that the Bureau was "too valuable to destroy."



In the basement of George Hall: note the placement of the louvered windows.

A Library is Born

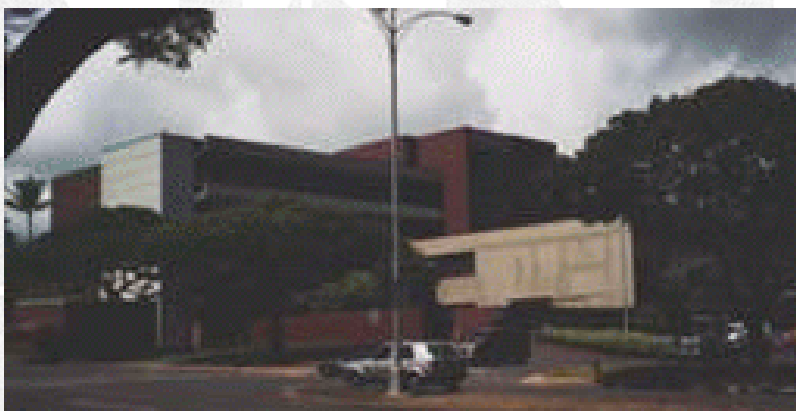
Although the Bureau was given the statutory duty of providing a comprehensive research and reference service and collecting Territorial reports, it was not until 1947 that a formal library was established. Nelle Signor came from the University of Illinois to help establish the library. She was succeeded by Margaret Holden, who was head librarian from 1953 to 1962. Hanako Kobayashi was head librarian from 1962 to 1987, and Frances Enos has been head librarian since then.

The LRB: a Long Tradition of Hard Work

Even early in the Bureau history, the staff hit the ground running. A 1949 clipping from the Advertiser noted that “during the last month, every [staff] member put in many hours of overtime, without extra pay.” The Bureau was said to “pride itself on its accuracy and impartiality. To achieve this, no report leaves the office until it has been checked by at least two members of the research staff.”

Bills at that time were completely typed by hand; Jim Funaki, long-time House majority attorney, reminisced about the *fourteen-layer* carbons that had to be used to assure that the necessary copies could be distributed. He used to get copy number 8, which often was barely legible; he has no idea how those further down in the hierar-

chy managed to make sense out of the ever-fainter subsequent carbon copies. Using carbons was tedious and difficult: any change that needed to be made had to be whited-out by hand on all copies of the carbons. Rick Kahle noted that, due to the tremendous work load, the Legislature did not use the Ramseyer format, as we do today: instead of setting out the



Sinclair Library at U.H. Manoa -- the LRB's second home

entire section or subsection and including all changes, in the early days often only individual sentences were amended. Here's the prefatory language from a tax code amendment in 1959, for example: “The second paragraph of subsection (d) of section 128-15 of the Revised Laws of Hawaii 1955 as amended is hereby amended to read as follows.” No wonder those early volumes of the session laws are so skinny!

Life at the Bureau had its fun moments: apparently there was a significant degree of camaraderie between the agencies that served the Legislature. The LRB scrapbooks contain a 1959 “resolution” from staff of the Public Archives to the Bureau to “E hui aku me oukou i oleloia/

A laulea pu i kou lokomaikai maoli” -- “Come and party with us, “not to condole but to ‘gloat over your liberation’ and departure to greener fields” (in other words, to return to the peaceful fields of academia at the UH Manoa campus).

The Places We Were

The LRB was originally located at the “old library” at the University of Hawaii — George Hall — from 1943 to 1955. In 1956 the Bureau moved to the “new library” — Sinclair Library. But the Bureau was only at home part of the time.

During every legislative session, the researchers and the librarians would pack up a “session library” (a mini-library containing whatever materials they estimated would be of most interest and use to the legislature) and move downtown to be close to the legislature. In these days the Legislature operated out of ‘Iolani Palace. At various points in time, the Bureau staff was housed for the session in the ‘Iolani Palace Basement, the Honolulu Armory, and, according to the Advertiser, in what must have been a picaresque session, “a little slum colony of decaying voting booths and other shacks that mar the area around ‘Iolani Palace.”

