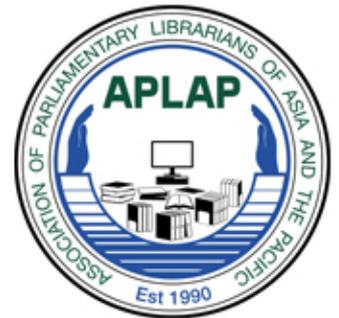


# COUNTRY REPORT: PHILIPPINES

House of Representatives



# APLAP 2021

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### *The Responsiveness and Relevance of the House of Representatives Legislative Library and Archives in Times of Crisis*

**Dr. Edgardo H. Pangilinan**  
*Deputy Secretary General*  
Legislative Information Resources Management Department

**Herminia B. Callejo**  
*Executive Director*  
Legislative Information Reference and Service Development Bureau

**Jose V. Enciso**  
*Service Director*  
Legislative Library Management Service

**Fairlyn H. Sarga** (Presenter)  
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### **Abstract**

The Covid-19 pandemic brought unprecedented shock to the world and the Philippines will not come out unscathed as it experienced the longest and strictest lockdown. To this date, Covid-19 is still a threat to the country as it exceeded the one-million mark of number of cases.

The Philippines' ability to deal with the looming disaster as a country was put to test. Its institutions grappled with its localized measures to respond to the crisis most especially in the beginning of the pandemic.

The House of Representatives Legislative Library and Archives perceived the crisis as an opportunity to enhance its established digital services even before the pandemic. It intensified its ongoing efforts to create digital content and to provide online resources. These contents and resources are delivered efficiently to clients through its electronic delivery systems that are already in place.

Human resource strategies to manage and develop personnel are applied to make sure that its staff are still competent, productive, and physically and mentally adapting well given the current situation. Attendance to relevant webinars, courses, and training is encouraged to upscale the knowledge and skills of staff to match the demands of the new work environment. Reporting of performance output is ensured through weekly and monthly submissions of accomplishment reports of staff. Moreover, team spirit is maintained through regular online communications via monthly Zoom staff meetings, group chats, and Viber

messages to disseminate memos, instructions, and other important information and to check on one another.

Due to imposition of lockdowns, limited physical duty is addressed through maximization of manpower by supporting work from home set-up of the Legislative Library and Archives staff through provision of equipment and expanding access to infrastructure of some staff. Health and safety are ensured during physical duties through strict compliance to health protocols and installed safety fixtures for the protection of the staff and clients.

While the pandemic highlighted the resilience and relevance of the Legislative Library and Archives, it continuously enhances its services and innovates its work processes not just to respond to the present pandemic but to future-proof its services and be prepared to the numerous crises that may unexpectedly occur in this volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world.

