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Publications policy and practice in the United Nations system

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Publications policy and practice in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/84/5).

* A/39/50.

PUBLICATIONS POLICY AND PRACTICE IN
THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

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PART I

I. THE APPROACH TO THE STUDY

1. At the request of several participating organizations, the Joint Inspection Unit included in its work programme this study on publications policy and practice in the United Nations system. The study bears some relationship to previous JIU reports: Recurrent Publications in the United Nations (JIU/REP/71/8); the Implications of Additional Languages in the United Nations System (JIU/REP/77/5); the Control and Limitation of Documentation in the United Nations System (JIU/REP/80/12); and Communications in the United Nations System (JIU/REP/82/6).

2. Publications are and will continue to be an important programme activity. United Nations system organizations produce approximately four thousand publications (including periodicals) each year. These publications aim to bring together, analyse and disseminate information on all the activities of the system as well as to encourage objective analysis and stimulate discussion. They must therefore properly reflect the work of the system and reach the persons, groups and institutions for which they are intended in as cost-effective a manner as possible.

3. A questionnaire was sent to all JIU participating organizations as well as to United Nations regional commissions and a number of autonomous or independent institutions such as UNU, UNITAR and UNRISD. The great majority of the organizations replied. The Inspectors also visited some of the organizations and held consultations with personnel.

4. The Inspectors encountered some difficulties in using the information gathered. Above all, the financial statistics relating to publications left much to be desired. The Inspectors have been able to make only an "educated guess" that the organizations of the United Nations system are spending sums bearing a relationship of about 10% to their Regular Budgets (i.e., about US\$ 150 million in 1981) on the direct costs of publications alone.

5. The main issue however is less a question of figures than of purpose and direction: What do the organizations of the United Nations system publish and for whom? Have target readerships been identified and are the publications reaching these readerships? Are publications being issued primarily because there is a legal, budgetary or other provision to do so or do they respond to a need or a demand? Is there sufficient quality control? Should saleability be a criterion? These and other questions the Inspectors attempt to address in the following chapters. Their findings can hardly be described as definitive or exhaustive, but the study has provided indications of possibilities for improvement.

6. The Inspectors wish to thank the organizations and staff who contributed to the report and who gave the Inspectors the benefit of their critical advice.

II. THE PUBLISHING SCENE : MAIN FEATURES

7. All the United Nations system organizations which responded to the JIU questionnaire are engaged in publishing. All publish periodicals and other material, and most publish books as well. As a whole, the United Nations system constitutes one of the world's major publishing groups. Some 2000 book titles were published in 1981, and a similar number of periodicals and other items. This effort does not of course match that of the Governments of some countries (the United States Government for instance issues some 15,000 titles per year) but it is sizeable none the less.

8. The main publishing organizations of the United Nations system are the United Nations, UNESCO, FAO, WHO and ILO. United Nations Headquarters produced some 400 book titles in 1981, UNESCO, FAO and WHO well over 200 each ILO over 100. All issue several periodicals (see Table I).

Definitions and classification

9. It is important for organizations to draw a clear distinction between publications and documents, so that secretariats may have, and provide to their governing bodies, a clear picture of what they are putting into each category and what results are being achieved.

10. UNESCO defines publications in the same way as the international book trade : a book is "a non-periodical literary publication containing 49 or more pages, not counting the cover" and a pamphlet has at least 5 but not more than 48 pages. UNESCO lists the categories of its publications as follows:

"information material: specialized studies; studies on particular topics for the general public; books on general subjects for the general public; works of reference; scientific maps; specialized periodicals; and periodicals for the general public".

11. UPU describes its publications as texts reproduced in the form of pamphlets or books and available for sale. For ILO, publications are "the works of reference, studies, manuals, monographs, proceedings, working papers, training tools, audio-visual kits, directories, bibliographies, periodicals and other serials which it issues for dissemination to its constituents, the general public and specialists, separately from the reports and other documents for discussion at meetings convened by the Organization".

12. FAO introduces another element in its definition of "priced publications" in that "the material is chosen for issue in this form because of its permanent character, special importance or value to a widespread readership". The Inspectors think this a useful standard for all publications.

13. Periodicals are generally defined as publications issued in a continuous series under the same title over an indefinite period.

14. The Inspectors examined the 1981 lists of publications issued in English by 12 organizations. (The Inspectors did not include any titles which were not explicitly shown to have been issued in 1981 and for this reason WIPO and UNU publications as well as some United Nations publications were not taken into account). Nearly 600 titles were examined (see Table II).

15. The publications fell into the following categories: (i) Official; (ii) Conventions, Codes and Treaty texts; (iii) Conference proceedings, Meeting reports and abstracts; (iv) Statistical works and Yearbooks; (v) Bibliographies; (vi) Repertories and Directories; (vii) Monographs and Specialized Studies; (viii) Handbooks, Manuals and Training Materials; (ix) General studies; (x) Public Information Material.

Table I: Publications production statistics 1981

Organization	Books		Periodicals		Others 1/	
	Internal	External	Internal	External	Internal	External
	No. of copies (000's)		No. of copies (000's)		No. of copies (000's)	
UNITED NATIONS						
Headquarters - Publications Division	250	1,400.0	838.0			
Headquarters - DPI						
UNOG	47	109.2	175.9			
ECA	1	1.8				
ECLA	22	25.6	8.0			
ESCAP	15	4.9	22.0			
HABITAT	4	1.5	1.0			
ITC			35.8			
UNDP	1		2.0			
UNEP	4	9.0	51.0			
UNFPA	2		10.0			
UNHCR						
UNIDO	26	72.9	21.5			
UNRWA						
UNSDRI	4	6.5				
UNU	7		14.5			
FAO	224 2/	388.0	270.0			
IAEA	120	117.5				
ICAO	34	70.8				
ILO	81 3/	64.4	68.4			
IMO	18	90.0	63.4			
UNESCO	43	100.4	4/			
UPU	25	24.0	5.2			
WHO - HQ	147		619.0			
WHO - Regional Offices	26	46.5	257.7			
WIPO	19	44.6 5/				
TOTAL	1,013	2,577.6	2,463.4	543	680	1,322.9
	1,879	5,041 6/	5,388.1 6/	1,223	1,326.9	2,422.5
				645		3,749 6/

1/ Others - maps, pamphlets, brochures, public information material.

2/ Books include "bound reports of major meetings".

3/ Books include "reprints".

4/ External printing is not recorded in annual totals. Average number of copies is 3,000 in English, 2,500 in French, 1,500 in Spanish, 1,000 in Russian and 1,500 in Arabic.

5/ Internal and external.

6/ As some organizations were unable to provide data on print-runs for publications produced internally, this is only a partial total.

Table II: English language and multilingual titles issued in 1981

Organization	(i) Official	(ii) Conventions, Codes and Treaty Texts	(iii) Conference Proceedings, Meeting Reports and Abstracts	(iv) Statistical works and Yearbooks	(v) Biblio- graphies	(vi) Repertories and Directories	(vii) Monographs, and Special- ized Studies	(viii) Handbooks, Manuals and Training Materials	(ix) General studies	(x) Public Information material	Total
UNITED NATIONS	10	4	13	39	4	2	34				106
FAO	1			10		1	4	6	2		24
IAEA		2	12	4	3		13	16			50
ICAO	5	15	5	4	6	2	8	13			58
ILO	17	2	15	2	1	1	38	35	1		112
IMO		12	1		1			2			16
ITU	8	1	1			12	1	27			50
UNESCO	5	1	2	4	1	4	49	17	6		89
WHO	2		3			2	26	6	1	4	44
WMO	2		5		1		10	5			23
Total	50	37	57	63	17	24	183	127	10	4	572

16. The first three categories are special to the United Nations system and in the book world outside would not qualify as "books". The question arises whether these categories should not be treated as "documents". The Inspectors consider that they should, unless they have an identified sales constituency or are re-produced in a form which makes them a saleable commodity to an identified readership. While they are no doubt valuable in terms of organizational requirements, they do not always need to be classified and treated as publications. Some organizations already have arrangements whereby documents reach interested persons outside the United Nations, and with improved bibliographic control of United Nations system documentation the documents can be made accessible to depository and other specialized libraries, as well as to institutions and persons outside the system who may require them.
17. The subject matter of certain conference proceedings or meeting reports may of course justify the production of a publication for specialists or the general cultivated reader. To transform the proceedings of a meeting into a book with a potential for useful dissemination requires the services of an editor.
18. The categories "Monographs and specialized studies" and "Handbooks, manuals and training materials" together make a strong showing of over 50% of titles examined. Hardly 1 in 50 titles was intended for the general reader (category ix) and there still appears to be a shortage of public information material (category x).