The Bureau lost its session-home-away-from-home when Honolulu Armory was razed to make way for the new state

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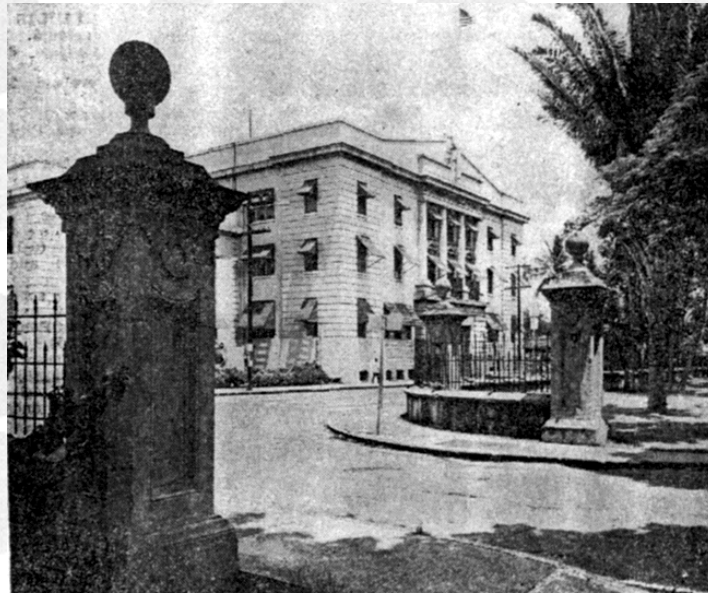
Capitol, which was completed in 1965 and first used in the 1966 session. After construction was finished, according to long-time researcher Susan Claveria, the Senate came to the realization that it needed fewer parking stalls than the House did, and that it would be convenient for the Bureau to be housed in the Capitol during session. So part of the Senate parking lot was paved over to add more office space for the Bureau and other offices (which explains the asymmetrical design of the chamber level).

Joining Forces with the Revisors

In 1972, two significant events changed the Bureau. First, it was transferred to the Legislature, and second, the Office of the Revisor of Statutes was associated with it. Until that time, the Office of the Revisor of Statutes, which had been created in 1959, had been contained within the Judiciary. Prior to 1959, the decennial statutory compilations had been put together by a Compilation Commission that was established for that task and then disbanded. In 1953, when the Legislature authorized the establishment of the Compilation Commission for the 1955 revision, it also directed the Compilation Commission to study ways to keep the compilation of laws current. The recommendation of the commission, supported by an LRB study, led

to the establishment of the Office of the Revisor of Statutes.

The initial bill creating the Revisor's office placed it with the Attorney General's office. The first senate draft moved it to the Bureau. The first house draft placed it within the Supreme



The old Armory, the Bureau's session home.

Note the pillars in the foreground: the photo was taken from the back of 'Iolani Palace, looking toward the site of the present Capitol building.

Court. The house draft eventually prevailed. According to assistant revisor Myra Shozuya, while with the Judiciary, the Revisors were located in Ali'iolani Hale, the Supreme Court building. The first revisor was Hidehiko Uyenoyama.

The legislative Auditor's office was formed in 1965, and its first management audit was of the Revisor of Statutes. The Auditor recommended consideration of placing the Revisors in the Bureau as its duties mirrored legislative concerns more closely than those of the judiciary. The idea took some getting used to, but in 1972 the Office of the

Revisor of Statutes was removed from the Supreme Court's jurisdiction and placed within the Bureau "for administrative purposes."

When the Revisors were placed under the Bureau in 1972, the office was moved to the

Remington Rand building, which was on the corner of Punchbowl and Beretania. They stayed there until that building was slated to be torn down for the construction of the Kalanimoku building. The Revisors were on the move again, this time to the former Bureau of Conveyances building, at the corner of Queen and Mililani Street.

In 1977, the Office of the Revisor of Statutes was formally folded into the Bureau. Space was made for the Revisors in the

basement, in room 007 on the other side of the Library from the Research division in room 004. At some point thereafter, they were moved to room 004, and they have shared office space with the Research division ever since. The title "Revisor of Statutes" now applies to the LRB director.