## **I. Introduction**

### **1. The Congress of the Philippines: An Overview**

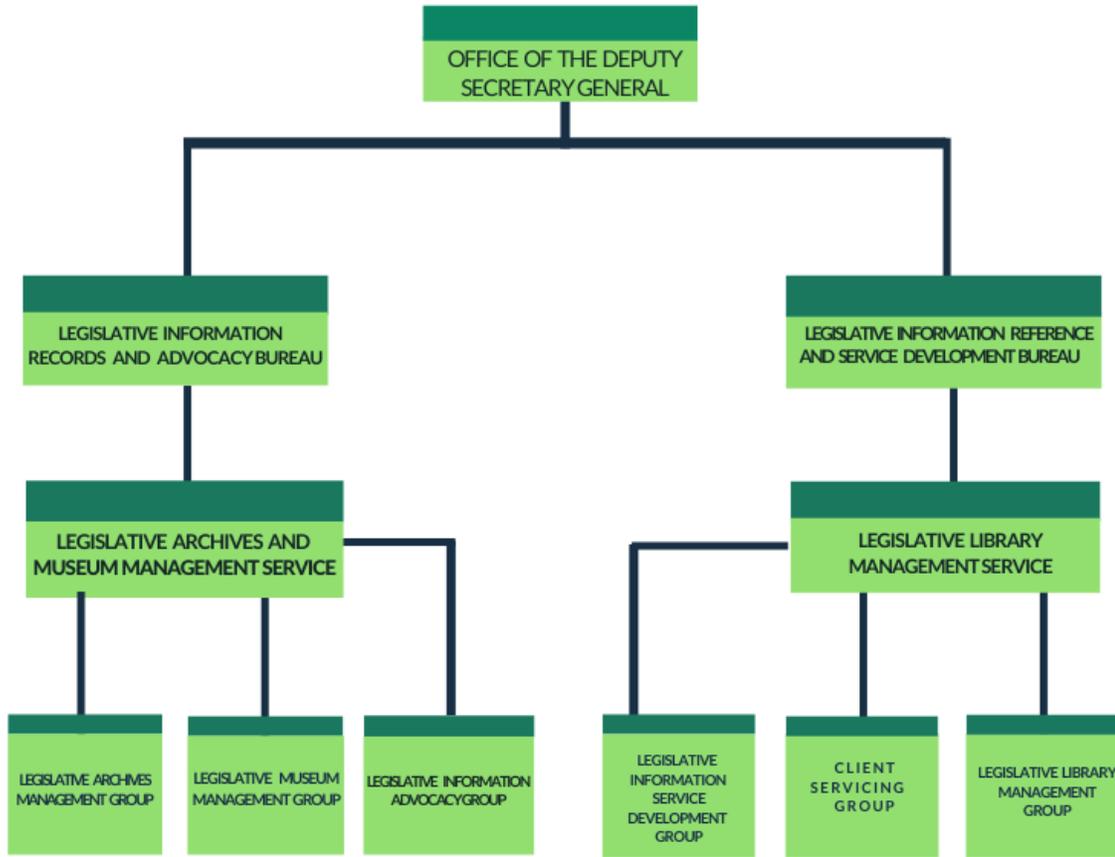
The Philippines is a democratic and Republican country. It has a presidential form of government, wherein power is equally divided among its three branches: the executive, legislative, and judiciary.

The Legislative branch of the government, on the other hand, is composed of two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate is composed of 24 Senators headed by Senate President Vicente C. Sotto III, while the House of Representatives is composed of 307 House Members (7 deceased, 1 dropped) headed by Speaker Lord Allan Jay Q. Velasco.

Currently, the House of Representatives comprises 63 Standing Committees, 16 Special Committees, and 1 Ad Hoc Committee.

### **2. The House of Representatives Legislative Library: An Overview**

The Secretariat of the House of Representatives, headed by Secretary General Mark Llandro “Dong” L. Mendoza, is composed of the Office of the Secretary General, Sergeant-at-Arms, Committee Affairs Department, Legislative Operations Department, Legislative Information Resources Management Department, Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department, Administrative Department, Finance Department, Engineering and Physical Facilities Department, Legal Affairs Department, Internal Audit Department, Knowledge Management Systems Bureau, Inter-Parliamentary Relations & Special Affairs Bureau, Public Relations and Information Bureau, and Legislative Security Bureau. These bureaus and departments made up the Legislative Staff Support Service Management System of the House of Representatives.



*Fig. 1. LIRMD Organizational Structure*

The Legislative Information Resources Management Department is headed by Deputy Secretary General Edgardo H. Pangilinan, DPA and comprises two (2) bureaus: the Legislative Information Records and Advocacy Bureau (LIRAB) and the Legislative Information Reference and Service Development Bureau (LIRSDB). Under the LIRAB is the Legislative Archives and Museum Management Service, which comprises the Legislative Archives Management Group, the Legislative Museum Management Group, and the Legislative Information Advocacy Group. Under the LIRSDB is the Legislative Library Management Service, which comprises the Legislative Information Service Development Group, the Client Servicing Group, and the Legislative Library Management Group.

The main mandate of the Legislative Information Resources Management Department is the management of legislative information resources including legislative records and artifacts; legislative and legislation-related reference resources such as printed and electronic books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and databases; legislative information service developments such as legislative information products and services, and legislative information advocacy.

