

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia

**Report by Karen Middleton
2008 Churchill Fellow**

***Examining the operations of parliamentary press galleries in
four comparable democratic systems – Great Britain, the
Republic of Ireland, the United States of America and Canada.***

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Signed:
Karen Middleton

Dated:
July 2009

CONTENTS	PAGE
Introduction and acknowledgments	
Executive summary	
1. Research project	1
2. The Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery: Australia's version	6
3. Westminster: the Press Gallery in London, Great Britain	7
4. The Dail: the Press Gallery in Dublin, Ireland	14
5. The Hill & White House: Congressional galleries & the White House Correspondents, Washington DC, United States	18
6. Parliament Hill: the Press Gallery in Ottawa, Canada	37
7. Conclusions	43
8. Recommendations	46

INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report summarises the findings of my Churchill Fellowship research tour of the press galleries and parliaments of four democracies – Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland, the United States and Canada. My research compared these press galleries with our own, examining:

- * History & location
- * Membership & facilities
- * Governance, administration & activities
- * Security & accreditation
- * Access & relations with government
- * Rules & practices
- * Archives & records

I would like to thank the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for its willingness to support my research and my employers at SBS Television for being prepared to do likewise.

Many others deserve great thanks for their invaluable assistance. In London, I'm especially grateful to Press Gallery administrator Elizabeth Johnson and my friend and colleague Stephanie Kennedy. In Dublin, thanks go to the Press Gallery's remarkable chairman and raconteur Eoin O'Murchu and National Union of Journalists secretary Seamus Dooley and fellow tireless unionist Gerry Curran.

In Washington, the incomparable Chelsey Martin opened doors and she, David, Remy and Charlotte welcomed me through theirs. On the Hill, Kim Oates and Becky Daugherty arranged many appointments. Olga Ramirez and her fellow gallery directors gave their time and insights and Bart Jansen endured questions.

From the White House, I'm grateful to Ben Chang and Caitlin Hayden; from the Correspondents' Association, Ann Crompton; and from the National Press Club in Washington, Sylvia Smith.

In Ottawa, Press Gallery director Terry Guillon – whose very existence led to this project – guided, explained and coped with last-minute rearrangements. And the Ingold and Harwood clans bestowed the generous welcome of old friends upon a weary traveller. Thank you all.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Examining the operations of parliamentary press galleries in four comparable democratic systems – Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland, the United States of America and Canada.

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PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of this project was to examine the way other, similar press galleries are structured and bring back to Australia ideas which could benefit the operations of our Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery in Canberra.

I visited the federal press galleries in four comparable democracies: Great Britain, Ireland, the United States and Canada. I particularly looked at their administrative structures, security and access issues, accreditation and membership arrangements and accommodation.

KEY FINDINGS

Four different political systems have revealed four different approaches to press gallery administration. The press galleries on Capitol Hill in Washington present, collectively, the most decentralised system with seven separate galleries representing some 7000 accredited journalists.

As a single Gallery, the Canadian model has the biggest staff, with 13 people all funded through the parliamentary budget and working both to serve the needs of the Press Gallery and act as liaison between it and the Government.

There and in Washington, gallery directors acknowledge they effectively serve two masters. But all insist they are able to do so without compromise and that, ultimately, their allegiance is to the Press Gallery.

The Irish Press Gallery is subjected to the greatest restriction on journalists' movements and has the least administrative support. The British Gallery at Westminster is the only one which funds the employment of an administrator through Gallery membership dues. Some of the press galleries closely guard their right to oversee their own membership accreditation and remain outside the system of security checks imposed upon other passholders within the legislature. This is the case with the Congressional galleries in Washington. They do not have security checks on their gallery passes, although their members are required to undergo security checks and obtain separate accreditation for significant special events such as presidential inaugurations.

In these galleries, they argue being exempt from security checks and managing their own membership arrangements are vital to maintaining independence.

Yet at Westminster, and among the White House press, the very same argument about independence is made to support the reverse situation. At the White House, United States Government security agencies handle accreditation procedures for media, which involve a full background check. At Westminster, British agencies conduct similar checks with applications for media accreditation handled by the Serjeant-At-Arms. In both cases, journalists say they are happy about that.

Journalists in each system report varying degrees of freedom in conducting their business. All have office space provided for at least some of their members within the building housing the legislatures or administrations upon which they report. Unlike Australia's arrangements, none are required to pay for this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- * That the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery consider options for funding the establishment and maintenance of a secretariat to assist in the administration of the Press Gallery's affairs, guard the principles of journalistic independence and interact more effectively with the public.
- * That the Press Gallery establish and maintain a website which explains the role of the media in Parliament and provides relevant contact information.
- * That the Press Gallery create or oversee the creation of an archive as a repository of important historical information, documentation and artifacts relating to the role of journalists in Australian political life.
- * That the Australian Government be encouraged to involve the Press Gallery more fully in logistics planning.

COMMUNICATION OF OUTCOMES

This fellowship was undertaken with the specific objective of communicating its findings to the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, of which I was formerly president, through its governing committee.

This report will be provided in written form to the Press Gallery committee for its consideration. I will make copies available to the Leader of the House and Manager of Opposition Business in the Parliament and to the Presiding Officers. It will also be offered to the governing bodies of the other galleries visited.

1. RESEARCH PROJECT

On my fellowship, I visited four cities in just over four weeks. The aim of the project was to understand the structure of each press gallery and to compare other arrangements with our own in Australia.

I was especially interested to know what kinds of restrictions were placed on each Press Gallery's activities: whether they maintained independent accreditation procedures; how well each gallery was resourced; and if it had a funding source - through Government financing, member subsidy, private sponsorship or donation.

I was able to compare the membership arrangements and operational rules, administrative structures, freedom of movement and facilities of each and to discuss with journalists, administrators and government officials the most pressing media-related issues they faced.

I met with journalists, Press Gallery administrators, parliamentary officials, serving and former presidential staff, political and media advisers from a range of parties in both government and opposition, directors of legislative broadcasting, Press Club managers and, in one case, a parliamentary Speaker.

PROGRAM

- Palace of Westminster: Ms Elizabeth Johnson, Press Gallery administrator
- Mr Mike Naworynsky, Deputy Serjeant-At-Arms
- Mr Frank Prenesti, Thomson Financial News (Honorary Secretary, Lobby)
- Mr Mike Steele, Newspoint, (Honorary Treasurer, Press Gallery)
- Ms Jean Eaglesham, Financial Times (Chairman, Lobby)
- Lobby briefing
- Foreign Correspondents' Association: Mr Chris Wyle
- Houses of the Oireachtas: Mr John O'Donoghue, Speaker
- Mr Eoghan O'Neachtain, Government press secretary
- Mr Mark Costigan, Deputy Government press secretary
- Mr John Downing, Deputy Government press secretary

Mr Eoin O Murchu, RTE Broadcasting
(Chairman, Press Gallery)

Mr Paul Conway, Superintendent

Mr Shay Byrne, Head usher

Ms Cait Hayes, Oireachtas
communications and marketing

Ms Sinead Maire Ni Bhroin,
Sinn Fein

Mr Tony Heffernan, Labor Party

Members of Press Gallery Committee

Oireachtas Broadcast Centre

National Union of
Journalists:

Mr Seamus Dooley, National Secretary

Mr Gerry Curran, NUJ press & PR branch

National Press Club,
Washington DC:

Ms Sylvia Smith, Journal Gazette
Fort Wayne (Former NPC president)

Ms Marlene Justsen, Archivist

Capitol Hill:

Mr Ed Pesce, Director, Senate Periodicals
Gallery

Mr Robert Zatkowski, Director, House
Periodicals Gallery

Mr Joe Keenan, Director, Senate
Daily Gallery

Mr Jerry Gallegos, Director, House
Daily Gallery

Mr Olga Ramirez Kornacki, Director,
House Radio & TV Gallery

Mr Mike Mastrian, Director, Senate
Radio & TV Gallery

Mr Jeff Kent, Director, Senate
Photographers' Gallery

Mr Bart Jansen, Congressional Quarterly

Ms Annie Tin, CSPAN

Bush White House: Mr Gordon Johndroe, Former
Presidential security adviser

White House
Correspondents' Assoc: Ms Ann Compton, ABC Radio
(former WCHA president)

Obama White House: Mr Ben Chang, Deputy spokesman,
National Security Council

Ms Caitlin Hayden, Communications
Director, National Security Council

Parliament Hill, Ottawa: Mr Terry Guillon, Director, Press Gallery

Mr Kory Teynacke, Prime Minister's
Press Secretary

Ms Heather Bradley, Communications
Director, Speaker's Office

Press Gallery staff

Mr Richard Brennan, Toronto Star

Mr Jean Le Duc, Parliamentary Broadcast
Service

Mr Chris Rands, CBC News

2. FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY PRESS GALLERY THE AUSTRALIAN VERSION

Australia's Press Gallery moved from Melbourne to Canberra in 1927, establishing itself in the Old Parliament House until 1988 and then in the new and current building on Capital Hill.

It comprises representatives of the nation's major media organisations, spanning print, broadcast and online media and the national and international wire services – approximately 300 members in all.

The Press Gallery's governing body is the Press Gallery committee, headed by a president and with a vice-president, secretary, treasurer and 4 general members all elected annually.

The committee oversees any necessary collective administration and liaises with the Department of Parliamentary Services and Parliament's presiding officers – the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Senate President – in matters involving the gallery's place within Parliament. These issues can include matters of real estate – gallery occupants pay rent for their work spaces – access and activities within the building and its surrounds, security and ceremonial or historical events.

Committee service is voluntary and the members undertake their own administrative work. The gallery has no source of significant funding, save for the \$5 honorarium it asks of members when they apply for or renew their two-year Press Gallery passes. Proceeds from the honorarium are spent on cards, flowers and gifts where appropriate.

The Press Gallery is an institution of Australia's democracy with a collective identity and reputation as distinct as the separate identities and reputations of its individual members. Yet the gallery's lack of funding impedes its ability to act collectively.

It has no website and no archive of past members nor any formal record of significant events and there is no central office nor administrative support.

The Press Gallery's main point of contact with the wider community is the president, who juggles much of the administration, invitations to speak, requests for tours, queries from students and others and general correspondence.

The increasing burden of administration falling upon the president and members of the governing committee – including issues of security and access – prompted this examination of other press gallery models and their structure and arrangements.

3. THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER THE BRITISH PRESS GALLERY

HISTORY & LOCATION

The “press” at Westminster was first recognised as a separate institution in 1803, when journalists complained to the Commons’ then presiding officer, Speaker Abbot, that they were unable to report on an important foreign affairs debate because MPs occupied all the seats. The Speaker moved the MPs aside and allocated the “press” its own row of seats and the Press Gallery was born.

The House of Commons Press Gallery and press rooms behind the gallery were destroyed by fire in a bombing raid on London on May 10, 1941. Journalists were given temporary accommodation around the Palace of Westminster until their premises were rebuilt, moving back in on October 16, 1950.

Central to the gallery is the corridor dubbed the “Burma Road”. It was named thus sometime after World War II – apparently, due to the hot and cramped conditions and its occupants’ unrelenting toil.

In 2006 and 2007, the Press Gallery's digs were renovated, requiring Gallery members to move out over two summers. The renovations cost 7.5 million pounds, with the cost borne by the Commons.

The Press Gallery and its senior subset, the Lobby, are housed officially within the Palace of Westminster, alongside the House of Commons. The Commons provides office space and desks for 152 people and the media organisations whose representatives occupy them do not pay any rent. But this does not extend to studio facilities for broadcasters. They have their own premises across the road at Number 4 Millbank.

The Press Gallery and Lobby offices were renovated over the past two years. The Commons bore the cost. An occupational health and safety assessment in 2003-04 declared a requirement of 5 square metres per occupant – an edict which was greeted with some mirth and appears to have been largely ignored.

MEMBERSHIP & FACILITIES

Journalists at Westminster are in two categories – the Press Gallery, with about 300 members, just over half of whom are based there permanently, and the Lobby, whose special designation as senior correspondents affords them greater status and access.

International media representatives are not granted Gallery or Lobby membership in their own right and must join the Foreign Press Association for access to the Commons. The FPA, established in 1888, has 20 designated passes.

Accreditation of online publications remains a vexed issue as does accreditation of free commuter publications. Some passes have been approved on a six-month trial. No freelancers have been approved and, thus far, no bloggers. The Deputy Serjeant-At-Arms explains that to be eligible, applicants must belong to a “credible newsagency,

a credible organisation with an editorial policy”. Character references from established passholders carry weight. Circulation is, the Deputy Serjeant says, “a factor but not *the* factor”. The system is subjective and there is no formal process of appeal.

Those with offices in the Press Gallery have their local phone lines supplied (and paid for) by the House of Commons. They install other phone and computer lines at their own expense. Journalists have passes to access the carpark.

The Press Gallery has both a restaurant and a combined café and bar - recently renovated and named “Moncrieffs” after gallery doyen Chris Moncrieff. The Commons pays the barman’s wage but business in the bar is down and it is, reportedly, struggling. A separate Lobby bar, “Annie’s Bar”, has been shut down due to lack of trade. Changes to the Commons’ sitting hours and an end to late-night sessions in recent years has changed the culture if not entirely curbed the thirst.

GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION & ACTIVITIES

The Press Gallery is governed by an elected committee comprising a chairman or woman, who serves a single-year term and then becomes vice-chairman/woman the following year. Also elected are a secretary, treasurer and general committee members.

The Gallery has a part-time administrator, currently Elizabeth Johnson, who works four days a week and whose salary is funded through membership subscriptions. She describes her job as “a mixture of event organising, book-keeping and reacting to events”. She also organises and runs monthly Press Gallery lunches featuring a guest speaker and attended by Press Gallery members and their invited guests. Held in the gallery’s restaurant, they are valued more as a potential source of news and opportunity for networking and the exchange of ideas than as a money-spinner.

The administrator does not distribute press releases.

Residential members of the Gallery and Lobby pay an annual subscription of 145 pounds and non-residents 95 pounds. Employers mostly pay the fees on behalf of their accredited journalists. Full-time fees have recently been raised 50 pounds, having not increased in the past four years.