The Status of Bill Status

How did the Legislative Reference Bureau Systems Office (LRB-SO, formerly known as the Legislative Information Systems Office (LISO)) come to

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be? While encountered most often in maintaining the computer system, their responsibility for that is comparatively recent. LRB-SO's first mission, and the impetus for its creation, was to handle bill status and index.

At some point in the Bureau's career, bill status was added to its duties. At that time, bill status was handled by a research division researcher, with the help of session staff, according to former researchers Susan Claveria and Jon Okudara. Everything was done manually on index cards.

According to Susan, when ICSD was developed, the Bureau's system was updated by having ICSD run a printout for the Bureau over each weekend. ICSD would give the bill status staff a printout, which was marked up manually throughout the week, and then given back to ICSD for another printout for the following weekend. When Jon took over, bill status was very busy: he had to run data nightly to a contractor who would read the punch cards. Jon would go home for a couple hours of sleep, and then head back at 4:30 a.m. to pick up 16 copies of the readout, to be distributed to key figures in the Capitol. This went on all session — those hardy bill status workers!

When the law authorizing the Bureau was reenacted in 1972 by moving it to chapter 23G from chapter 304, the Bureau was given the official charge "to

control and maintain the operations of any legislative data processing program as may be established." In 1974, Jon Okudara, the researcher who was handling bill status, spearheaded legislative efforts to computerize the system. The legislature put together a work group that traveled throughout the United States, examining different systems. An IBM system, CICSVS Stairs/ATMS, was



Capitol Center on Alakea Street: the Bureau's home during the Capitol

chosen and put into place for the 1980 session. In 1981, session worker Bina Chun christened the system "Ho'ike," which means "to show."

Jon left the Bureau after the 1981 session (probably to get some sleep) and was replaced by four or five people, and the combined functions of bill status and data systems was spun off into the newly christened LISO division.

Subsequent researchers may have winced at ATMS'

"user hostile" interface, but compared to what had gone before, it was a major step forward. Since that time, LRB-SO added SHADOW, a computerized bill drafting system run from ICSD's mainframe, then moved to a personal computer-based system, still using SHADOW and is positioned to help move to a networked system of personal computers.

Access to Access

In the 1990 session, the Legislature opened a facility at the Capitol to assist the public with access to the legislative process. At first, the Public Access Room was no more than a table and some chairs in a small room on the chamber level. However, it was an immediate success, traveling with the Legislature to our temporary quarters in the State Office Tower/Capitol Center/Hemmeter Building from 1991 to 1995, during the renovation of the Capitol.

The PAR started with an all-volunteer staff, but demand was so great that for the 1993 session, Elektra Anderson from Common Cause was hired as the Public Access Room's first paid session employee. Elektra was eventually made a year-round employee, as was her successor, Laurie Veatch, who took over from Elektra for the 1995 session. When Laurie left after that session, the Senate tapped Kimo Brown, who had been attached to the Public Access Room while running the

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The State Capitol -- the Bureau's once and current home

legislative broadcast project, to take over the job. The PAR was officially made part of the Bureau in 1996. The PAR's expanded space in the renovated capitol has allowed Kimo to hire increasing numbers of session staff to service the public during the session.

Y2K and Us

The Bureau has undergone myriad changes from

its beginning in a small office in a UH basement with a handful of employees, to its present accommodations in four locations in the Capitol with a session time staff of 53. The Bureau has provided over fifty years of legislative service: who knows what awaits us in the next century?

*Susan Jaworowski
Research Attorney
Legislative Reference Bureau*



LRB Directors

Dr. Gilbert Lentz
1943-1946

George McLane
1946-1947

Dr. Edmund Spellacy (acting)
December 1946 - January 1947

Dr. Donald Webster
February 1947 - June 1947

Dr. Norman Meller
1947 - 1956

Robert Dodge (acting)
October 1949 - January 1950

Dr. Robert Kamins
1956 - 1959

Dr. Kenneth K. Lau
1959 - 1962

Tom Dinell
1962 - 1965

Herman S. Doi
1965 - 1969

Henry N. Kitamura
1969 - September 1972

Samuel B.K. Chang
October 1972 - 1994

Wendell K. Kimura (acting)
1995 - present