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Co-operation between and management of libraries of the  
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Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Co-operation between and management of libraries of the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/84/1).

\* A/39/50.

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN AND MANAGEMENT OF  
LIBRARIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

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Table of Contents

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1-7	1
II. CURRENT OPERATIONS	8-64	2
A. Structure	15-21	3
B. Staffing	22-32	5
C. Users and services	33-44	7
D. Collections	45-54	9
E. Information tools	55-64	10
III. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE	65-157	12
A. Co-operative activities	68-107	12
1. Inter-library panel	71-74	13
2. Indexing of United Nations system documentation	75-80	14
3. Human resources planning for library staff	81-86	15
4. Local co-operation	87	16
5. Microform programmes	88-91	17
6. Depository libraries	92-95	17
7. Public information centres	96-99	18
8. UNESCO-supported programmes	100-103	19
9. International library organizations	104-107	20
B. Management improvements	108-139	21
1. Systematic structure and linkages	109-114	21
2. Strengthened internal management	115-121	22
3. Work programmes, reporting and follow-up	122-124	23
4. United Nations library services in Geneva	125-139	24
C. New information technology and systems	140-157	27
IV. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	158-166	30

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. One of the most significant features of our time is the growing importance of information as an instrument of worldwide socio-economic, technological and cultural progress, and the dawning of the "information age". At the international level, several thousand international organizations seek to gather, process and disseminate an ever greater flow of information to serve national governments and Member States, scientists and researchers, other organizations and groups, and the international community as a whole.

2. The organizations of the United Nations system have long recognized the crucial role of information interchange to promote co-operative international problem-solving and harmonize national actions to meet common ends. A former Secretary-General of the United Nations once identified documents as "the most important working tools of the organizations".

3. The challenge is to organize and control this mass of documentation as an integrated information network which meets the needs of users, rather than producing a flood of paper which overwhelms them or is ignored by them. Recently, recognition of the relentless growth of specialized documentation and the potential of new information and communications technologies has led to calls for improvement. In a 1982 resolution on information systems (1982/71), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) cited information as "one of the most valuable resources at the disposal of the United Nations system". ECOSOC emphasized the need to facilitate developing country access to these information systems, and the importance of co-ordinating and harmonizing them from the perspective of needs of users at the national level.

4. The creation, development, smooth operation and - above all - effective use of information systems requires co-operation and co-ordinative efforts from many parts of the organizations of the United Nations system. This would include substantive units, electronic data-processing units, communications services, administrative services, libraries, publications units, documentation groups, public information offices, regional and field offices, inter-agency bodies, and top management. JIU has explored the growing emphasis on information systems in a series of recent reports on various key components: the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems (JIU/REP/78/7), co-ordination of public information activities (JIU/REP/81/2), communications (JIU/REP/82/6), and in a report on publications currently being completed.

5. This report deals with United Nations system libraries and library services. These units can and should play a very important role in information systems, particularly in facilitating organized information flows and achieving co-ordinated bibliographic control of the documentation involved. That is, they should ensure that adequate descriptive, subject and analytical information is established concerning their organization's documentation, and that it is organized and made available for convenient use by Member States and staff, researchers, and other users at their local duty stations, within the United Nations system, and in the worldwide community, including in particular the developing countries. Conversely, the libraries should also ensure that Member State representatives and staff have access to all the relevant national and international information which they need to carry out their policy-making, negotiation and research responsibilities.

6. The concept of "systems" is a crucial one for libraries. No modern library is able to function satisfactorily as a self-contained unit, capturing within its walls all the information needed to help its users carry out their tasks. This truth is even more obvious in light of the tremendously rapid growth of information worldwide in recent years. All libraries which have not yet done so must increasingly develop a network of linkages with related organizational units which generate and require information, with other libraries, and with the international information community if they are to survive.

7. The libraries of the United Nations system have never been studied comprehensively. The Inspectors conducted this study using an extensive questionnaire to which 78 libraries of the system responded, the services of a consultant, a considerable volume of documentation from the libraries and other sources, and a series of interviews with library officials both inside and outside the system. They wish to express their appreciation for the many thoughtful comments and useful ideas which were offered.

## II. CURRENT OPERATIONS

8. The following Chapters provide an overview and summary of patterns, trends, problems and issues in the library operations and services of the United Nations system. Because of the large number and diversity of the libraries, it was not feasible to include detailed individual comparisons and assessments (with the exception, to some extent, of the United Nations library services in Geneva, as discussed in Chapter III.B.4). Nevertheless, it is important at the outset of the analysis to recognize two broad categories of these libraries:

(a) A first group of about a dozen libraries accounts for most of the total library funding, staff and collections in the system. These libraries are the large, central headquarters libraries (in particular those of the United Nations in New York, FAO, IAEA, ILO, UNESCO and WHO) plus a few specialized or regional libraries. They have made considerable progress in many areas to provide modern and responsive services to their library users.