Mandates

19. Almost from their inception, organizations of the United Nations system began publishing. WIPO (in its previous existence as the International Bureaux of the Paris and Berne Conventions), ITU and UPU started as early as the nineteenth century. Some others like ILO, UNESCO and WHO came into being at the time of or subsequent to the League of Nations. UNESCO inherited its Index Translationum, with certain other publications, from the League. WHO inherited some from the League and others from the Office International d'Hygiène Publique.
20. The organizations of the United Nations system also publish under mandates from their Governing Bodies, and publications are considered an important instrument in executing the general purposes of the organizations. These mandates place a responsibility on each organization to publish in pursuit of the objectives set by the constitution and to disseminate information in support of the programmes being executed, but do not put a high priority on commercial considerations. As early as 1952, a Working Group of the ACC stated: "The fundamental publishing aim of the member organizations remains that their publications shall be read rather than they should be paid for. In this connection, it must be borne in mind that most of the publications involved would constitutionally require to be published if there were no purchasers for them at all while, on the other hand, they are not written to appeal to the so-called general reading public".
21. In 1960, ILO's Governing Body endorsed the general principle that "the publishing work of the ILO is not a commercial undertaking, but a service required by the Constitution". The Director-General of ILO later (1971) spelt out the mandate as follows: "The central aim of ILO publications policy is to facilitate objective study and analysis, as well as to spread knowledge and stimulate discussions, of the major social and economic problems and trends in the different countries of the world, and so to promote concrete national and international action in furtherance of the aim of the Organization". FAO recognizes constitutional obligations "to collect, analyse, interpret and disseminate information relating to food and agriculture" and observes the guiding principle that "all material (priced publications and main and working documents) issued by FAO or with FAO's assistance should bear a direct and specific relation to the projects and activities in the approved Programme of work".

22. The directives on UNESCO publications policy adopted by the General Conference at its nineteenth session in 1976 state: "Publications should serve the purpose of the Organization as defined in the Constitution. Their content should be determined mainly by the programme adopted by the General Conference and the major themes selected by it". Results "must not be assessed in monetary terms alone, but also in terms of the effectiveness of the publications in helping to attain the Organization's principal objectives".

23. Many articles of the WHO Constitution call for activities that require publications. The Director-General of WHO stated in a report to his Executive Board in 1975: "Publications are the principal link, indeed the only effective medium of communication, with professional health workers".

Languages

24. So far as non-periodical publications are concerned, the general principle of parity amongst the working languages of the various organizations would appear to require that each such publication should appear in all the working languages of the organization. In practice, however, it is often extremely difficult to apply the principle in full. It is often impossible to procure translations soon enough to avoid reducing the timeliness and impact of the original, and strict parity has to give way, as FAO puts it, to "selectivity in actual practice".

25. This policy, of principle tempered by pragmatism, seems to be almost universal in the system. ILO, for instance, makes its choice of language or languages on the basis of the "best possible forecast of demand ... and the characteristics and size of the target readership". It takes into account "what is necessary for the convenience of member States and practicable with facilities and staff available". This approach shows also the importance of budgetary constraints: there are simply not enough resources to permit the translation of all non-periodical publications into all working languages, and the determination of the language is therefore an offshoot of the purpose and intent of the publication.

26. The smaller organizations have varying practices, depending on their product and clientele. ITU's publications are produced in three working languages (French, English and Spanish). UNU, considering its basic audience to be scientists, has felt that, by publishing in English, the University can reach its target relatively well. However, other language editions are published when appropriate. Being based in Tokyo, UNU publishes some material in Japanese.

27. There is a different language picture relating to periodicals and other serial publications. Some organizations publish in many languages besides their own working languages or those of the United Nations. The UNESCO Courier appears in 26 languages, and there is even a quarterly selection in English, French and Spanish in Braille. UNESCO gives subsidies to help to defray the translation costs of editions published by National Commissions. FAO also helps by providing manuscripts and illustrations, by purchasing copies for distribution at FAO training centres or seminars, and by cash grants. WHO and ILO serial publications also appear in non-United Nations languages, often through collaboration with governments or commercial publishers who are given the translation rights. WHO and ILO also perform these services through their regional offices or institutions.

28. Publications issued in official or working languages are often translated by the organization itself: about 60% of translations are made in-house. Other language editions are produced under contract by outside publishers, by agreement with governments, or by National Committees or similar bodies. Some organizations have special arrangements for translation with the USSR, China, Cuba and Switzerland.

Structure and organization

Headquarters

29. More than half of the organizations place overall internal control in a Publications Board or Committee which advises the Executive Head on the formulation and execution of the publications programme. It is a senior body made up,

for instance in FAO, of the Deputy Director-General as Chairman, the Director Office of Programme, Budget and Evaluation, five Assistant Directors-General spanning various disciplines within the house and the Director of the Publications Division.

30. The Publications Board of the United Nations comprises representatives of certain key departments, with representatives of other departments or offices in New York when their programmes come before the Board. Offices away from Headquarters may be represented. The Board co-ordinates the planning and supervises the execution of the programme, approves the estimates for contractual printing and supervises the use of funds for this purpose and for internal processing. The Board meets bi-monthly and has a Working Committee which meets more frequently.

31. These Boards or Committees are organs of co-ordination and general supervision advising the Executive Head. They satisfy themselves that programmes conform to the mandates given to the organizations and are calculated to advance their work, but they do not enter into the details of individual publications.

32. There are wide differences in the location chosen for publishing operations within the structures of the various organizations. In many cases, publications units, in which mainly production tasks are centralized, are virtually indistinguishable from services concerned essentially with documents or with conference services. In other organizations, such units are a part of Public Information. Most have little control over the choice of the subject, the quality and style of the manuscript or the publishability and "marketability" of the text.

33. UNESCO is unique in having a publications unit in each programme sector. The heads of these units meet with the Director of UNESCO Press in a Consultative Committee on Publications. This committee has a broad mandate to review and comment upon publications plans, to study ways of improving the quality of manuscripts and to stimulate ideas for books on UNESCO themes for publication by outside publishers. WHO has a Standing Advisory Committee on Publications and Documentation whose terms of reference include study and comment on publications proposals and plans, advice on the usefulness, content, presentation and any other aspect of a periodical or series as well as study of the need for new types of publications or documents.

34. Most of the more active publishing agencies use principally full-time staff, but some organizations contract out almost all authorship and printing tasks. The smaller organizations find it cheaper to hire experts ad hoc than to carry full-time personnel who would not be fully occupied throughout the year. Some publications units have more than 100 professional and general service staff members. Others have only one or two part-time persons concerned with publications. In the United Nations two departments have responsibility for publications: the Department of Conference Services for most of the production and sales functions and the Department of Public Information, which, apart from producing material (as distinct from publications) for the general public, negotiates contracts with commercial publishers for the co-publication of United Nations texts.

35. Many of the functions involved in preparing a publication are identical with those required for a document. Sometimes therefore staff divide their time between the two functions. This is particularly the case for translators, but it also occurs with internal printing and with graphics. Estimates of the amount of time spent on one or the other activity are often arbitrary.

Regional

36. Many organizations have regional or sub-regional offices or centres which publish material having an essentially regional relevance, in conformity with the policy and practice of the organization. The regional economic commissions and other regional bodies like PAHO have established quite considerable programmes, co-ordinated with Headquarters, and have ample room for independent decision-making.

37. ILO's regional centres issue publications on matters concerning employment, training and labour administration of direct relevance to the regions and sub-

regions in which the centres are located. UNESCO delegates responsibility to offices away from Headquarters for the preparation and issue of regionally- or nationally-oriented publications. Its Regional Office for Education in Asia and Oceania has produced over 30 major titles in a year. Much of UNICEF's publications effort is conceived, funded and carried out by regional or country offices with little co-ordination by, or even reference to, headquarters.

Budgetary and financial aspects

Procedure

38. The normal procedure in the United Nations for arriving at budget allocations is for the Working Committee of the Publications Board to review the publications proposals by budget section and by programme on the basis of the presentations made by departments or offices. Upon completion of its review of this material, the Working Committee presents to the Publications Board a consolidated publications programme and printing estimates for the following biennium, with recommended dates for the submission and production of individual items. This consolidated programme is reviewed by the Board. Following that review, the programme as amended is transmitted to the Budget Division for incorporation into the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget.

39. In the ILO, an Indicative Publications Plan is prepared on the basis of submissions from author departments which may run into the following biennium. The inclusion of publications in the plan has to be established first. FAO's divisions plan publications they deem necessary for the execution of their programmes and submit preliminary lists to the Publications Division for costing. Tentative budget allocations are set and each operating unit adjusts its programme accordingly. The revised costs are then submitted for consolidation and later consideration by the Publications Committee.