Currently, the entire Legislative Information Resources Management Department is composed of 59 staff with a Deputy Secretary General, 4 directors, 10 librarians, 23 archivists, and 21 administrative support staff.

## **II. Responsiveness and Relevance of the Legislative Library of the House of Representatives**

### ***A. Issues and Challenges During the Covid-19 Pandemic***

On March 16, 2020, by virtue of Proclamation No. 929, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte declared a State of Emergency throughout the Philippines due to the novel coronavirus and an Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) was imposed throughout Luzon. With this directive, government offices remain open but are either operating with skeletal workforces and/or under work from home arrangements.

The House of Representatives had to adapt to the new work environment. Due to the suspension of onsite services, the Legislative Library and Archives received an increase in demand for electronic resources and access to some of the requested resources had been a challenge.

Due to the imposed lockdown, there was a need to immediately address the issues and challenges brought about by the limited physical duty of staff so as not to make the quality of services suffer. With the new work set-up, the Legislative Library and Archives also recognized the need to upscale the knowledge and skill set of staff to match the needs of the times.

### ***B. Developed and Implemented Parliamentary and Research Services***

Since the digital services of the Legislative Library and Archives of the House of Representatives have already been in place even before the pandemic, digital services have been continuously enhanced to address the current crisis. Some of the parliamentary library and archives services that are being enhanced are as follows:

1. Building Up the Digital Collection, Increasing Digital Contents, and Establishing Strong Social Media Presence of the Legislative Library and Archives

The Legislative Library and Archives intensified its online harvesting or collection, storage, and retrieval of electronic resources as well as its creation of digital contents. It continuously establishes its social media presence, with its legislative-related contents and resources, to reach more clients and researchers.

- a. Creation of digital portal for compiled Covid-19 electronic resources

A digital portal was created by the Legislative Library to compile all Covid-19 policies and issuances, laws and legislations, publications, websites, and databases, published by local and foreign governments, academic institutions, international organizations, and health science publishers. There are a total of 190 electronic resources compiled.



Fig. 2. Covid-19 Electronic Resources Portal (<https://bit.ly/3enhPEv>)

- b. Online monitoring of Covid-19-related news was made available on *Legislative Library Online* since there was a demand for it during the start of the pandemic. The *Legislative Library Online* or the Legislative Library blog features news monitoring, selective indexing, and social bookmarking of online news clippings of national issues related to or about the House of Representatives, its House Members, Philippine legislative history, legislation, bill drafting, creation of laws, and other articles pertaining to the Congress of the Philippines.

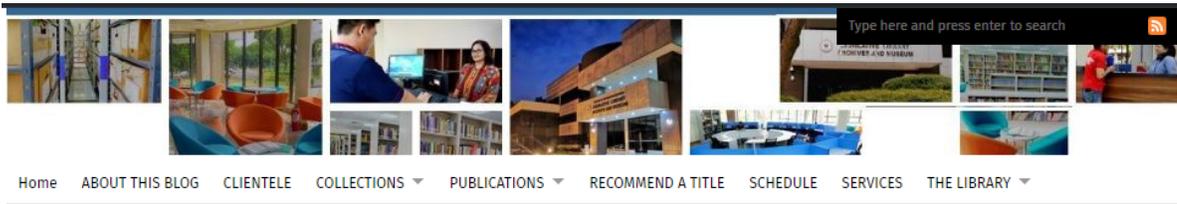


Fig. 3. The Legislative Library Online ([www.hreplib.wordpress.com](http://www.hreplib.wordpress.com))

In 2019, there are a total of 2,379 views, 987 visitors, and 889 posts published on the Legislative Library blog. However, during the onset of the Covid-19 crisis in the Philippines in 2020, numbers for the Legislative Library blog went up to 3,693 views or 55% increase; 2,183 visitors (from the United States, Singapore, European Union, India, Canada, Hong Kong SAR China, Australia, Japan, and the United Kingdom among others) or 121% increase; and 3,364 posts published or 278% increase from 2019. From the figures, it can be implied that there was a vast interest in legislative-related news articles online in 2020.