Aside from the administrator's salary, the subscription fees cover the annual cost of renting and running two photocopiers, the supply of newspapers and magazines when the House of Commons is in session and, more recently, a wi-fi connection. They also fund the bulk purchase for Gallery members of highly-valued government directories, published twice-yearly, and "extraneous" expenses such as flowers, cards and wreaths when required.

Some traditions have fallen away. Years ago the Gallery dispensed with its golfing committee and it has not held an annual dinner since the 1970s. But it does run an annual essay competition for students, begun in 2003 as part of its bicentennial celebrations, and hosts the sponsored annual Speaker Abbot Award, for courageous journalism.

But it still retains some of the old rituals including the Chairman's Pint – a drinks session hosted annually by the chairs of the Lobby and Gallery to conduct the ceremonial handover from the old chairman, or woman, to the new.

SECURITY & ACCREDITATION

Security incidents over the decades have impacted on access to the Palace of Westminster for both visitors and residents, including the media. The Irish "troubles" naturally heightened the sense of security awareness and visitors now pass through a thorough system of security screening involving metal detectors and photographic passes to enter the buildings.

The 1979 death of Airey Neare, the Thatcher Government spokesman on Northern Ireland, led to a major security clampdown. Neare died on a Friday afternoon in March, 1979, when a bomb planted in his car detonated as he left the Westminster carpark. Further security upgrades were undertaken in the wake of September 11, 2001, and upon the advent of the 2003 Iraq War, journalists were made to wear their security passes - to which they had hitherto paid little heed - more prominently.

Press Gallery and Lobby accreditation is undertaken by the Serjeant-At-Arms' office in consultation with the governing committee and involves a full security check. Passes are issued for three years and the process is cumbersome, complicated, thorough and very slow.

Applicants whose parents are from abroad must wait while British security agencies contact their counterparts in the relevant country to run family background checks.

Historically, any Irish or communist connection automatically raised eyebrows. These days other nationalities or affiliations also attract extra security attention.

Although the process is tortuous and clearance for a permanent press pass to Westminster can take many months to obtain, senior journalists with whom I spoke were happy with the arrangement, if not always the process. They did not want the responsibility of vetting applicants for Gallery or Lobby passes because of the security implications and the risk of granting somebody access to the Houses of Parliament who might have ulterior motives.

There is no detailed map of the building available to visitors or occupants, for security reasons.

ACCESS & RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT

Members of the Lobby have specially designated passes which afford them privileged access to areas of the building not open to other journalists, most notably the Members' Lobby outside the Commons chamber. There, Lobby journalists may converse with MPs and ask direct questions. They may use any information obtained through one-on-one conversations but not anything merely overheard.

Lobby members are also entitled to attend and report on the Downing Street briefings, held daily not in Downing Street but in the Treasury Building and at the Parliament. The briefings are on the record but are restricted and are not televised, although the Prime Minister's office publishes a summary on its website.

Making phone calls or transmitting text messages from Lobby briefings is banned. Anyone leaving the room during a briefing is not allowed to re-enter.

The Prime Minister's staff will also conduct a "huddle" in the lower gallery beside the Commons chamber after Prime Minister's Questions if there is a big issue or event, such as the Budget.

The Prime Minister holds a formal press conference once a month.

The now-former Speaker banned journalists from an area frequented by MPs known as the "terrace", although they are allowed into the nearby Terrace Cafeteria in the company of an MP.

RULES & PRACTICES

There is no set of written rules under which Gallery and Lobby members operate. But, as one senior correspondent explained, "you'll know if you breach them".

Photography is banned in the House of Commons. There is a live broadcast feed of proceedings but cameras are required to focus on whoever is speaking. Journalists may carry and use mobile telephones, Blackberry and other similar devices and digital or other recorders in the parliamentary chambers provided phones are switched to silent.

Reporters may visit MPs and Peers in their offices but only by prior appointment.

Rules governing the custom and practice involving the Press Gallery and Lobby at Westminster are not written down. This suits the Gallery and Lobby but is a source of frustration for the Serjeant's office.

ARCHIVES & RECORDS

The British Press Gallery maintains its own library but does not have a website. Years ago, the gallery had a "works of art" committee.

This is no more, although many works of art still exist – historical and contemporary cartoons, artifacts and photographs. The Gallery has had them re-framed and the Commons arranged for them to be hung in its corridors and offices at no charge.

A website explaining its activities is accessible at www.parliamentarypressgallery.org.uk and also through a subsidiary address www.thepressgallery.org.uk.

4. WORKING AT THE DAIL THE IRISH PRESS GALLERY

HISTORY & LOCATION

The Irish Press Gallery is based in Leinster House, with the Houses of the Oireachtas, the Dail and the Seanad.

The gallery's offices are located along a corridor beside the Dail chamber. However last year, most members were forced to move out – temporarily, they're told – due to structural concerns with the part of the building they occupied. When a stone staircase in the neighbouring Natural History Museum collapsed, prompting a structural survey of all nearby buildings of similar vintage. The survey determined that the area housing the Press Gallery was bearing a weight 13 times its capacity.

All of the senior correspondents are now housed across the road at the Passport Office, awaiting the completion of reinforcement work. Some are suspicious at long delays, concerned they will not be allowed to return but will be moved elsewhere instead, creating distance between themselves and their parliamentary prey.

The committee remains at odds with the Oireachtas over occupancy rates. The Parliament wants one person per room whereas the average, pre-departure, had been eight. They are now looking for compromise accommodation still within the building.

MEMBERSHIP & FACILITIES

The Irish Press Gallery comprises 81 full members and 48 associate members. The House has set an upper limit of 100 full members and provides 43 desks which are allocated to organisations, rather than to individuals. Only about 10 of the current desk occupants are women.

There is no subscription fee for membership although the governing committee charges “a fiver” for Gallery accreditation. There are about 30 senior correspondents, known as the “polcorrs”, or political correspondents – a system of demarcation based on seniority which mirrors the one in London.

Photographers and TV camera crews are not members of the Press Gallery.

The Parliament provides the office space and facilities free of charge – rooms, desks, photocopiers and water coolers. Telephone lines are also provided, with the Parliament paying for calls to landlines and mobile telephones within Ireland. There are no security cameras in the gallery corridors.

Leinster House has a broadcasting studio, used mainly by the government-owned public broadcaster RTE.

GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION & ACTIVITIES

The Gallery committee maintains its own membership list and holds an annual general meeting.

It is governed by a chairman or woman, two secretaries and a treasurer with four general members also elected to represent daily newspapers, television, radio and the Sunday papers.

While positions are elected annually, chairman Eoin O'Murchu has served five consecutive one-year terms, unchallenged. He is a self-acknowledged ex-member of both the Irish Republican Army and the Communist Party.

SECURITY & ACCREDITATION

The Press Gallery's governing committee vets and approves (or rejects) applications for membership.

To be eligible, a journalist must prove he or she is accredited to a genuine national broadcaster or news publication and assigned to cover political issues. The gallery chairman requires an authorising letter from the applicant's editor or news editor and, when satisfied of the applicant's bonafides, recommends to the Parliament that he or she be accredited. Day passes are sometimes issued.