40. Publishing operations obviously constitute a considerable portion of each organization's expenditure, but it is in present circumstances impossible to quantify the portion with certainty. Replies to the JIU questionnaire in this respect were incomplete, often vague and probably incompatible, and the Inspectors do not feel justified in including the figures in this report. But the smaller, technical organizations of the system did indicate with some unanimity that their direct publication costs centered round a figure bearing a relationship of about 10% to their regular budgets. If this percentage were extended to the whole United Nations system, direct publication costs would work out at approximately US\$ 150 million in 1981. A further substantial sum would have to be added if indirect costs were to be included. It seems to the Inspectors extremely desirable that the budgets of all organizations should be drawn up in such a way as to enable at any rate the direct costs of the publications programmes to be identified and extracted.

41. To say that direct publication costs bear a 10% relation to the regular budget does not imply that publication costs represent 10% of the regular budget. Many organizations attract extra-budgetary resources for publications programmes arising from extra-budgetary activities. In 1981, UNEP financed 25% of its direct expenditure on publications from extra-budgetary sources, UNESCO 20% and FAO 15%.

Revolving Funds

42. A few organizations have revolving funds, created essentially to finance the costs of printing additional copies or reprints of publications. The WHO Publications Revolving Fund not only helps finance these costs in relation to sales publications but also meets some of the expenses (including staff expenses) for sales promotion as well as for distribution and mail. The Fund pays the salaries of 2 professionals and 6 general staff. In 1980-1981, US\$ 1.8 million were credited to the Fund. In UNESCO, US\$ 2.6 million income from sales of publications was credited to the Revolving Fund in 1981. This Fund pays authors' royalties as well as some printing and distribution costs. A large portion of it

is used to meet the salaries of 45 staff members employed in sales and distribution - a commitment which seems to go beyond the original purpose of the Fund. FAO finances some 20 posts from its Revolving Fund. IMO has since 1965 financed the direct cost of its publications programme completely from its Printing Fund (apart from a nominal US\$ 100 annually on the Regular Budget); the Fund finances one professional and six general service posts, and was able to transfer US\$ 400,000 to the organization's Working Capital Fund in 1982.

Use of Non-Convertible Currencies

43. There have been frequent suggestions that organizations might use non-convertible currencies to pay for printing, but not much progress has been made. Some countries insist on being paid in hard currency and in some there is not always sufficient guarantee of timely delivery or appropriate quality. However, it would be reasonable to ask those that pay part of their extra-budgetary contributions in non-convertible currencies to agree to the use of a proportion of these sums for the production of publications in their countries. There has been some limited positive experience : UNRISD has arranged for the printing of some specialized studies in Hungary, and UNITAR and WHO have made similar arrangements with the USSR. Two organizations, on the other hand, found their efforts in this direction fruitless.

III. POLICY AND PRACTICE

44. At the highest level, publications policy has to be decided in the light of the purposes of the organization concerned, as well - of course - as of the system's need to foster international peace and understanding. When controversial issues have to be addressed, the treatment of them must not impugn the integrity of those who hold other views than those of the author, or engage in the "advocacy or criticism of particular political systems or ideologies" (ILO).

General criteria

45. At a lower level, the organizations have developed various working criteria. These include the following:

Publications should bear a direct relation to and promote projects and activities in the organization's approved programme of work.

Publications should be directed to identifiable (target) readerships.

A distinction should be made between material of short-term value suitable for publication in a periodical and material of long-term value for publication in more lasting form (studies, monographs).

Manuscripts should be written as simply and concisely as the subject matter permits.

Authors should write "with a more diversified readership in view than their immediate circle of specialists or professional contacts" (ILO).

The estimated volume of demand and, in particular, the sales potential of manuscripts should be a major if not decisive factor in deciding whether to publish and in what numbers. The sales potential should normally, as a minimum, permit the recovery of reproduction costs (ILO).

Publications should have quality, referring, as FAO puts it, "to the completeness and adequacy of the material presented and to the standard of writing which must be adapted to the audience".

The quality and usefulness of contributions from substantive departments should be assessed on a comparative basis to arrive at a coherent and well-balanced programme of publications (ILO).

46. These criteria provide a suitable backdrop against which to test individual programmes and publications. It will be useful in the course of the study to examine:

- how far the criteria are being followed in practice,
- what obstacles to improvement in publications programmes there may be, and
- what can be done to make publications programmes more effective.

But first it is necessary to look at some of the practical matters which have a bearing on publications programmes.

Content and Quality

47. The decision to prepare a publication usually originates in a substantive department, which undertakes to furnish the manuscript itself or to hire someone to write it. The request for permission and funds to embark on the publication comes from the publications unit of the appropriate department or from a senior executive in the substantive field. The Publications Division has no say in this process. Later, through its Head who is normally a member of the Publications

Board or Committee, the Publications Division may have an opportunity to comment on proposals for publications but it can exercise little pressure to change their basic concept or content.

48. The reasons why Publications Divisions have so little influence over the content of publications programmes in their early stage are twofold. First, in a Publications Committee which consists of many Heads of specialist Divisions ranking as high as Assistant Directors-General, the head of a Publications Division has only a junior voice. Second, Publications Divisions do not generally have personnel trained in the substantive fields in which the organization is working and this makes them less influential, in the formative stages of a publications programme, than the substantive departmental heads or representatives. Publications Boards/Committees themselves have little or no control over the quality of manuscripts (see comments on their composition and role at paras. 29-31).

49. In 1979, the United Nations Publishing Division invited a distinguished former commercial publisher to examine its publications programmes. He noted that the Publishing Division "does not act as a publisher in the generally accepted sense of that word, having no responsibility for the editorial content or development of the material it handles". He continues: "This split between what is in the book - its content, editing, level of discourse, design - and how the book is produced and distributed.... causes a feeling of loss of identity among participants in the larger publishing endeavour". His report also stressed the need to create a community of purpose and make a conscious joint effort to improve quality.

50. The quality of manuscripts is everywhere acknowledged to be a matter of serious concern. The Inspectors received oral and written comments on unhappy drafting, on the unsatisfactory quality of some departmental texts and on what was informally described as "chilly professional jargon", and indeed in their own experience have encountered many texts which fell short of the best standards in content, readability and presentation. Good texts do come out of the United Nations system, but the proportion is not high enough.

51. Organizations have made various efforts to maintain some measure of quality control over their publications. The United Nations University submits its manuscripts to "peer review". University presses use this technique successfully, as it helps to guarantee the scientific credentials of the manuscript. This technique has another advantage: it may serve to avoid duplicating material already published, since the "peer" reviewer is likely to possess a broad knowledge of what has already been issued in a particular field. WHO practises peer review particularly in relation to the technical content of publications.

50. UNESCO's Consultative Committee on Publications (consisting of the Heads of Publications units and the Director of UNESCO Press) has a broad mandate to review and comment on publications plans and to study ways of improving the quality of manuscripts. WHO's Standing Advisory Committee on Publications and Documents has a similar role. This type of Committee can help to keep up standards, but full success in quality control will continue to depend on arrangements made closer to the working level of manuscript preparation.

53. Timeliness is another aspect of quality control. No matter how well it is drafted, a publication issued after long delays will have a reduced impact. Many important publications are regularly produced with great delays - up to 4 years in the case of the United Nations Yearbook. The Inspectors were informed that a UNESCO study of the matter had shown that it takes an average time-span of 25 months from the receipt of a manuscript at headquarters to the appearance of the first language version. This is too long. ILO considers that 6 to 8 months for a publication of about 160 printed pages should be enough. Suffice it to say that the importance of getting a publication out on time applies with equal force to its distribution and sale as to the preparation of the manuscript. Departments or units seeking permission to produce publications should be required to state and justify a specific period of time within which each publication must be produced and distributed or sold. If

this time frame cannot be met, the publication should not be produced "in house" : it would be better to seek the services of a commercial publisher to have the publication appear in time.

54. Almost all United Nations bodies forbid signature of manuscripts by staff members, except in special circumstances. Many staff members feel that the quality of writing would improve if those who are responsible for work requiring special creative, scientific or literary effort were named as authors. When a publication is the result of work done by an outsider, its author is usually named. The Inspectors consider that the rules on citing the authors of publications by name when these have been prepared by staff members should be made more flexible. The names of staff who have participated in the preparation of a publication should be published in the case of publications which call for special creative, scientific or literary effort.

55. The criteria for publications (see para. 45) recognize the need to direct publications at specific readerships. ILO in one of its internal circulars enjoins authors to ensure that publications are written to appeal "to the widest possible readerships". It should be mandatory that each publication from the earliest stage should be directed to a specific and identifiable readership. This should guide the whole process of writing and production.

56. The view was expressed to the Inspectors that insufficient attention was paid to the selection of authors from developing countries. The principle of geographical distribution does not apply in this instance, but the Inspectors believe that consideration of target readerships, the language needs, and the nature of the cultures to which any given publication is to be addressed should lead to a choice of the author most suitable for reaching the target, who will in many cases be from a developing country.