(b) A second group is composed of almost 70 very small central, specialized, branch or regional libraries with quite limited resources. Most of them (more than 40) are located within the United Nations, with another dozen in UNESCO and the rest scattered among the other organizations.

9. The Inspectors found that the libraries of the system, as a whole, are seriously underutilized as an information system resource, and are not contributing as they should to support the organizations' programmes. In 1948, an International Advisory Committee of Library Experts reported to the United Nations (A/C.5/222) that it should have "a library service of the most advanced type", with adequate and competent staff, compact and useful collections, modern and productive methods, and active inter-library and inter-agency co-ordination to provide economical and responsive services to Secretariats, delegations, and other users. Thirty-six years later, however, the Inspectors are concerned that the systems' libraries are isolated from each other and, in many cases, from new developments in the international library community and in information technology.

10. As a group, these libraries have not yet developed the dynamic information services role and network that they should be providing. There appear to be four basic causes for this situation. First, the 78 libraries are basically quite small, dispersed and fragmented. They typically have modest budgets, limited collections and information tools, only 3 or 4 staff members, and humble status as sub-units tucked away somewhere within larger units. Their small size forces them to concentrate on day-to-day operating problems rather than on a steady process of improving library services. In addition, their large number and worldwide locations (not to mention the existence of some 250 other "information" units of various types, many informal "document rooms", or the information centre libraries of the organizations) have also tended to discourage individual library efforts to establish co-operative links to mutually strengthen library operations.

11. Second, leadership within most of the individual libraries has often been rather traditional and custodial. Much greater emphasis has been placed on organizing and maintaining a collection of materials than on ensuring responsive information services to users. A few libraries have emphasized regular consultations with users on acquisitions, taken the initiative to prepare special bibliographies and lists, sought feedback from users on desired service improvements, developed co-operative links with other information sources, and publicized and expanded library services. Several libraries in particular combine these efforts in regular work programmes and reporting to superiors in an orderly ongoing library development process. Most of the libraries, however, have not taken these initiatives, and in some cases it seems that the "users" may scarcely know the library exists. Too many libraries merely wait for specific service requests and respond to them ad hoc, without any coherent programme for improvement on a continuing basis.

12. Third, division heads and others responsible for library services (including governing bodies) have too often taken the libraries for granted: they do not demand continuous and critical examination and improvement of library operations. Many small libraries were established for various "research centre", convenience, or prestige reasons, but have since been left to struggle along without higher level guidance or attention. Because libraries are viewed as a "support service" or "continuing function", they have also often been exempted from programme budgeting-evaluation-reporting cycles that should stimulate improvement efforts. The large specialized agencies include their main libraries in this cycle, and the United Nations will also include its many libraries in the future, which should lead to more active oversight. At present, however, most responsible senior officials do not ensure that their libraries are a well-established part of the overall organizational information system, nor encourage them to build necessary links to other libraries and information sources.

13. Fourth, the international "information revolution" of the past years has not yet really reached many of the libraries. The organizations have given considerable attention to developing computerized administrative systems, and are increasingly beginning to apply new technologies in their substantive operations. As they move toward much greater emphasis on information gathering, retrieval, analysis, dissemination and effective use, however, their libraries must change too: the "traditional" library might even disappear as much different forms of library and information services evolve. Changes are already occurring rapidly in computer-based systems and telecommunications which have tremendous implications for library operations, co-operation, information handling and bibliographic control. As of yet, however, except for the few larger libraries, the libraries have scarcely begun to realize the potential which these new tools can provide to strengthen the scope, speed and quality of their services.

14. The problems created by these four inhibiting factors are reflected in the current operations of the United Nations system libraries, as discussed in the following sections of this Chapter. Chapter III then discusses the considerable potential for strengthening library services to the organizations and other users in the future - co-operative activities, strengthened internal management, and better use of new technological opportunities.

#### A. Structure

15. The International Organization for Standardization has defined a library as "Any organized collection of printed books and periodicals or of any other graphic or audio-visual materials, and the services of a staff to provide and facilitate the use of such materials as are required to meet the informational, research, educational or recreational needs of its users".