Press Gallery members are the only passholders at Leinster House who are not subjected to formal security checks.

ACCESS & RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT

The Press Gallery has a formal briefing once a week, after Cabinet meetings, from three members of the Government Information Service. The briefing is on the record but recording devices are forbidden. The spokesmen do not conduct broadcast interviews.

The Taoiseach, or Prime Minister, gives short, informal news conferences, or "doorsteps", two to three times a week and more formal press conferences regularly.

Officially, journalists are not allowed into the part of the building housing the offices of the TDs, or parliamentarians, although they are sometimes invited. Party leaders have special dispensation.

The superintendent says anyone found there would be warned but “we wouldn’t put handcuffs on them”. Newspaper reporters are also able to interview parliamentarians by telephone. Television cameras and still photographers are banned inside the building except on special occasions. Press Gallery members are allowed in the Visitors’ Bar and restaurant.

RULES & PRACTICES

Reportedly, there is a formal set of rules for journalists operating within the Dail but senior journalists and government spokespeople alike say they have never seen it.

They will, however, reel off what’s described as the behavioural “guide” – that journalists are not allowed to “chase” people around the building with a microphone or tape recorder; that television cameras and still photographers are not allowed inside the buildings except on special occasions by prior invitation; that men must wear a collar and tie while sitting in the gallery above the chamber and women “neat business dress”; that formal interviews must be conducted on the “plinth” - the raised concrete square in front of Leinster House; and that advance permission to use the plinth is officially required.

Television reporters are not allowed to use the plinth to record their pieces to camera. Instead, they have to stand in the street outside the building’s gate – a product of the Parliament’s official view that speaking for the House is the privilege of Members only.

There is frustration among media representatives that there is no all-weather facility in which to conduct interviews, a view which finds some sympathy among government staffers.

The Parliament looks to the Press Gallery’s governing committee to enforce the rules.

ARCHIVES, RECORDS & ONLINE PRESENCE

The Irish Press Gallery maintains membership lists but does not have a dedicated website.

5. THE HILL & THE WHITE HOUSE: CONGRESSIONAL GALLERIES & THE WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENTS' ASSOCIATION WASHINGTON DC, UNITED STATES

- (a) GALLERIES ON THE HILL

HISTORY & LOCATION

The “press” were allowed to operate on Capitol Hill from the 1870s and were soon given the right to run their own galleries.

There are now seven separate press galleries, with the House Daily Gallery the oldest. The Daily Gallery credentials journalists from daily publications – newspapers, wire services and, these days, online publications, although these continue to pose a challenge.

At the time of the War of 1812, there were only four correspondents. By the time of the Civil War, their numbers had swelled to 58. Now, there are about 7000 reporters working on the Hill, each credentialed to a particular gallery.

The Radio & TV Galleries were established firstly for radio in 1939 and for TV in 1959. These accommodated journalists who were not entitled to accreditation to the print-only Daily galleries. The Photographers' Gallery was established in the 1950s, once photographers began to be associated with individual publications.

The galleries are divided between the House and Senate. They are: the House and Senate Daily galleries, the House and Senate TV and Radio galleries; the House and Senate Periodical galleries; and a single photographers' gallery, based on the Senate side.

MEMBERSHIP & FACILITIES

Of the approximately 7000 journalists carrying credentials for congressional press galleries, about 3000 belong to the Radio and TV galleries, about 1400 to the Periodicals galleries and about 400 to the single Photographers' gallery, of whom an average of about 70 photographers work in the building on a daily basis, 25-30 of those on daily news. The rest are members of the House and Senate Daily galleries.

The charges for membership vary. In the Senate Radio and TV gallery, members are currently paying \$US25 a year, which is being collected to fund a \$US150,000 fibre broadcast link from the Capitol to the Senate offices. (The House side already has a fibre link.) The gallery's committee can vote in an extra fee if more money is required. The dues also entitle them to membership of the Radio and TV Correspondents' Association, which has its own separate constitution.

To join the Periodicals Galleries, prospective members pay an \$US8 application fee and credentials are for one year.

The Daily Galleries charge the same, using the proceeds to buy miscellaneous items including drinking water and newspapers. The fees also help fund the costs of the combined staff of the press galleries travelling to and running the media accreditation for the Democrat and Republican parties' political conventions, which are massive media operations.

Members of the galleries on both the House and Senate sides occupy fairly confined spaces with, in some cases, a degree of hot-desking necessary on busy days. There isn't room for all accredited journalists to work in the gallery office space every day but space is available for those working there temporarily.

The Daily galleries have the biggest space and numbers. The suite of offices on the Senate side include a communal central lounge area for visitors and for accredited journalists' use. There are 10 old-style phone booths along the wall. These are sound-proof with closing doors and are still used by those who want to make a cell phone call out of earshot of competitors whose desks are otherwise a few feet away. Journalists in the galleries' offices have access to the internet but not wifi.

The TV and Radio galleries occupy very cramped office space. On the House side, the journalists' offices are of the pocket-handkerchief variety in a low-roofed, soundproofed-walled, windowless environment. Those with booths or bureaux in these galleries are required to also have their own separate office space outside the Capitol complex.

There is a small booth-sized studio for live and pre-recorded interviews and both the House and Senate galleries oversee the operation of full-sized press conference studios. These are available only for the use of Members of Congress and the Vice-President. They must be invited by gallery members to use the studios. The Vice President, Speaker and Minority and Majority leaders are allowed to use the studios without invitation. Only members of the galleries, members of Congress and their press secretaries are allowed into the press conference rooms.

A new broadcast studio and office space for up to 40 more journalists on the House side will soon be available in the Capitol Visitors' Centre, constructed as an adjunct to the Congress itself.

Gallery journalists avoid having mail sent to their Capitol Hill offices wherever possible, because of security delays. They report that the irradiation and inspection process can delay the delivery of letters by up to two weeks and packages by up to eight weeks.

GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION & ACTIVITIES

Each of the seven galleries has its own elected executive or standing committee of members – varying in size from five members to seven.

In the Daily galleries, there are five elected members, each of whom serve for two years. Their terms are staggered, with three members elected in odd-numbered years and two in even-numbered years in an arrangement designed to ensure continuity which dates back to 1951.

Each gallery is run by a full-time director and staff who are paid and employed by Congress but hired by and work to their galleries' executive committees.

The Daily and the TV and Radio galleries each have six staff headed by a director. The smaller Periodicals galleries and the Photographers' gallery have three staff each.

The staff are subject to the provisions of the Congressional Accountability Act. Directors and staff are required to be apolitical, often privy to confidential security information to enable their logistics planning which cannot be passed on to the journalists they serve in advance of an event.

Staff are responsible for negotiating access to events with Congress and, at times, the Administration and are involved in event planning, to ensure media representatives have enough time and space to perform their duties.

Some acknowledge it's a case of serving two masters but all insist that they manage successfully to both represent the interests of the media and adhere to the requirements of their ultimate employer, the Congress.

Congress also pays for the office space the four galleries occupy and covers their costs for office equipment and basic utilities.