## Legislative Library Online Statics

2019

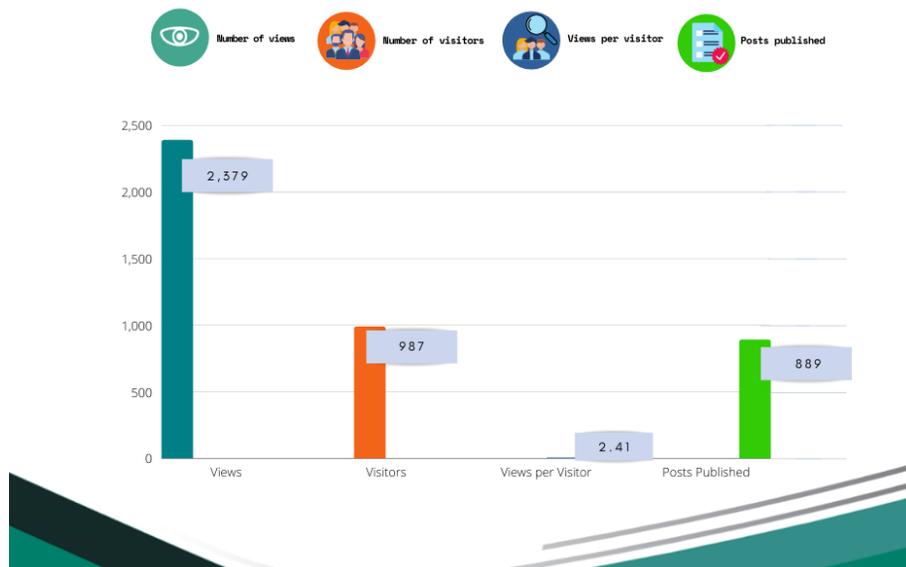


Fig. 4. Legislative Library Online Statistics in 2019

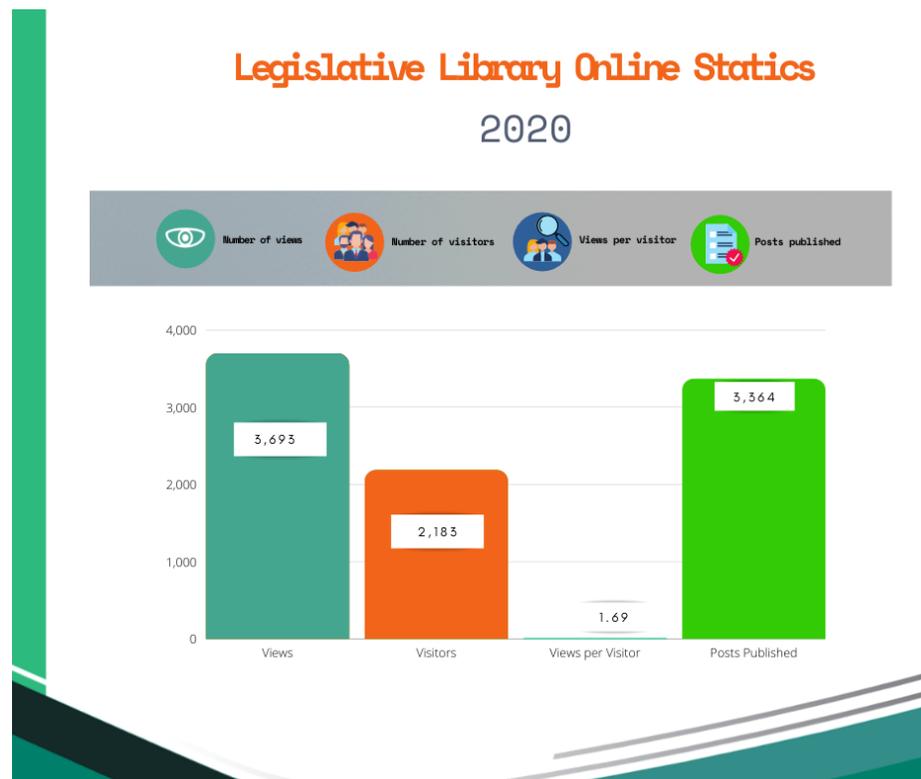


Fig. 5. Legislative Library Online Statistics in 2020

- c. Establishing strong social media presence through increasing digital contents for the Legislative Library, Archives, and Museum Facebook page

For 2020, there are a total of 158 created and curated Facebook posts for the Legislative Library, Archives, and Museum page that elicited 9,030 engagements and 134,999 reach.