16. In 1978 and again in 1980 the Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems (IOB) published a Directory of United Nations Information Systems, a project welcomed by the General Assembly as "useful to all countries, in particular developing countries" (resolution 32/178). The 1980 Directory described some 350 information systems in 35 organizations, including libraries, bibliographic systems, referral centres, clearing houses, information analysis centres, and data banks, but omitting public information services and administrative organizations. The purpose of the Directory was to attempt to help users identify the organizations and information systems which provide services to the general or specialized publics.

17. Seventy-eight libraries within the system responded to a JIU questionnaire (not including those of the World Bank group or IFAD, which are not participating organizations of JIU, nor separate audio-visual or photo libraries). While there might be as many as 100 libraries in the system - taking into consideration varying definitions of "libraries", continuing changes in the total, and some non-responses to the questionnaire - the data and patterns provided by the 78 units are used in the rest of this report to represent United Nations system libraries as a whole.

18. The overriding structural characteristics of the United Nations system libraries are their large number and their small size. Of the 78 libraries surveyed, most are those of the United Nations (44 libraries or 56 percent) and UNESCO (16 libraries or 21 percent). WHO, ILO and FAO together had 10 libraries responding, and the remaining 8 were distributed among the smaller specialized agencies. In a broad sense, all these libraries are specialized libraries, dealing with the subject fields of their organization. However, for purposes of this study, the Inspectors classified the libraries as "central" (serving an entire headquarters or located at and serving an entire field office) or "specialized" (serving only a part of an overall office). About one-third of the libraries were central (29), and the remaining two-thirds specialized (49).

19. The libraries consist of three large libraries, several moderately-sized ones, and many very small ones with only a few staff (see Section B. below). Their budgets are equally modest, with little expectation that they will increase. In fact, one-quarter of the libraries, primarily central libraries, expect that special cost-saving measures will be required in the near future. Coherent and accurate system-wide costs are difficult to establish: only one-half (39) of the 78 libraries could provide adequate figures. The others are primarily small sub-units whose costs are buried within the budgets of larger departments or divisions.

20. The 39 libraries reported annualized budgets for 1981 ranging from as little as \$4,200 up to \$4.8 million and totalling about \$18.5 million. However, the eight largest libraries alone comprised \$15.8 million of this total, leaving an average annual budget of about \$90,000 each for the remaining 31 libraries. It appears that roughly 80 percent of these budgeted costs were for staff, 10 percent for acquisitions, and the remaining 10 percent for such things as binding, printing and computer services. After adding in an additional \$1 million a year for books and periodicals which are purchased outside library budgets, and a generous estimate of \$5 million budgeted costs for the 39 other (small) libraries that did not provide budget figures, the annual United Nations system expenditures on libraries amount to about \$25 million in 1981. This is a considerable amount, but it represents only about 1.7 percent of total United Nations system regular budget expenditures of \$1,456 million for that year.

21. Geographically, the 78 libraries surveyed are located primarily in Western Europe (28) and North America (22), with the remainder in Asia and the Pacific (14), Latin America and the Caribbean (6), Africa (5), Eastern Europe (2), and the Middle East (1). This of course reflects the concentration of United Nations system headquarters in New York and Western Europe: almost half the libraries are found in just two cities, with 21 in New York and 13 in Geneva. In terms of organizational placement, more than half (45) of the 78 libraries are located at headquarters, one-third (25) at regional offices, and the remainder (8) at other locations.

B. Staffing

22. The 74 of the 78 libraries which provided a breakdown of their staffing had a total of 608 staff posts. However, this staff was quite thinly spread among the libraries, as shown by the table below, particularly when it is recognized that the largest library staff - the United Nations headquarters library in New York - itself comprised more than one-quarter of the total (157 posts), and that the nine largest libraries had more than 60 percent (374 posts).

<u>Number of staff posts</u>	<u>Number of libraries</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Average number of posts</u>
1	18	24	1
2 to 5	34	46	3
6 to 20	13	18	9
21 to 59	8	11	27
over 100	1	1	157
	<u>74</u>	<u>100</u>	(8)

23. It was not possible to judge whether these staff posts are sufficient to meet library service needs, since only 18 libraries reported having even partial work-load, productivity, or staffing standards. The development of such standards, using international standards developed by UNESCO and the International Organization for Standardization as a starting point, would be very useful to properly assess present library staffing, and could eventually lead toward common standards for the United Nations system. Such standards could be particularly helpful in both large and small libraries to ensure the recruitment of well-qualified library staff, improve staff resource distribution among different functions, make services more effective, and substantiate any requests for new posts.