The duties of gallery staff include distributing press releases to gallery members, organising and overseeing news conferences, coordinating coverage of committee hearings and compiling lists of legislation and upcoming hearings, logging chamber proceedings and keeping records of which media organisations cover which events. Staff also help save seats for reporters at news conferences and busy committee hearings. They will take phone messages for gallery members working in the Capitol complex but members are not allowed to include gallery phone numbers among contact numbers on their business cards.

The TV and Radio galleries issue daily schedules of events around the building, posted on electronic bulletin boards and available in email and pager form to subscribers. These are emailed and updated regularly throughout the day. Initially provided as a resource for the broadcast media, this is now used widely right across the Hill.

The gallery staff have placed a disclaimer on the information after an incident in which a notification about the Speaker's absence from an event was misinterpreted and reported as a snub. Staff in the galleries are not supposed to be quoted.

SECURITY & ACCREDITATION

The Galleries on the Hill guard fiercely their right to accredit their own members, without the involvement of Congress. Their members are not subjected to police or security checks to obtain their passes.

All staff on Capitol Hill are required to pass through security-screening magnetometers to enter the building every day. Members of Congress and Senators are not required to do so.

The executive committee of each gallery vouches for the bonafides of those they credential – and who are therefore entitled to a Congressional security pass. Accreditation allows them to move freely about the buildings with relatively few restrictions.

Visiting journalists and media technicians must obtain temporary credentials from the relevant gallery before being able to work in the building. Galleries issue one-day passes, specified-period longer temporary passes, and permanent passes. Letters of introduction from a visiting media representative's employer or bureau chief are required for temporary credentials, which are issued free of charge.

Despite the increase in security since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, media representatives retain their rights of access and their independence from security checks in order to perform their daily duties.

They are, however, required to undergo background checks for accreditation to cover special events, such as the presidential inauguration, even though these events may be taking place in areas to which they normally have free access. Directors report that these arrangements began about four years ago.

The galleries are required to police their members' behaviour and authority for penalising breaches of rules rests initially with the governing committee. Gallery staff also liaise with the Capitol Police.

Each gallery has a set of criteria to be fulfilled in order to be granted accreditation. Currently, the Senate Daily, TV & Radio & Periodicals galleries are handling accreditation for their respective House galleries.

Some galleries have introduced online credentialling, in which applicants' organisations can check the progress of applications through use of a password.

Key component requirements for accreditation include residency in Washington DC, proven need to cover Congress, separation from the organs of government and production of original news content. Washington-based foreign media are eligible, provided they fulfill all other criteria. But the accreditation process has proven controversial in the past, with some of those refused accreditation, or refused renewal of previous accreditation, complaining it is secretive, subjective and unfair. In some cases, they have taken legal action. When this occurs, the Congress provides legal representation for the galleries.

Each gallery's staff assess applications initially and recommend their approval or denial, based on the written criteria, but are not required to give detailed reasons for refusal. If denied, an applicant may seek a face-to-face meeting with the governing committee accompanied by a lawyer or advocate. Those still denied may appeal to the Speaker, on the House side, or the Senators' Rules Committee.

In 2007, the Senate daily gallery refused to renew the credentials of Joe Enoch, a correspondent for ConsumerAffairs.com, without explanation. Reports at the time suggested the gallery's governing committee did not believe ConsumerAffairs.com was a legitimate news organisation.

The website quoted its founder and editor James R. Hood as saying of the Press Gallery: "The Press Gallery concept is a throwback to the days of smoke-filled rooms and inside-the-beltway deal-making." He said it was "clearly unconstitutional" for a government employee, like the gallery's director, or "a self-appointed gaggle of scribes" to decide who was or was not legitimate.

Across all the galleries, the accreditation rules also require that applicants be being paid for their work, thereby excluding self-publishing bloggers unless they charge subscription fees or make an income from advertising. Religious publications are able to be accredited, provided they fulfill these criteria and are not wholly or primarily funded by churches or other religious institutions.

The galleries also require that applicants not be connected with government, political parties or engaged in any kind of corporate or other lobbying work. Some applicants are disqualified on the basis that their employer organisations are not only owned by but also controlled by governments.

However, the Congressional Rules Committee has the power to direct the galleries to admit particular individuals and did so in the case of *Voice of America*, which is government owned and run. *Voice of America* is literally that – the voice of America’s government – and operates abroad, broadcasting into countries in many cases where there are no independent media. The US Government wanted to ensure VOA was able to continue its work in spreading a pro-US message. The galleries accepted the argument, although VOA has non-voting membership.

The Defense Department’s military journal *Stars and Stripes* was also accredited because it was able to prove it acted as a legitimate newsgathering organisation and had adequate protective firewalls between its application of news judgment and the views and interests of the Defense Department.

The congressional galleries have also had to make exception over the years for representatives of foreign media organisations which are controlled by governments, for example from totalitarian regimes. The exceptions – first made, for example, for media from the former Soviet Union in the 1940s – are made to avoid recriminations against American-owned media representatives in those countries.

Online publications are proving a credentialing challenge for all press galleries on the Hill, with traditional assessment criteria not always keeping up with new media. In the House Daily Gallery, for example, the online political journal *The Huffington Post* has succeeded in having correspondents accredited. The gallery's governing committee determined that its stories were frequently picked up in daily publications and it was regarded as a reliable source. Increasingly, online publications are being granted credentials for a trial period of several months.

ACCESS TO ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Journalists have widespread access to the buildings on Capitol Hill and to their occupants. There are designated positions on the House and Senate sides of the building at which "stake-outs" – or informal news conferences – may be conducted. Journalists may move around in other parts of the building but they have what's known as the "roaming reporter rule" – they can ask questions in corridors but must not linger or impede access.

Journalists may seek interviews with senators or members who are in the chamber by lodging requests for them to come outside. These are made in writing at desks outside each chamber.

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT & THE EXECUTIVE

A directive from the chief of the Capitol Police to members of the Capitol Police force, dated 2005, expressly protects media rights to operate freely in the Capitol complex and its grounds. It lays out the rights and responsibilities of both the media and the police, including that police shall not obscure the lens of a media camera or obstruct media representatives' view of a scene under any circumstances.

Relations between the media and government and within the media can be complicated when the President visits the Hill. This requires gallery staff to liaise with both the Congress, as the host, and the Administration, through the White House, which oversees arrangements when the President moves around.

These occasions have also given rise to demarcation issues between correspondents from the Hill and correspondents from the White House (even those working for the same organisation), when pooling arrangements need to be made and numbers restricted. After negotiation, it has now been decided that, under the current president, where numbers are restricted and media organisations have correspondents both on the Hill and at the White House, presidential visits to the Hill will be covered primarily by White House correspondents.

RULES & PRACTICES

Journalists sitting in the chambers may carry notepads and writing implements but not telephones or recording devices. On the House side, reporters responsible for logging the proceedings are allowed to take in a laptop.

Reporters are not required to say the Pledge of Allegiance in the chambers and are not officially required to stand for ceremonies when Members and Senators are required to do so. However, as they are not allowed to engage in any form of protest, most avoid gestures (including remaining seated) which might be able to be interpreted that way.

Still photographers are allowed into the House under some circumstances, for special sittings, but not into the Senate. Elsewhere in the building, they are allowed wherever other congressional staff can go except the third floor, where the Majority Whip's office is.