Programme balance

57. This is the last of the criteria in para. 45. A publications programme is more than the sum of its parts. It must have coherence. It must reflect the organizations' mandates, not the preferences or idiosyncrasies of individuals. This duty is for the Publications Boards and Committees, and it is important that they should fulfil it by looking at the publications programmes of their organizations as wholes and from a positive point of view, considering not only the relatively easy question whether the individual publications proposed are acceptable but also the more difficult one, whether any category of readership or any subject matter has been left uncovered in the proposed programme.

Co-operative activities among organizations

58. Some organizations have worked together on and shared the cost of financing publications. FAO/WHO, UNESCO/FAO, UNEP/UNESCO and ILO/FAO/UNESCO, FAO/IAEA are some of the partnerships which have been tried in this way. The practice is however not common, despite the possibilities of duplication in some fields. It is obviously more difficult to achieve joint publication and distribution than for a single organization to publish on its own. Sometimes one organization makes a subsidy to another when the latter undertakes a joint effort. Admittedly, some complications may arise between organizations in pursuing joint conceptual and production efforts on individual publications. Despite this, the Inspectors believe there are many merits in bringing the disciplines of different organizations together and presenting material in an integrated fashion where the subject matter permits and the co-operative activity among organizations will illuminate the subject matter for a wider public. The cost-effectiveness of such publications may justify the extra effort expended.

Co-publications with outside publishers

59. Not all organizations pursue vigorously the possibility of persuading outside publishers to share in production costs through joint publication efforts. Admittedly, not all titles lend themselves to such cost-sharing. But there are a number of publishers, including scholarly presses, who are interested in the same subject matter as the United Nations organizations. Indeed, not only smaller publishers

would value the prestige of the link with a United Nations organization. Operations of this sort can reduce the internal costs and workloads of organizations and may also ensure a wider market and more intensive distribution. Sales staff should be involved in the search for these contracts.

60. This type of co-publication can take one of three forms. In the first case, the outside publisher undertakes the production and shares the distribution with the author-organization. Usually, the countries of exclusive distribution are the subject of negotiation. The second type amounts to a distribution arrangement : the outside publisher makes a substantial advance purchase and may acquire exclusive distribution rights in certain territories in return for the addition of his name to the cover of the book. A third means of co-operation with outside publishers results in a "commercial publication" : the manuscript is sold to a publisher for publication and exclusive distribution. In this case, the name of the United Nations agency may not appear except as the author of the manuscript. This technique is sometimes employed when the organization cannot or will not undertake a translation, which is then done at the expense of the outside publisher.

61. FAO and UNEP have authorized outside publishers to prepare manuscripts on agreed subjects (frequently conference working papers and proceedings) and then to produce and market the resulting books. But UNEP no longer does this, and FAO has doubts about its effectiveness. For one thing, since copyright is not held by the organization, other language editions are not possible without the permission of the publisher, who is probably interested in only one language. These failures should not be allowed to cast doubt on the feasibility of the practice. To take an example from outside the United Nations system, commercial publishers produce some 50 titles per year mainly from conference or other proceedings of the European Communities. There is no basic reason why the United Nations system cannot issue more by this means.

62. There have been successful examples of collaboration with commercial publishers. UNICEF co-published with a Guatemalan commercial firm a series of three books prepared in support of a Central American programme for early childhood development. ILO negotiated an American edition of the "Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety" which resulted in the bulk sale of 4 000 sets and in net income of some US\$ 33,000 over a five-year period.

63. At the United Nations, contractual arrangements concluded by the External Publications Office of DPI produce some income. Royalty rates are negotiated on the basis of a percentage of net receipts (i.e. after discounts) or as a percentage of list price. In 1981, ILO received \$12,609; UNESCO \$51,000 (in 1980, \$163,000); FAO, \$3,400; WHO, \$2,768; WIPO, approx. \$5,000 and ECLA an estimated \$54,480.

Printing

64. More than half of the books published in the United Nations system in 1981 were produced internally, but the costs of publication are not easily identifiable chiefly because in the production departments staff work and materials are used on documents and publications without distinction.

64. Print-runs are usually set by the Head of the Publications Division, taking into account the requirements of the author department for free copies, the number of copies that have to be distributed and estimates of sales. Reprints follow similar consultations. The costs of reprints are met either from revolving funds or by the originating department. ILO frequently grants reprinting rights to local markets in developing countries if the sales price is to be lower than the original ILO edition.

66. In response to pressure from member States for greater geographic diversification in the selection of printers, a number of organizations have looked into the feasibility of using printers in countries outside their headquarters, some far afield. Other organizations have had the composition done at long distance while printing and binding are carried out closer to home, thus reducing freight charges.

67. Because of sharp increases in the cost of paper, some agencies have tried co-operative buying of paper in order to achieve economies of scale. For the same

purpose, organizations in Vienna have combined their printing efforts. IAEA operates the Vienna International Centre for Printing Services (VICPS), which produces books and periodicals for IAEA, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the Division of Narcotic Drugs and the International Narcotics Control Board. In 1981, over 1.5 million books, periodicals and other publications were produced. At one time, there was even discussion of the possibility of having VICPS print for other United Nations organizations outside the city, but this ran into difficulties on grounds of cost and some agencies feared that priority attention could not be guaranteed for urgent jobs.

68. Geneva-based organizations might find it useful to explore the possibility of setting up a joint printing plant similar to VICPS. A pooling of the available resources could make feasible the use of more sophisticated technology in the typesetting and printing of publications and documents. Other joint publishing activities in sales and distribution would no doubt follow.

69. Rapid changes in printing technology have called into question many traditional assumptions. Short print-runs and reprinting almost on demand have become more feasible and economical. Publishers routinely use camera-ready copy : material typed on a typewriter or word-processor in a format which facilitates the photographing of the page is then printed by offset using the negative. Computers and electronics combined have opened up new techniques for rapid printing and transfer of texts and for economical storage. United Nations system publishing should take full advantage of these and other developments.

IV. DISTRIBUTION AND SALES

Free distribution

70. The results of distribution and sales provide an index of the success or failure of individual publications. It is therefore necessary to consider how organizations distribute and sell their product. Some publications are distributed free of cost to the recipients. Where the recipients are member States, the copies received are in fact part of the benefits which accrue to them as members of the United Nations or of a specialized agency.

71. While a policy which encourages free distribution may be praiseworthy, information cannot be indiscriminately spread abroad without consideration of its effectiveness. WHO considers that its publications can be most effectively disseminated by using "established national channels". FAO supplies member States with pre-arranged quotas which vary with the differing categories of publication. The distribution of FAO material within countries is "primarily the responsibility of the governments themselves". ILO identifies within individual countries and regions the persons and institutions with whom it thinks its publications can have most effect and distributes its publications to them, if possible, through a co-ordinating point agreed with the Government. ITC offers all publications free of charge to institutions and individuals in developing countries. ITU has no free distribution but gives a discount to member States.

72. A great deal obviously depends on the interest which governments take in furthering the work of the organizations; but it does seem that the more direct the contact of the organizations is with their potential reading public, the more effective is the distribution likely to be. How else can an organization gauge whether its publications are making headway or not? UNEP in listing specific objectives of its publications programmes points to the need "to assess the results of dissemination of a given product". If this is to be an agreed aim, difficult though it is, reasonably close contact with recipients must be maintained.

73. Some figures for the organizations which are the biggest distributors are given in Table III.

74. Some distribution lists have been put on computer but this is not common practice. To facilitate their use and eliminate duplication (sometimes within the organization itself), distribution lists should be consolidated and computerized. This would also make for easier collaboration among organizations in measures relating to distribution.

75. A study of United Nations statistics reinforces the view that computerization of lists could lead to more rational distribution methods. The United Nations reported printing 838,000 copies externally in 1981. It produced 250 publications internally with an average press run of 5,600, i.e., another 1,400,000 copies. Of a total of 2,238,000 copies, 740,000 were sold, leaving in round figures about 1.5 million copies mostly for free distribution. But in 1981 the United Nations distributed free 7,691,642 copies. This figure included publications shipped by regional commissions and by offices in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi to New York for distribution as well as miscellaneous requests for current and old stock. Taking all these factors into account, the figures remain disturbing. Considering that in 1980 the United Nations distributed almost 9,000,000 copies, there would seem to be scope for improving the rationale behind distribution. It may be that some documents have been included in the figures above but even so they are striking enough. However that may be, the Inspectors are convinced that if the distribution lists of the United Nations entities were consolidated and computerized there would be better scope for rationalizing the distribution of United Nations publications. The lists of individual United Nations entities could be pruned of duplications, out-of-date addresses eliminated and the effort reinforced to reach interested recipients. Country by country breakdowns of lists would also assist planning.