- d. Legislative library information products are made available on digital platforms—*Scribd* and *Yumpu*

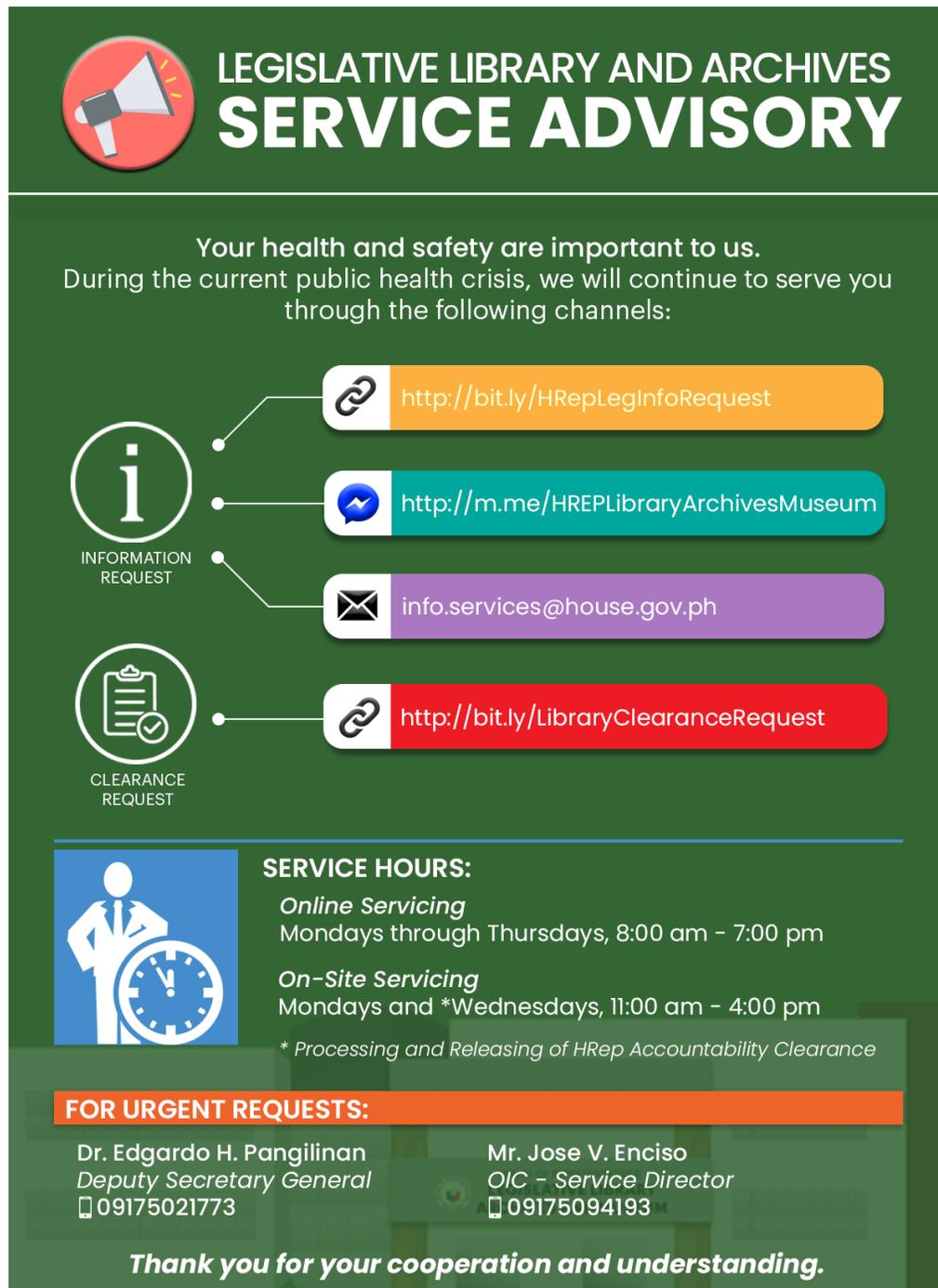
The Legislative Library does digital publishing of its legislative information products. There are a total of four (4) compendia of laws (i.e. Environmental Planning, Agriculture, Elections, and Women’s Rights and Welfare) created from April 2020 to April 2021 and are for digital publishing on *Scribd* digital library.