They are not allowed to photograph the door-frame of the House or Senate chambers, or through the doors into the chambers themselves. There are conventions but no written rules for photographers' behaviour and the photographers themselves appear to prefer it that way, allowing for shades of grey in interpretation.

Members of the Photographers' and Radio and TV galleries report a degree of frustration at the increasing official inclination to demand pooled coverage, restricting the numbers at events, with security or space concerns often the official explanation.

There are no independent broadcast cameras allowed into the chambers and video may only be shot at designated "stakeout" positions around the building.

Cross-media operations are posing challenges for these locational rules. For example, a television reporter and cameraman caused controversy when the reporter surreptitiously recorded a conversation with a Senator in a corridor using wireless microphone while the cameraman held a small still-photograph camera, configured to shoot video.

Inside the chambers, television and radio rely on the congressional broadcaster, which restricts camera angles, for coverage of the chambers. Cameras only film the person speaking and no shots of the visitors' gallery are allowed.

Congress retains editorial control over the images and reserves the right to suspend the broadcast without warning. On occasion, the congressional broadcast has been suspended when incidents have disrupted proceedings. Examples include a Member collapsing on the floor of the chamber and noisy protests from the public galleries. On these occasions, television networks had no access to video pictures of any kind.

There has been greater scope for diversity of coverage of committee hearings. Many hearing rooms are also not wired for congressional broadcast and network cameras record their own images from fixed positions. But as more rooms are fitted out, some media are concerned that the restrictions applying in the chambers will soon apply to committees as well.

There are designated “stand-up” positions outside the building for television reporters to record pieces to camera with a congressional backdrop. But the congressional rules stipulate that the Capitol building may not be used as a backdrop for advertising.

There are rules of etiquette and dress which apply in certain areas of the building. In the Speakers’ Lobby and in the chambers, male journalists are required to wear a coat and tie and females must also be suitably dressed – generally described as suits, skirts or trousers/slacks.

At the time of research, there was a push from within the Speaker’s office to introduce a new rule banning women from carrying large bags. Female reporters were resisting this.

ARCHIVES, RECORDS & ONLINE PRESENCE

The galleries maintain their own membership lists and keep their own records. In some cases, they keep two databases. The first, of basic information including name, organisation and contact details, may be made available outside. The second, which contains more information gathered during the accreditation process, is guarded closely.

The gallery staff also compile and update contact lists for key congressional and Senate personnel and distribute them to gallery members. The galleries don’t retain video or audio tapes of proceedings or news conferences.

The Congressional galleries maintain web pages but they are extremely difficult to find without knowing the specific url. The portal for the Senate galleries is through the Senate's website but there is no link on the Senate's home page. The url is www.senate.gov/galleries. Links to the four Senate galleries are listed there.

On the House side, the portal is through the House of Representatives' home page. The specific url is www.house.gov/house/mediagallery. This page has links to the three House galleries' pages. Quick links to all six other galleries are available through the House TV & Radio Gallery page. The electronic bulletin board of media events in the Capitol complex is at <http://ebbs.senate.gov>.

****THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB****

Staff from the congressional galleries are given honorary membership to the National Press Club in return for overseeing the operations of the NPC's annual elections. The club requires that 55 per cent of its members be working journalists.

The National Press Club is a profit-making venture but it also has a not-for-profit arm which manages the Eric Friedheim National Journalism Library and archive. The library has a paid archivist overseeing its work with a volunteer assisting.

The club runs courses for journalists, taught by volunteers, in everything from basic computing and research to etiquette on "how to dine with a source".

Operated by a board of 12 members plus a president, vice-president, secretary, membership secretary and treasurer, the club's daily business operations are run by a general manager. The managerial

position is a paid job but the others are volunteers. One former president estimates the position required about 30 hours' work weekly, on top of her day job as a working journalist.

The club hosts regular luncheon speeches which are covered by the CSPAN television network, with a specially convened committee devising lists of, and then approaching, possible speakers. The club's president has a veto power over potential speakers.

- **(b) THE WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENTS**

HISTORY & LOCATION

The White House Correspondents' Association is the organisation which represents journalists covering the White House in their collective dealings with the Administration.

Marking its 95th year in 2009, it was formed in 1914 in response to requests from then President Woodrow Wilson for help in selecting journalists to attend regular news conferences.

Its regular members work out of office space directly behind the White House briefing room, which was built by President Richard Nixon over the old swimming pool between the main White House and the West Wing.

The pool had been constructed with publicly raised funds for the polio-afflicted President Franklin D. Roosevelt and was used by successive presidents including Harry Truman and John F. Kennedy. But the demands of an ever-growing media prompted Nixon to reclaim the space.

President George W. Bush authorised a renovation of the room – which remains nowhere near large enough to accommodate the whole accredited press corps – and it was re-opened in 2007.

MEMBERSHIP & FACILITIES

Membership of the White House Correspondents' Association is in three categories.

Regular members are required to be employed on the editorial staff of a newsgathering organisation which regularly reports on the White House and must be primarily assigned to cover the White House themselves.

Associate members are former regular members who are still working media representatives but who no longer covering the White House. They don't have voting or office-bearing rights within the association.

Regular and associate membership costs \$US35 a year. Applicants for regular membership must already have permanent White House press credentials. Would-be associate members must have either the same or permanent credentials to one of the Congressional galleries.

Membership in both cases is tied to employment. Changing jobs requires a new membership application and applications must be signed by the employer or bureau chief.

Honorary membership is bestowed upon people selected by the association as having rendered it significant assistance or having distinguished themselves in public life. Members may not be engaged in any lobbying, public relations or government work, or be employed by a stock exchange or involved in share trading of any kind.

At the White House itself, the media work space has recently been renovated, in part driven by a security requirement that the windows out to the Rose Garden be sealed off. While the White House essentially paid the overall renovation bill, the press corps were involved in its design and their organisations paid the individual re-fit costs for each work booth.

According to one senior correspondent, media organisations pay for their telephone and internet lines but the White House covers the cost of other utilities.

GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION & ACTIVITIES

Governed by a nine-member committee, the WHCA liaises with the US Administration on issues affecting White House correspondents, including access to the President and executive, work space and conditions, logistics and associated travel and other costs.

Its other role is as host of the annual White House Correspondents' Dinner, which features the President as its guest speaker, giving a traditionally humorous address.

The association runs a program of journalism scholarships and sponsors awards for political journalism, the winners of which are announced at the dinner.

SECURITY & ACCREDITATION

While the White House Correspondents' Association advocates for as broad a spread of media as possible to be accredited to cover the White House, it does not have a role in credentialling correspondents and prefers that it stay that way.

The George W. Bush Administration had proposed that the association take more of a role in the accreditation process to help establish the journalistic bonafides of applicants in the wake of an embarrassing incident involving a political stooge. But the association declined. It argues that it doesn't want responsibility for deciding who is and is not entitled to report from the White House.

The process for obtaining a permanent or "hard" media pass for the

White House is lengthy and involves a thorough background check conducted by security agencies. While foreign media are eligible, they wait many months to be either approved or denied.