Table III: Distribution and Sales 1981

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Distribution</u>	<u>Books</u>	<u>Periodicals</u>
UNITED NATIONS - HEADQUARTERS			
Publications Division	free	7,691,642 ^{1/}	N.A.
	sold	740,000	504,000
Department of Public Information	free	-	119,050
	sold	-	147,950
FAO	free	330,000	254,000
	sold	369,000	169,000
ILO*	free	55%	70%
	sold	45%	30%
IMO	free	13,585	84,000
	sold	111,400	N.A.
UNESCO	free	450,000	527,000
	sold	160,000	3,126,178
UPU	free	11,700	10,400
	sold	8,300	17,500
WHO	free	50%	80%
	sold	50%	20%
WIPO	free	1,000	16,000
	sold	6,000	42,000

^{1/} Includes publications produced by regional commissions and by offices in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, distributed by United Nations Headquarters.

* ILO's percentages are of "reserved for free distribution", "reserved for sale".

Sales policy

76. The following policy pronouncements on sales give some idea of how organizations view this matter:

- Sales of publications should be vigorously encouraged as a means of making useful information more widely available, and not as a means of making a profit (FAO)
- (...) The appraisal of the sales possibilities of each publication in each country and the promotion of distribution, whether by sale or otherwise, of WHO publications, are important elements of the publishing programme (...). (WHO).
- The main purpose of sales is to increase distribution without additional cost to the Organization (WHO).
- The ILO does not aim to publish only for profit and a decision to publish will rarely be dependent upon marketing considerations alone (ILO).
- Revenue from sales is the best way of measuring real public interest in the results of ILO research, etc. (...). It is also a major means of relieving pressure on the regular budget and allowing re-investment of the returns from publishing activity (ILO).

77. Three conclusions seem to emerge from these statements:

First: Decisions on sales publishing in the United Nations family are not governed by the profit motive.

Second: One aim of sales is to recoup some production costs and obtain funds for re-investing in reprints, etc.

Third: Another aim is to increase distribution without additional cost to the organization.

Sales income

78. Sales of publications in the United Nations including regional commissions and other entities earned some US\$ 4,000,000 in 1981 (See Table IV). UNESCO earned US\$ 2,800,000 in large measure from UNESCO Courier, its successful monthly magazine. Next were WHO with some US\$ 1,800,000; ILO with US\$ 1,700,000; IAEA with US\$ 900,000; WIPO with US\$ 900,000; IMO US\$ 870,000; FAO US\$ 500,000; ICAO US\$ 320,000 and UPU US\$ 270,000. These ten organizations produce most of the United Nations family publications and account for more than 90 per cent of sales. There is no simple correlation between production and sales. FAO, with 278 books and some 71 issues of periodicals is second among the producers but eighth in sales income. ILO stands third in sales income, having produced 118 books and 60 issues of periodicals.

Prices of publications

79. The prices of sales publications are fixed according to widely differing standards. In some cases, they are set on the basis of a multiple of the run-on cost of production (they do not take into account the costs of editing or composition). UNESCO generally uses a factor 4.5 times the run-on cost. The United Nations uses one of 7.5. UNEP uses an indicative figure of from US\$ 0.10 to US\$ 0.50 per page. Some organizations appear to base their price decisions on a wish to sell their publications at a lower price than comparable commercial publications.

80. Some organizations like UNESCO fix their prices to national distributors leaving them free to set their own local price provided payment is made to the organization in convertible currency at the host country sales price minus discounts.

81. For sales to developing countries, some special pricing arrangements exist. WHO sells to developing countries at discounts ranging from 40% to as high as 65 or 70%. Local currency is accepted in some cases. ILO sells some publications

Table IV: Sales Income (US dollars)

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1978</u>
UNITED NATIONS					
Headquarters	Bookshop	584,227	643,506	560,902	535,906
	Mail	1,460,583	1,393,425	1,533,434	1,514,254
	Agents	1,189,697	1,116,860	1,039,108	1,492,792
Geneva	Bookshop	93,303	78,607	57,398	62,432
	Mail	75,554	75,843	65,629	46,785
	Agents	647,468	524,194	581,696	515,653
ECLA	Bookshop & Mail	24,215	41,171	42,566	29,260
UNEP	Agents	64,630	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
UNFPA	Bookshop	1,227	2,021	982	N.A.
UNU	Mail	9,742	4,800	1,000	N.A.
	Agents	14,418	11,823	2,287	N.A.
FAO	Mail	155,583	127,345	79,634	66,694
	Agents	317,018	283,857	252,317	302,842
IAEA	All sales	918,396	1,068,148	913,455	705,306
ICAO	Bookshop & Mail	292,619	326,505	341,795	289,173
	Agents	34,630	32,523	29,743	51,714
ILO	Bookshop & Mail	1,173,889	771,610	827,769	623,487
	Agents	572,539	466,774	551,845	415,659
IMO	Bookshop & Mail	871,000	861,000	885,000	698,000
ITC	Mail	11,500	10,000	N.A.	N.A.
	Agents	1,800	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
UNESCO	Direct	147,000	175,000	130,000	125,000
	Agents	2,592,000	2,876,000	2,614,000	2,219,000
	Bookshop	54,310	43,681	33,634	31,054
UPU	All sales	268,800	123,900	107,900	91,800
WHO	Mail	701,000	716,000	863,000	716,000
	Agents	1,187,000	1,309,000	1,460,000	1,215,000
WIPO	All sales	888,000	695,000	502,000	N.A.
Totals		14,352,148	13,778,593	13,477,094	11,747,811

to developing countries through its regional offices at 25% below normal cost. Some of the larger publishing organizations do not favour different pricing for different markets as, they say, this complicates accounts particularly when they are not kept by computer. A number of sales managers stated that they would rather give publications away than be involved in the complication of different prices. Some organizations give differing discounts to their sales agents without finding this too complicated.

Sales distribution

82. Publications appear to be sold primarily in developed countries, though few organizations have given detailed breakdowns. Of total UNESCO sales of US\$ 2.8 million in 1981, four countries (France, USA, Belgium, United Kingdom) account for US\$ 1.75 million or more than 60 per cent. Including Spain, the Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan and the Netherlands, UNESCO sales to developed countries approach US\$ 2 million or over 70 per cent. The preponderance of developed countries as markets is even more striking in the case of United Nations publications. In 1981 the total amounted to US\$ 2.06 million: of this total, US\$ 1.8 million or 91 per cent came from developed countries and only US\$ 170,000 from developing countries (US\$ 45,646 from Africa and the Middle East; US\$ 49,553 from Asia excluding Japan, and US\$ 73,640 from Latin America). ILO sales in developed countries were 78 per cent of its total sales in 1981. Some of the sales recorded to developing countries find their way through bookshops to developing countries but hardly in sufficient numbers to alter significantly the general picture given above.

83. The organizations handle sales distribution in various ways. Many maintain headquarters bookstores, which also respond to postal requests for publications. Most of the organizations have public or private distributors in many countries and, as we have seen, they rely on sales agents as well, some using the same agents in a given country. The discounts allowed to agents vary from one organization to another. WIPO gives 20 to 40 per cent. The United Nations discount varies from 20 per cent for a single copy order to 30 per cent for 25 or more copies. ILO uses a sliding scale of discounts, from 25 to 45 per cent, to booksellers and sales agents. WHO normally gives 40, UNESCO 50 per cent.

84. A few organizations have no distribution at national level. All their sales are handled either by their own bookshop or through correspondence. Some have exclusive sales agents in a number of countries, particularly those that have the best sales record, but also in developing countries where the sales agent, as in planned economy states, is often nominated by the host government. Some organizations have more than one distributor in a country when that seems advisable. A few have a mixture of these methods. WHO, for example, has national distributors both exclusive and non-exclusive. It holds stocks in some countries, notably the United States, but orders are processed in Geneva.

85. As stated in para. 82 above, sales to developing countries are much smaller than sales to developed countries. This is only a reflection of the general situation in the book trade, namely that the market for books, and indeed for publications of most kinds including maps and magazines, is much more substantial in the developed world than it is in the developing world: consumers and organizations in developed countries can afford more books and magazines than those in developing countries. The preponderance of sales of United Nations publications may therefore continue to lie in the developed world. But the present disproportion between sales in developed countries and sales in developing ones is too great. More should be done to encourage sales in the developing world, not only because of the financial returns to be expected (indeed, the financial return on the marginal dollar or man-hour spent on encouraging sales in developing countries may well be less than the return in developed countries, so a net financial sacrifice may be incurred) but also because of the universality of the United Nations system.

86. The wider question also arises, whether United Nations publications are always sufficiently targeted to the developing world. This can hardly apply to the purely factual and statistical portion of the publication output. Yearbooks

and statistical compilations do not admit of much targeting. But the Inspectors stress the importance of the developing world as a target for technical publications, and the point is relevant both to the choice of subjects for technical publications and to their drafting.

Best performing titles

87. As might have been expected, there have been no runaway best sellers among United Nations system publications. But some publications have sold a more than respectable number of copies. Two United Nations books for the general reader, "Basic Facts about the United Nations" and "Your United Nations" have sold well: "Basic Facts" sold almost 12,000 copies in 1981 with a cumulative 169,000 since it first appeared in 1946; "Your United Nations" has sold 80,000 copies since 1957. UNESCO's multilingual 23rd edition of Study Abroad has sold 18,350 copies since 1980.