There are also a total of seven (7) Legislative Library pathfinders (i.e. Displacement of Overseas Filipino Workers, Labor Turnover, Tourism Revenue, Civil Society and Peoples’ Organization, Local Special Bodies, Urbanization, Poverty Alleviation, e-Governance, Welfare of Children, and Climate Change) created from August 2020 to April 2021 and are published on *Yumpu* digital platform. These digital contents/resources are also free for download from the Legislative Library blog.

2. Enhancement of Online/Digital/Remote Servicing

a. Intensifying remote servicing through online document delivery using electronic platforms

The Legislative Library and Archives has already put in place its remote centralized servicing in answering queries online and delivering electronic resources through the utilization of platforms like digital forms, electronic mails, and online messengers. The figure below shows the established remote services of the Legislative Library and Archives, which were enhanced even more when the pandemic hit:



**LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
SERVICE ADVISORY**

Your health and safety are important to us.  
During the current public health crisis, we will continue to serve you through the following channels:

- INFORMATION REQUEST**
  - <http://bit.ly/HRepLegInfoRequest>
  - <http://m.me/HREPLibraryArchivesMuseum>
  - [info.services@house.gov.ph](mailto:info.services@house.gov.ph)
- CLEARANCE REQUEST**
  - <http://bit.ly/LibraryClearanceRequest>

**SERVICE HOURS:**

*Online Servicing*  
Mondays through Thursdays, 8:00 am - 7:00 pm

*On-Site Servicing*  
Mondays and \*Wednesdays, 11:00 am - 4:00 pm

*\* Processing and Releasing of HRep Accountability Clearance*

**FOR URGENT REQUESTS:**

Dr. Edgardo H. Pangilinan  
Deputy Secretary General  
☎ 09175021773

Mr. Jose V. Enciso  
OIC - Service Director  
☎ 09175094193

**Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.**

*Fig. 6. Online/Digital/Remote Servicing of the Legislative Library and Archives*

From March 2020 to April 2021, a total of 1,003 clients were served, which includes the House Members (4), Secretariat (222), Congressional staff (181), other government agencies (144), the private sector (170), students (251), and the general public (31).

A total of 1,901 legislative documents were served, which includes 1,484 electronic resources and 417 physical resources. E-resources beat physical documents by a ratio of 7:2 or for every nine documents served, seven (7) are digitized/electronic/online resources while only two are physical documents. Among the e-resources provided regardless of format, Infopack was the most served with 648 (34%) documents, followed by Statutes; Executive Issuances; Implementing Rules and Regulations; Department Issuances with 470 (24%) documents; Bills and Resolutions, Bill History, and Committee Reports with 254 documents (13%).

The most common means of clients to send their requests during the pandemic is via the online form (513), followed by e-mail (273), Facebook (141), phone call (70), walk-in (67), and mail (8). Comparing electronic (e-mail, Facebook, online form) and non-electronic means (mail, phone call, walk-in), clients made use of electronic means (86.47%) more than non-electronic (13.53%) to request for information products and services.

- b. Offerings of digital services were made known to Legislative Library clients through the Legislative Library, Archives, and Museum Facebook page

To ensure that the stakeholders are well-informed of the collection and services of the Legislative Library, legislative information, collection, and service offerings are constantly made available through the Legislative Library, Archives, and Museum Facebook page.