The White House issues temporary passes for foreign media accompanying their nations' leaders to meetings with the President. Hard passes entitle their bearers to enter the White House grounds, the Press Room, including the media working areas, and the hallway to the lower Press Office.

ACCESS TO ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

President Obama has conducted several full news conferences since he was elected but the more routine media contact with the White House is through his Press Secretary.

The White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs conducts daily on-the-record briefings from the White House Press Room. These are broadcast on CSPAN and transcripts are published on the White House website.

Intermittently he or his deputies also conduct what's known as a "gaggle" – an informal news conference or update on logistics. Traditionally, under previous presidents, these gaggles were either conducted on an off-the-record basis or could be quoted but not filmed. Under the Obama Administration, they are regularly conducted on camera and frequently on board Air Force One in transit. Their contents also appear, transcribed, on the White House website.

RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT & THE EXECUTIVE

The arrangements for pooling White House coverage have been the source of some frustration between the press corps and the White House in recent years (reaching back to the previous Administration)

and between organisations within the corps itself.

Those organisations participating in the pool – and therefore taking turns to be the designated reporter or crew covering an event – bear the cost of the privilege, in the form of travel or other expenses.

But the previous Administration began distributing pool reports, as they were known, to all media, not only those who were paying to participate.

Organisations which are pool members have fought to have them returned to subscribers only, on the basis of fairness. (*See below for more details on pooling)

RULES & PRACTICES

There is a hierarchy in the White House press room which ensures that senior correspondents have first shot at questions, both to the President, at his press conferences, and at the Press Secretary's briefings.

At presidential news conferences, the US President traditionally calls on the president of the White House Press Association – the dean of the press corps - to ask the first question.

Seniority of service also commands status and the doyenne of the corps, groundbreaking former correspondent for United Press International Helen Thomas, retains her seat in the front row of the briefing room. Aged 89 this year, Thomas was the first female president of the White House Correspondents' Association and has covered every president since John F. Kennedy.

The White House press corps operates a pooling system for reporters to ensure every presidential activity is covered. The 30 newspapers and other print organisations participating in the pool work on a rotating roster, with each providing a correspondent as the designated pool reporter on approximately one day a month.

The television and radio networks operate similar rotating pools. While members of the White House pool (as designated by the rosters) travel on Air Force One, the rest of the press corps travels on a chartered jet aircraft – either a 747 or a 767- usually flying in just ahead of the President.

The White House assigns up to four staff media assistants to travel with the press and to work for them during trips away from Washington. A Secret Service agent is assigned to the media for the duration and ensures they are able to access venues smoothly without being obstructed by other countries' security agents. A US Customs official also travels with the media and handles the passports.

Media organisations pay the full cost of the charter aircraft including the fares of the assigned White House staff. (Fares are charged at roughly first-class rates).

With the aircraft usually carrying approximately 70 members of the media, costs are divided by the number of media passengers with each organisation paying a portion relevant to its number of seats. Ahead of each trip abroad, the White House travel office liaises with the chairman or woman of the TV pool (a position which rotates among the five national TV network bureaux every three months) to ensure the TV networks have enough information to allow for preparation. Their television equipment is sent up to three weeks ahead of the trip.

White House staff do an “advance” on the trip – travelling the route and selecting or confirming locations and venues – well head of time and take the TV network chair and technician and a pool print representative with them to ensure the media’s logistical needs are accommodated.

ARCHIVES, RECORDS & ONLINE PRESENCE

The White House Correspondents’ Association maintains an archive and a comprehensive interactive website, including transcripts and links to video clips of presidential speeches to the annual White House Correspondents’ Dinner.

Its website is www.whca.net. The White House is at www.whitehouse.gov.

6. PARLIAMENT HILL: THE PRESS GALLERY IN OTTAWA, CANADA.

HISTORY & MEMBERSHIP

The Gallery has 400 full-time Press Gallery members with 50 lifetime honorary members, appointed on recommendation of the Press Gallery’s governing board. It also has about 30 foreign media among its membership. About 80 Gallery members are French-speaking.

Membership is not restricted to reporters. Camera crews and photographers are also entitled to join.

There was once a Press Club but it fell upon hard times. Its old locale is now known as the National Press Building.

FACILITIES & PHYSICAL LOCATION

The Press Gallery maintains two offices, one in the Parliament and one across the road in the National Press Building. The parliamentary office contains desks for 25 reporters.

The Gallery also manages and operates two press conference rooms – one inside the Parliament and one in the National Press Building. The latter has had a refit in recent years. Gallery office-bearers preside over news conferences in the Press Building conference facility, chairing proceedings and choosing who asks questions. The parliamentary news conference room is made available to groups outside Parliament and decides on who qualifies are also made by the Gallery.

With renovations due to begin on the Parliament's West and Centre blocks in the next few years and the need to construct a temporary Commons chamber within 18 months, the Press Gallery faces having to move out. It has been assured this is only for the duration of the renovations but are seeking a guarantee in writing that they'll be allowed to return.

The Press Gallery has access to the Parliament's day care centre for children.

GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION & ACTIVITIES

The Canadian Press Gallery has a governing board of directors, elected from the Gallery's membership.

Its director, Terry Guillon, has 13 staff and an operational budget of about \$C100,000 a year, provided by the House of Commons. Others suggested the total cost of running the Gallery, including office facilities and staff salaries, is in the vicinity of \$C800,000 a year. This is indexed to inflation and not without its critics.

The Gallery raises some of its own funds from its annual Gallery dinner and by charging a fee of \$C250 a year for access to a live feed of the audio of news conferences conducted in its two press conference rooms.

The Gallery's office acts as the conduit between Gallery and government and other parliamentarians. Like the House TV & Radio Gallery in Washington, the Canadian Press Gallery staff operate an events alert system throughout the Parliament buildings. Each media office in the downtown area maintains a Gallery "squawk box", receiving up to 100 announcements a day when Parliament is sitting.

The Canadian gallery also acts as a distribution point for press releases, delivering them to its members.

SECURITY & ACCREDITATION

The Canadian Press Gallery manages its own accreditation procedures. It also manages accreditation for the annual Budget lock-up.

Passes are divided into three categories: permanent, temporary and "press support" for those not journalistically engaged but supporting those who are.

To qualify for membership, applicants must be full-time correspondents for recognised media organisations and resident in Ottawa. They must prove their organisations are not associated with government. Employees of online publications can qualify. Whether or not to credential bloggers remains a vexed issue in Ottawa's Gallery, as elsewhere. It has established a committee to consider how to deal with it, with its primary criterion for eligibility at present being that applicants must generate revenue or income through their work.

The Gallery charges \$C100 a year, plus 5% GST for permanent Press Gallery membership. Temporary passes are issued at a cost of \$C5 a day with other rates available for monthly passes.

Any security breach by a Press Gallery member or members becomes the subject of a report by parliamentary security officers to the Gallery's board. There is scope for the board to reprimand offenders and two members had their passes revoked for misbehaviour.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police have been pushing for some years for a national media registration system and database, an idea the Press Gallery continues to oppose.

ACCESS & RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT

Access to individuals in the Government is a slightly fraught issue and the Gallery's relations with the current Government are particularly strained. Journalists complain about a lack of planning information from the Prime Minister's office and say they believe it's a government "all about control".