88. Yearbooks with their appeal to libraries, research and other academic institutions sell even better. In this category are the Statistical Yearbook (264,000 copies since 1949) and the Yearbook of the United Nations (200,000 copies since 1947) which together average about 7,000 copies per year.

89. The technical organizations have also some good sales: ITU's CCITT Yellow Books sold 51,267 copies in 1980 and ICAO's Location Indicators sold 17,160 copies in 1982 in a multilingual version. Some IMO titles sold over 4,000 copies in 1980 or 1981. In these cases, the technical organizations have little competition to face. Study and training texts have also done well: ILO's Introduction to Work Study (175,000 copies sold since 1957) and How to Read a Balance Sheet (116,000 copies sold since 1966) have averaged 7000 copies per year in English. UNESCO's Source Book for Science Teaching has sold 40,000 copies in English since 1973 and 26,000 in French.

Promotion

90. No organization has what it would consider enough funds for promotion of publications. What is available from the revolving funds is quite limited and budgets do not usually include large amounts for this purpose.

91. Few would gainsay the importance of promotion. When a new publication is imminent or has seen the light of day, potential readers must be alerted. The commercial publisher usually concentrates his promotion on his own geographical area before turning to opportunities for peripheral sales. A publishing organization in the United Nations system is expected to promote sales in all member States. For this purpose most organizations prepare sales catalogues and issue special brochures to promote periodicals as well as individual titles or groups of titles. Because promotion is best linked to the tastes of selected readership targets in different cultural settings, United Nations promotion activities, sometimes lacking in specificity, have not always made their mark.

92. The book review in a specialized publication is a useful method of bringing new material to the attention of the prospective reader. Instead of sending copies of a publication to numerous journals to see if any will review, IAEA sends a promotion leaflet to review journals which then request the publications they wish. There is much competition among publishers to have their works reviewed in these journals so that contact with the journals has to be maintained and be purposeful. One problem encountered has been the lateness with which reviews appear: a good review issued a year late is probably a review lost. Organizations have to make their promotion moves early enough in the cycle of the publication to achieve timely reviews.

93. Almost all the United Nations organizations participate in book fairs and exhibitions. This can bring a good cross-section of titles to the eye of the specialized or general public and open to business opportunities. For this reason, collaboration among members of the United Nations system is common: collective stands are frequently rented with costs shared.

94. The readership survey is another adjunct to promotion used by commercial publishers, particularly those involved in the production of periodicals. This

helps the publisher to gauge the temper and quality of the readership he must cater for. Occasional market surveys provide among other things insight into what types of book will sell best. United Nations organizations by and large have not attempted these types of survey although a number of enquiries have been made of users of specific publications*, for example the United Nations for statistical publications, WIPO for its publications generally and WHO in what it refers to as "regular poll checks of unpaid distribution". The Inspectors consider that surveys for the purpose of identifying reader receptivity and needs in different countries or regions are necessary to the improved planning and execution of publications programmes.

95. Some organizations include in their publications an addressed postcard asking for an acknowledgement of receipt and comment. This is a low-cost method of ascertaining whether a publication has reached its intended reader and objective. The information gathered is usually examined by sales and promotion personnel but, like information gleaned from surveys (see para. 94), should be communicated to authors and author departments as well to assist them the better to address the needs identified.

96. Press releases, feature articles, radio and television programmes can also promote sales by making publications of the United Nations family known to the public. What is more, this information material can reach a much larger audience than the books themselves will ever reach. The opportunity therefore should be grasped to use these information media of communication to convey the salient features of United Nations family publications to as many people as possible. In an era of electronic communication, the message contained in a publication, presented in a popular manner, can be brought home to millions. All this involves a link between programme officers, publications departments and DPI with its spread of United Nations Information Centres around the globe. Information Centres in individual countries should be able through their liaison with governments and their contacts with the local press to disseminate information on United Nations family publications in the form most appropriate to the need. The Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) should be asked to consider this question and advise how best the public information efforts of the United Nations system could aid the dissemination of information on its publications.

Advertising

97. Many organizations advertise their publications in specialized journals, particularly bibliographic ones since much United Nations family publishing is collected by libraries. Some organizations do not allocate funds for this purpose but obtain similar results by exchange advertising. The two methods are of course not mutually exclusive.

98. Six United Nations agencies accept paid advertising : ICAO, IAEA, IMO, WIPO, UPU and ITU. ICAO's income from it amounted to US\$ 445,452 in 1981, a sum within striking distance of the estimated costs of US\$ 588,000 for publications in the same year. ITU earns similarly high revenue from advertising in ITU Journal. The others earn more modest sums : IAEA reported income of US\$ 17,320 in 1981; WIPO makes about US\$ 45,000; IMO about US\$ 25,000; UPU some US\$ 11,000 annually. Each of these organizations is highly specialized, so that the advertisements tend to be created for a select audience. WIPO, for example, states that most of its advertisements come from patent attorneys and trademark agents.

99. ICAO's guidelines for the acceptance of advertisements face the need to make judgments on acceptability : ICAO will not accept advertisements which tend "to exaggerate beyond a reasonable description of product advantages" and it reserves the right to refuse any advertisement which includes "ideological or politically controversial terms". The advertising of products "sold specifically for military purposes" is also ruled out.

* The JIU conducted a user survey of the publications of the United Nations Division of Public Administration and Finance (see JIU/REP/78/2).

100. Most United Nations organizations do not accept paid advertising. They take the view that the acceptance of advertising could compromise the impartiality, both commercial and political, on which their work is based. Clearly, this is a matter for each individual organization to decide but the Inspectors believe that more organizations could accept some paid advertising subject to strict rules and safeguards. To do so, however, publications would have to be produced on time.

Overstock

101. United Nations system organizations, like most commercial publishers, generally decide how many copies of a book or publication to print, in the light of their estimate of the number they can sell in two or three years. As a general rule, about 50 per cent of sales are made in the first year a title is available; after that, there is usually a sharp fall, though there will be significant sales in the next two years. After three years or so, commercial publishers generally "remainder" or even destroy their unsold copies, keeping only a few for archive purposes. The cost of keeping large stocks is prohibitive and new processes such as photocopying and offset have made it simple to reprint any number of copies as needed.

102. In the United Nations system, stocks are kept for longer periods, partly because, like the products of university presses, United Nations system publications tend to have a long shelf life (ILO, for example, stocks some publications dating from the early 1920's) but partly also in some cases because, the Inspectors were told, financial restraints have impeded the development of comprehensive measures of inventory control and stock reduction. Since it seems to be fairly clear that there are in the system substantial stocks of unsaleable publications, whose storage is costing large, if unquantifiable, sums, the twin problems of inventory control and stock reduction must be tackled and solved with some sense of urgency.

103. That is not to say that nothing is done to dispose of outstanding stocks. Most organizations make special offers, for promotional purposes and for the benefit of institutions in developing countries. One or two "remainder" publications to discount dealers. The United Nations has recently tackled the problem of unsold stocks. The basic expectation is that 50 per cent of the sales run will be sold within 3 years of publication. Stock remaining after 5 years is drastically reduced or disposed of by sale for wastepaper.

104. The Inspectors draw attention to the desirability, in all organizations, of strict control of stocks of publications and of energetic clearance of surplus stock, by sale for pulping if necessary. Organizations which do not practise these measures run the risk of occupying storage space to no purpose and - where storage is rented - of spending large sums with no return.

Copyright

105. Most of the organizations in the system copyright most, or even all, of their published material. The most frequent reason for this, as emerges from a survey recently conducted by the United Nations, is the safeguarding of sales revenue. Other reasons include the protection of the interests of the author, the prevention of inaccurate reproduction and the misleading use of material out of context, the need to control the appearance of reproductions and to prevent the appearance of conflicting translations (an especially important point in the case of formally adopted or normative texts, classifications and the like). It has even been found that the retention of copyright has enabled organizations to correct the erroneous use of material and to direct prospective authors and publishers to more up-to-date and apter sources than the publications in question.

106. Most FAO material is copyrighted. ILO, which formerly did not as a rule copyright its published material, has since 1973 adopted a policy of copyrighting almost all of it. The UNU copyrights all its publications. UNESCO copyrights most of its material, though it also considers that the greatest facilities for the transfer of copyright should be granted to publishers in developing countries and to non-profit making institutions as well as in the case of languages in which few works are published. WHO copyrights all its publications except for three

periodicals and its official records. IMO copyrights its publications in order to protect sales revenue, though it retains the right to allow reproduction in suitable cases.