### 3. Digitization Prioritization

Due to an increase in the demand for electronic resources, the Legislative Library and Archives boosted its digitization efforts by determining, selecting, and prioritizing the holdings that needed to be digitized. Digitization equipment was provided to be taken home by staff to allow remote work during periods of lockdown.

From March 2020 to April 2021, there are a total of 1,449 Philippine laws and 10 titles or 19,416 pages of legislative documents digitized by the Legislative Library and there are a total of 8,909 total number of titles or 83,901 pages of legislative documents digitized by the Legislative Archives.

### ***C. Application of Human Resource Development/Personnel Management Strategies***

The Legislative Library utilized some strategies to ensure the development of its human resource.

1. Upscaling of knowledge and skills of staff through attendance to relevant webinars

To ensure that there will be no mismatch between the knowledge and skills of personnel and the new work set-up and to guarantee that its staff will be adequately equipped to adapt to the new normal, the management encouraged its staff to attend relevant webinars, training, and courses,

which are provided by the House of Representatives and various institutions, both local and foreign.

The graph shows the percentage of various webinars attended by the Legislative Library and Archives staff from March 2020 to December 2020. Out of 113 webinars and online training and courses attended by the staff, 37 (33%) webinars are themed on enhancing technical skills and learning new digital tools, 32 (28%) are related to Covid-19, health and well-being, and adapting to the new normal, 5 (4%) are on capability leadership courses, and 39 (35%) are other relevant webinars to capacitate the library staff.

2. Regular reporting of performance output is ensured through weekly and monthly submissions of accomplishment reports of staff. Online monitoring of accomplishment reports or progress of each work-from-home activities was implemented.
3. Team spirit is maintained through regular communications via monthly Zoom staff meetings, group chats, and Viber messages to disseminate memos, instructions, and other important information and to check on one another.

#### ***D. Maximization of manpower by supporting telecommuting/remote working***

Limited physical presence brought by the imposition of lockdowns had to be augmented by remote work wherein offsite services are provided. Office equipment like laptops are allowed to be brought home by some staff for work-from-home tasks. With the assistance of the House of Representatives Information, Communication and Technology Service, the establishment of the file server was materialized and now served as the storage of digital legislative library resources and archives records and can be accessed from homes of some staff.

### **III. Conclusion**

Despite the limitations brought about by the pandemic, the Legislative Library and Archives was able to respond to the needs of the current times. It continuously renders library and archival services to its stakeholders, which are mainly the House Members, Secretariat, and the general public. Most of the services were unhampered even on the onset of the pandemic.

The Legislative Library and Archives intensified its ongoing efforts to create digital contents and provide online resources. These contents and resources are being delivered efficiently to clients through its established electronic delivery systems. It also speeded up its continuing digitization efforts of its collection to meet the ever evolving demands of its clients.

With the new work environment, the management of the Legislative Library and Archives recognized the importance of managing and developing its personnel. Human resource strategies are being applied to make sure that its staff are competent, productive, and physically and mentally adapting well given the current predicament.

Knowledge and skills of staff are upscaled through attendance to relevant webinars, courses, and training. Moreover, reporting of performance output is ensured through weekly and monthly submissions of accomplishment reports of staff. Team spirit is maintained through regular online communications such as

monthly Zoom staff meetings, group chats, and Viber messages to disseminate memos, instructions, and other information and to check on one another.

Due to imposition of lockdowns, limited physical duty is addressed through maximization of manpower by supporting work from home set-up of the staff through provision of equipment and expanding access to infrastructure of some staff. The transition to digital services of onsite services progressed without impediment because most of the work processes and services of the Legislative Library and Archives are already digitally in place.

The pandemic highlighted the resilience of the Legislative Library mainly through its established online services to deliver legislative information and it also brought opportunities for the Legislative Library and Archives to evaluate and improve its digital services even more.

The Legislative Library and Archives realized the need to strengthen and invest in infrastructure. Onsite and offsite servers are needed to be prepared for numerous crises that may unexpectedly occur to the library and archival collection and services. More importantly, the need to have a business continuity plan (BCP) is recognized to be prepared for the numerous crises that may unexpectedly occur in this volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world.

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