The Prime Minister appears reluctant to conduct regular news conferences in the National Press Building, preferring to sidestep the national media where possible and engage more directly with provincial media. As one senior journalist put it: "It's like there's a goddam gloom over this city. It's cold and it's dark and people are scared."

The Prime Minister's press office believes the suggestions of isolation are exaggerated, noting that it conducts regular background briefings with selected senior correspondents.

Gallery staff acknowledge that the gallery was consulted on logistics earlier in the year in preparation for the visit of United States President Barack Obama.

Media adviser Kory Teynacke says the Prime Minister makes about half of his official announcements outside the capital, Ottawa, which he argues is entirely reasonable, given the size of the country.

Mr Teynacke dismisses suggestions that Prime Minister Stephen Harper deliberately minimises contact with the Ottawa-based Press Gallery, joking that he “dislikes all media equally”.

He says the office does very little selective leaking, as that only creates “ten angry journalists and one ingrate”.

Both the Government and senior gallery members defend the system of having staff paid by the Parliament as Press Gallery employees, serving both the Parliament and the press.

Both sides insist that although the staff serve two masters, they advocate for the gallery in the end.

RULES & PRACTICES

Media representatives have very few restrictions on their movements around the Canadian Parliament, with access to almost all areas except the Members’ gym and Members’ private meeting areas.

But there has been conflict with the Government over its decision in the past year to ban journalists from waiting outside the Cabinet room for meetings to conclude – a change to accepted practice.

As the Speaker’s office explains it, the Government’s view was that Press Gallery members were previously there at the invitation of those meeting inside. That invitation was revoked.

Members of the Press Gallery's freedom of movement within the Parliament buildings extends to knocking on the doors of MPs and conducting interviews with their agreement. In reality, print reporters have greater freedom because television cameras are more likely to attract objections and MPs take a dim view of camera operators hanging around in the halls. Staking out meetings of parliamentary committees is not allowed unless the committee has given journalists permission to wait outside.

Photographers from Reuters and the Canadian Press agency are allowed into the Commons chamber during Question Period but are only allowed to photograph the person with the call to speak.

While some informal pooling arrangements exist, the Government is pushing for these to be expanded. The media generally resist this, asserting the need to represent their individual organisations separately whenever possible. However there is a pooling roster for television cameras for the "scrums" held before and after Wednesday caucus meetings.

ARCHIVES, RECORDS & ONLINE PRESENCE

The Press Gallery has an archive which goes back to 1875, including correspondence, board minutes and other documentation, material relating to the annual Press Gallery dinners.

It also archives all of the press releases, which are scanned and turned into electronic documents, plus audio recordings and transcripts of news conferences which it makes available to its members.

Director Terry Guillon says that, ultimately, he aims to send the releases to the national archives. For now, the Gallery maintains a password-protected archival website of all the news releases for the previous 12 months.

While it does not operate an interactive website, it does maintain an online contact list of members and administrative staff.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In all of the countries visited, as in Australia, it is the advent of new media, as much as the need to maintain security in an age of terrorism, which is providing a significant challenge to the way press galleries have managed their accreditation arrangements.

Measured against the four other systems under examination, Australia's arrangements rate better on some fronts and less well on others.

Access to the chambers for still photographers is more sensible and forward-thinking in Australia than in some the other countries although the general public's access to events in Australia's Parliament could still be greatly improved.

Viewers of Australia's parliamentary broadcasts have access to a less sanitised version of proceedings than do viewers of parliamentary broadcasts elsewhere, although restrictions on camera angles ensure that those Australians who are able to attend the Parliament in person will still know more about what goes on than those forced to watch from home.

The Australian Press Gallery's accommodation within Parliament House is the most comfortable and best-resourced of those all the countries studied. But it is also the only one whose resources are funded completely by the media organisations themselves and whose members are required to pay rent to occupy their collective place within the Parliament.

Media representatives and staff in each country were surprised to hear that the Australian Parliament insisted upon a user-pays arrangement with the Fourth Estate. Four other legislatures believe the presence of a free and independent media is a public right, worthy of public subsidy in varying degrees.

In the United States, where security considerations are driven by the relatively recent and up-close experience of terrorism, seven congressional press galleries continue to successfully manage their own accreditation arrangements without the influence of government, - as do the galleries in Dublin, Ottawa and Canberra – albeit in Washington’s case with some strong criticism about a lack of transparency.

Yet, down Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House, correspondents don’t want that task at all, preferring to subject themselves to security checks and have the White House take responsibility for the exclusions it makes.

At Westminster, the job is also undertaken by the Serjeant-At-Arms’ office. Journalists in London neither collectively object to being subjected to background checks nor want the responsibility of deciding who is legitimate and who is not.

In all four systems examined, there is a fear among gallery journalists that their relevant governments may attempt to curtail their capability to scrutinise by moving them to less convenient or suitable premises outside the legislature.

On Capitol Hill, journalists’ freedom of movement is greater than almost everywhere else. This is in stark contrast with Dublin, where journalists are not allowed into parliamentarians’ offices even by invitation and where restrictions on broadcast interviewing make television journalism in the political sphere a particularly difficult enterprise.

In Ottawa, rising tensions between the current Government and the Press Gallery has fostered what now appears to be a mutual disrespect over attitudes to media freedom and control.

The White House arrangements for involving media representatives in forward-planning to ensure everybody's objectives are met demonstrate a level of practical problem-solving, trust and consideration not generally present in the political system in Australia under governments of either hue.

In all five systems, journalists believe they are engaged in a form of public service - to explain to their nations' citizens what their elected representatives are doing and to ask them why. All would like to be able to do it better.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- * That the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery consider options for funding the establishment and maintenance of a secretariat to assist in the administration of the Press Gallery's affairs, guard the principles of journalistic independence and interact more effectively with the public.
- * That the Press Gallery establish and maintain a website which explains the role of the media in Parliament and provides relevant contact information.
- * That the Press Gallery create or oversee the creation of an archive as a repository of important historical information, documentation and artifacts relating to the role of journalists in Australian political life.
- * That the Australian Government be encouraged to involve the Press Gallery more fully in logistics planning.

9. COMMUNICATION OF FELLOWSHIP INSIGHTS

This fellowship was undertaken with the specific objective of communicating its findings to the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery, of which I was formerly president, through its governing committee.

Therefore, I hope to offer the gallery committee some insight into how other press galleries operate and provide some benchmarks against which to measure our own operations in Australia.

Should we think there might be better ways to do things, I hope this presents options for change. Should we decide that our systems are comparatively good, I hope this might confirm why they work and encourage us to strive for continued improvement.

This report will be provided in written form to the Press Gallery committee for its consideration. I will make copies available to the Leader of the House and Manager of Opposition Business in the Parliament and to the Presiding Officers.

I also hope to be able to discuss my findings in public forums.

Finally, many of the organisations whose members assisted with this report have expressed an interest in receiving a copy.

It was frequently remarked, during my trip, that “nobody has bothered to do this before” and that a comparison of press galleries could prove to be at least an interesting document and at best a useful resource in all five countries. I hope they are proven correct.

KAREN MIDDLETON

JULY 2009

Page 46