107. In respect of copyright, the United Nations appears to be the odd man out. Its basic practice (document ST/AI/189 Add. 9 of 29 March 1972) is not to retain copyright in its published material, in the belief that that is in keeping with its policy of facilitating dissemination of the contents of its publications as widely as possible by all reasonable means. Substantial exceptions to the basic practice have been made, especially in the case of statistical documents which contain information from governments who would not have furnished the same information to commercial publishers. It has also been found desirable to copyright certain maps and the proceedings of some special conferences as well as, for instance, the United Nations Yearbook and Year United Nations, in order to safeguard the sales revenue from these widely-purchased publications. The United Nations has recently reviewed its policy, in the light of other organizations' experience and of some recent changes in United States copyright legislation. As a result, it is now prepared to consider favourably copyrighting rather more of its publications. Such an evolution would bring the United Nations more into line with the main body of the system.

PART II

V. MAIN ISSUES

The approach to sales and to free distribution

108. Two pronouncements made in 1952 provide a good backdrop to an understanding of the approach of United Nations system organizations to sales. First, a Working Group of the ACC stated: "The fundamental publishing aim of the member organizations remains that their publications shall be read rather than that they should be paid for. In this connection, it must be borne in mind that most of the publications involved would constitutionally require to be published if there were no purchasers at all ..." (the Inspectors doubt whether word "most" is still correct). Second, the Executive Board of WHO stated: "Although it is desirable to offset as high a proportion as possible of the cost of production of WHO publications, they are not looked upon primarily as a source of revenue. The main importance of sales resides in the fact that only in the case of such publications as are purchased is it possible to have some certainty that they are finding their way into the hands of persons who really need them".

109. Both statements recognize - implicitly or explicitly - that some publishing has to take place on constitutional grounds whether or not sales are involved. Where they differ is in the weight they put on sales : the first suggests an anti-thesis between publications that are read and those that are paid for; the second does not find these types mutually exclusive, but considers the main importance of sales to be as an index of whether publications are in fact reaching people who are likely to make use of them rather than as a source of revenue.

110. Distribution of material is not an end in itself. If material disseminated does not reach the institutions and people for whom it is designed, the whole process of publication is pointless. Organizations have not yet been able to gauge with any certainty the extent to which the publications they distribute free are having a positive impact on their readers. While every effort must be made to correct this lack, a concomitant effort is necessary to promote sales.

111. The Inspectors believe that Governing Bodies, where this is not now explicit, should enjoin their Publications Boards/Committees to require that, before work on any publication is approved, proper information should be supplied on the readership to whom it is directed as well as the marketing concept and sales plans. When a manuscript of a publication has been prepared, it should before approval of its issue be scrutinized to see whether it satisfies the criteria on the basis of which its preparation was sanctioned. Governing Bodies should also at intervals of two to three years test the validity of the grounds on which publications are being produced to ensure that, apart from those that are obligatory in a prescribed form, publications are not being approved through a reliance merely on the possibilities of free distribution rather than on the basis of a test of publishability - which all approved publications should meet. Secretariats should, for these reviews, provide Governing Bodies with information on the extent to which publications have reached the readerships for which they were planned and should indicate what proportion of the number of copies printed has been distributed free or sold.

112. As a corollary to the recommendations in para. 111, no publication should be issued merely to serve as proof that an activity has taken place. The focus and aim of a publication should be sharper : it should have a clear developmental or other objective in view. Furthermore publications in respect of which sales are not a viable proposition, should be issued in the form of documents rather than books which demand print runs in the the thousands. This device would normally represent a saving both in costs of production and in costs of distribution.

Quality control and the rôle of the Director of Publications

113. Most organizations accept that there should be significant improvement in the quality of United Nations system publications. The question is how to achieve it. It is clear that the improvement cannot come from any new activity of the supervisory bodies, the Publications Boards or Committees. Better quality will take place only when there are arrangements for quality assessments to be made closer to the unit level of publication (see para.52). An Editorial Sub-Committee of the Publications Board or Committee could help to identify action necessary on individual texts. Such a committee should not comprise merely members of the Publications Committee but should include persons who have wide experience in the organization or outside and who either have writing skills or a flair for and interest in projecting the ethos of the organization. The Director of Publications should be the chairperson of such a Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee would itself advise on the acceptability of texts or arrange, in collaboration with the authors, for peer review. Such a review would engage not only the question whether the contents of the publication are technically or scientifically sound but also whether the language, presentation and style meet the requirements of the readership to which the publication is targeted. The Sub-Committee could also advise persons who are about to prepare texts how best to approach their topics and achieve the readership aims established. It should be a stimulus to the individual effort of an author.

114. The rôle of the Director of Publications is important in efforts to improve quality. The position of Director of Publications or of a Publications Division demands a person who has sound publishing experience including commercial publishing. The present level of responsibility accorded the Directors does not give them the authority to take firm decisions on publishability, decisions which might run counter to the will of more senior technical or administrative personnel. This is a difficulty organizations must resolve. When one considers the considerable sums of money being invested in publications, it would seem short-sighted for organizations not to provide mechanisms whereby the quality of the material they publish can be assured. The rôle of the Director of Publications must be examined in this light. UNESCO has found it feasible to set up individual Publications units in each sector but even this does not of itself guarantee quality production at all times. The Inspectors consider that the professional talents of Directors of Publications must be encouraged, their scope for action enlarged and their status recognized. They ought to be able to speak with the authority of "the house" on matters concerning publishability and quality production. For this purpose the Executive Heads of organizations, with the above considerations in view, should re-examine the rôle and place of Directors of Publications in their organizations.

Management information - is it well enough organized?

115. The adequacy of information on the details of publishing varies among the organizations. The Inspectors noted that there was inadequate information - or information not readily available - on some important aspects of publishing. Statistics of production, sales, staff costs, printing expenses and stock were deficient in some instances. There is insufficient feedback from readers on which to gauge whether publications are an effective arm of programmes. There is an absence of market intelligence to inform those who are originating material in what direction they should be pointing their efforts.

116. All organizations should identify and separate the major costs of producing documents from those of publications. Computer programmes developed for commercial publishers are available for adaptation as an aid in this task. The Inspectors are glad to know that IAEA has since 1979 established a cost-accounting system for its internal uses : the system gives information and statistics on various publications costs and is being extended. ECLA has established a "standard costing system according to the standard formats and processes involved in the production of documents and publications". A "run-on" costing system for sales publications has also

been implemented. The expense of introducing improved costing systems would be more than compensated by more informed decisions and better quality of publications as well as better geographical coverage. Such management information would improve the possibility of assessing the cost-effectiveness of publishing programmes. For this purpose the Inspectors recommend that all organizations should, where they have not already done so, institute appropriate accounting systems to enable them to distinguish between the direct costs of publications and those of documents.

Reductions in the quantity of published material

117. In 1981, some 1800 publications (excluding periodicals) were issued with a total press run of approximately 3.6 million copies and an average press run of about 2000 copies per publication, which is exceedingly small. Of the copies printed less than 50 per cent appear to have been sold or are likely to be sold. Furthermore the sales occur mainly in a small group of developed countries (see para. 82).

118. Why are the press runs and sales so low and why are sales concentrated in a small number of developed countries? There are some legitimate explanations : sales are not a primary aim of United Nations family publishing; some highly technical publications are required only by a small number of specialists in the world; potential purchasers in developing countries may not be able to afford some publications; the languages in which publications are produced may not suit some countries. These are plausible considerations but they omit one vital factor. Publishing operations have not always given enough emphasis to the reader. By this is meant that publications have not always been drafted for target readerships and the resources given to marketing, promotion and distribution have been small.

119. Ideally, there must be an optimum relationship between the programme activities of the United Nations system and the quality and quantity of published material activities. The Inspectors do not profess to have arrived at a definition of this relationship but, in the light of the factors identified in this report they considered as one possibility a 25% reduction in the quantity of material published on the understanding that resources released by the reduction would be put into marketing, promotion and distribution. The aim would be for the United Nations system to concentrate on producing less but higher quality material targeted to specific readerships and using the document form of production wherever the numbers to be reached did not justify the printing of full publications, or when sales were not a viable prospect. Many organizations were against a 25% reduction in output ; they contended that -

- (i) a reduction in quantity would not automatically mean an improvement in the quality of the remainder published;
- (ii) research and technical information services in substantive programmes would probably be hard hit by the reduction;
- (iii) in a climate of budgetary constraint, "resources liberated" provide savings and are not normally used for other purposes;
- (iv) document production would increase without the possibility of sales accruing;
- (v) a reduction in output of publications would mean a reduction in Revolving Funds which depended on sales from publications to assist with promotion and distribution;
- (vi) some organizations had already had their programmes severely cut;
- (vii) the figure of 25% was arbitrary.

120. There is some validity in the views expressed by the organizations. Indeed one salutary aspect of the Inspectors' work on this study has been the evidence they encountered of quite regular efforts from Governing Bodies and Secretariats to face some of these irksome publishing issues. There is an awareness of the problems

and critical thought has gone into the preparation of many publications programmes. But in the Inspectors' view it is essential to apportion more and better resources to quality control and to marketing, promotion and distribution. If the right mix is found, the end product will be the better both for free distribution purposes and for sales. Accordingly the Inspectors recommend that Governing Bodies :

- a) satisfy themselves that publications, on evidence to be produced, are being designed for specific readerships and reaching the clientèle for which they are designed;
- b) authorize Secretariats in the preparation of future publications budgets to increase the proportion of funds to be allocated to quality control, marketing, promotion and distribution at the expense of a reduction in the quantity of material to be published;
- c) encourage organizations to collaborate with one another, in small combinations if necessary, for specific activities in marketing, promotion and distribution;
- d) approve no real increase in publications budgets until such time as the Governing Bodies are assured that efforts to improve the diffusion end of the publishing activity are producing concrete results.

121. Finally the Inspectors draw attention to UNESCO resolution 2/15/III, passed at the Fourth Extraordinary Session of the General Conference, December 1982, which touches on some of the main issues confronting the publishing organizations of the United Nations family. The resolution recommends the Director-General to ensure that UNESCO publications are, inter alia :

- designed to reach an increasing number of readers, whether specialists or members of the general public;
- distributed under improved conditions and, as far as possible, at lower cost;
- the subject of co-publication arrangements or are published in accordance with decentralized procedures, whenever such arrangements are desirable and appropriate;
- more widely disseminated, especially in developing countries.

Most organizations would recognize these as desirable goals.

VI. INTER-AGENCY CO-OPERATION

122. There are only occasional institutionalized consultations among the organizations on publishing questions. Indeed, there is only one forum for such consultations, the Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP). This body used to be convened ad hoc (generally once a year) by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination but now functions outside the ACC, as a contact group of responsible officials. It is convened by the Under-Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Conference Services in the United Nations and its secretary is also the secretary of the United Nations Publications Board. It does not take decisions and rarely makes recommendations. For the most part, its sessions deal with documentation and language arrangements, but publishing questions have appeared on its agenda. A few years ago it explored the pooling of printing orders, and the Inspectors have been glad to note that the provisional agenda for the meeting to be held in August 1984 in Montreal includes discussions of the rôle of the editorial function in relation to documentation and publication, and of the application of new technologies; a preliminary review of the present report is also scheduled.

123. Editors of United Nations system periodicals meet annually to discuss matters of common concern. Informal consultations also take place at the annual Frankfurt Book Fair. A number of United Nations organizations participate and the levels of representation vary from year to year. There is usually a pre-announced agenda but no prepared presentation on specific problems. However, a meeting of United Nations publications representatives expressly devoted to the question of copyright was held at the Fair of 1982.

124. In sum it appears that consultations are limited in scope, and do not include all organizations. In particular, there is little effort to avoid duplication of subject matter of publications. From time to time two or more agencies have worked on a publication together but this is not common. More contact takes place on production questions, but this does not cover the entire United Nations family. Approved publication plans are circulated among the various organizations, generally in the form of appendices to the programme and budget, but these are merely lists of titles which do not provide enough information for the avoidance of duplication or overlapping. Moreover, at that late stage, plans having been approved, there is hardly any way of bringing an interorganizational approach to bear.

125. The Inspectors believe that the publications functions of IAMLADP should be developed. It seems important that the following subjects at least should be explored on an interagency basis:

- a) collective arrangements for gathering information. This would include not only the measurement of staff costs, but also, in particular, the separation of documentation and publication printing costs,
- b) interagency collaboration in the preparation and distribution of publications,
- c) the quality and appeal of publications,
- d) techniques to ensure that publications are directed to the needs of target groups in developing and developed countries,
- e) consultations on future publications programmes, and
- f) new production technologies.

126. Many other topics could profitably be discussed interorganizationally. The list includes: the improvement of sales and marketing, arrangements for dealing with unsold copies, and the use of non-convertible currencies. All these matters could, and should, be discussed in IAMLADP in the relatively near future.

127. If these discussions were successful, IAMLADP might in due course find it useful to set up a sub-committee on publications, but the Inspectors do not recommend such a course at this stage. It might also, in due course, be found advisable to restore IAMLADP's link with ACC, so that IAMLADP, which is at present an almost completely consultative body, might be in a position to make recommendations to ACC for action. But these developments should depend on the evolution of the discussions within IAMLADP as at present constituted.

128. Finally, as a complement to the activities of the IAMLADP sub-committee, the ACC should invite the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) to advise on public information aspects of publications. As one consultant, a former commercial publisher, saw it, the United Nations could produce works of wider general appeal through collaboration among the various agencies, works which "would rival any major press in scope and reader interest". JUNIC could consider inter alia :

- how to make publications more effective in disseminating knowledge of and carrying the message of the United Nations system to broad areas of the public, and
- how to integrate some DPI audio-visual productions with the publications of the United Nations system organizations.

129. These efforts should give some impetus to the pursuit of matters of common interest among the publishing organizations of the United Nations system.

Table V: List of Supporting Recommendations

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Paragraph</u>	<u>Subject</u>
II	12	The definition of a publication
III	53	Time-frame should be set for issue and distribution of publications.
"	54	Names of authors should be inscribed in special cases.
"	55	Identification of readerships for each publication.
"	58	Inter-disciplinary co-operative publishing should be encouraged.
IV	74-75	Computerization of distribution lists.
"	85	Organizations should encourage an expansion of sales in developing countries.
"	94	Readership surveys as an aid to programming for publications.
"	95	Survey information should be made available to authors as well.
"	96	JUNIC should be asked to advise how best to incorporate public information efforts with publicity on publications.
"	104	After minimum stock requirements are established, excess copies should be given away or sold for pulping.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

130. This report takes a broad overview of the publications scene in the United Nations system.

131. Part I of the report comprising Chapters I, II, III and IV provides information on the main features of the publishing activity and on publications policy and practice. The subject of quality control (paras. 50-55) is particularly important, and recommendations aimed at ensuring that publications are produced for specific readerships and within an optimum time frame are made at paras. 53 and 55. Chapter IV is devoted to distribution and sales. On the basis of the information examined in those chapters, Part II of the report raises main issues (Chapter V) and discusses possibilities for inter-agency co-operation (Chapter VI).

132. The main recommendations appear in these latter chapters. Supporting recommendations are made in Part I on different aspects as they arise in the text and are summarized in Table V.

133. Four issues are isolated and discussed in Chapter V. These are:

1. The approach to sales and to free distribution

Organizations have to execute mandates which put a priority on their disseminating information. Sales are seen to be of secondary consequence. While not questioning the validity of the mandates, the Inspectors recommend a more positive approach to sales. Such an approach would make organizations more alive to the need to produce publishable and marketable material. The recommendations on this subject are in paras. 108-112.

2. Quality control and the rôle of the Director of Publications

Improvements in the quality of published material seem unlikely if these depend on Publications Boards or Committees whose functions are largely supervisory. Efforts to improve quality need to be taken closer to the unit level of operation. A crucial element in bringing quality consciousness closer home lies in the functions of the Director of Publications. He should have some experience in the publishing field including commercial publishing and he should have the authority to ensure that material being published meets standards of acceptability in the light of the readerships to which it is addressed. He should be the chairperson of an Editorial Sub-Committee charged by the Publications Board or Committee to assist him in the pursuit of this task. Knowledgeable and interested persons not necessarily connected with individual substantive publishing in the organization might be invited to become members of such a sub-committee. The recommendations on this subject are at paras. 113-114.

3. Management information

There are many significant gaps in statistical and other information on the direct and indirect costs of publications and on the effectiveness of publications activities. It is essential that these deficiencies be corrected if management is to plan intelligently. Some organizations have already taken action to introduce accounting systems designed to give better information on costs. All organizations should have such systems. The recommendation on this matter is at para. 116.

4. Reductions in the quantity of published material

A re-distribution of publications resources needs to take place so that proportionately more money is spent on marketing, promotion and distribution. Governing Bodies should demand stricter controls on what is published and for whom, and consider making the necessary budgetary arrangements to redress the imbalance between production and diffusion. The recommendation is at para. 120.

134. Chapter VI discusses certain forms of co-operation and consultation which exist among the organizations. These have been useful but more needs to be done. IAMLADP should take a keener interest in the subject of publications. A sub-committee of IAMLADP should be appointed to work on such problem areas in publishing as may be recognized by the ACC. Among these, the Inspectors have noted the need for some co-ordination of management information and for study on the feasibility of co-operative sales and distribution arrangements among the organizations. A list of topics which should lend themselves to co-operative work by the organizations through IAMLADP is given in para. 125 which embodies the Inspectors' recommendations.

135. The Inspectors also recommend that ACC invite the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) to advise on the public information aspects of publications. It would seem useful to make use of the resources of DPI and its Information Centres to assist in promoting the aims of United Nations system publications. The recommendation on this is at para. 128.