24. Approximately 200 of the 608 total staff posts were professional, 350 were general service, and the remaining 50 field or manual service staff. These overall figures, however, mask a serious problem in the smaller libraries. While most of the professional posts (151) were concentrated in the nine largest libraries, as might be expected, fully one-third of the libraries (26) had no professional posts at all.

25. The large number of library staff at the general service, field and manual service levels may also reflect a traditional, manual style of services that will change for non-professional and professional staff as well. In the future, librarians in the United Nations system will face wider responsibilities and more complex duties. They will require higher qualifications in order to cope with the explosive growth of published and computerized information, its many varied forms, and the growing use of computerized processes in library operations. A 1983 vacancy announcement for a P-2 Reference Librarian post in IAEA, for instance, called for a university degree in librarianship or information science, a firm background in computer retrieval techniques, good knowledge of scientific/technical reference literature, and responsibility for providing reference/research/information services using not only IAEA/UNIDO data bases but about 200 external (commercial) data bases as well.

26. As this example indicates, librarianship has become a much more sophisticated activity than it seems to those who encounter only the final stage of library services - information delivery. Of the 175 professional staff in library posts for whom educational background was given, 145 had some type of professional library education and 108, or 62 percent, had a second- or third-level university degree in librarianship or information science. In addition, more than 30 general service staff had professional librarianship degrees.

27. This general level of professional competence, however, is not sufficient, and three particular problems exist. First, among the libraries headed by professionals less than half the heads had majored in librarianship. Improvement is essential: all these libraries should be headed by people with strong professional librarianship backgrounds.

28. Second, the 26 small libraries headed by general service staff need to be reassessed. If a small library is to exist and to be effective, it should have qualified staff. The 1948 Committee of Library Experts recommended that any branch or special library should have, as a minimum, one professional librarian and one clerical assistant. Where inexperienced general service staff have been pressed into duty to oversee a haphazard collection, the "library" should be consolidated with another library at the duty station, a competent professional should be recruited to ensure effective operation, or the present general service library head, if professionally competent, should properly be upgraded to the appropriate professional level (which would usually involve minimal additional expense).

29. Third, the obvious trend toward increasingly complex library service requirements inevitably requires a further upgrading of qualifications for and levels of some key posts at the senior general service and professional levels, especially in conjunction with the introduction of new sophisticated technology. The introduction of workload and productivity standards, however, should lead to better use of resources and some reduction of posts, so that little overall increase in expenses would be involved. It appears that the problem of "adequate" staffing of United Nations system libraries in the future will be more and more a qualitative rather than a quantitative one. Therefore, a careful process of recruitment of highly-qualified and competent staff will become even more essential.

30. Despite the need to strengthen staff skills, however, little is being done in staff training. Career development and professional improvement programmes scarcely exist, and participation in professional meetings within the system or in host countries is very limited. There is scarcely any regular exchange of information or experience among libraries of the system, even at the same duty-station and even at the highest managerial levels. Library officials expressed undoubtedly justifiable concerns that this lack of contacts is leading to professional isolation and stagnation, with attendant dangers to the quality of future library services.

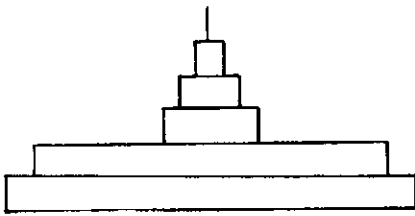
31. Staff turnover and rotation could mitigate this situation to some extent, but such movement is small. Almost half of the 320 professional and senior general service staff had been in the same library for more than 10 years. Data from 22 libraries on transfers and separations among this group showed that only 15 people had transferred from libraries to other units from 1979-1982 (only 2 with promotions), in contrast to 25 who had taken early separations from the organization (before age 55), and 27 who had separated after age 55. Actual staff rotation between libraries is close to zero, but with modest progress toward career development programmes it might be stimulated in the future.

32. The limited career development patterns are one of the most painful problems of library management in the United Nations system. The restricted advancement possibilities in the many small libraries are obvious, but even in the larger libraries advancement usually stops at the G-4 and P-3 levels. Further promotions are blocked not only by slow staff turnover, but by an emphasis on supervisory, rather than professional skill, rationales for posts at higher levels. A 1971 JIU report, using percentage of staff at each grade level in a pyramid graph, illustrated the particularly weak career advancement prospects for United Nations librarians in 1970 (chart A. below), in contrast to those for administrative generalists, economists, political affairs officers, statisticians and (for example, public information officers, chart B.). The 1982 JIU data show only very slight progress at the P-3 and P-4 levels, with the career "pyramid" for librarians system-wide still a very constrained one (Chart C.) compared to the corresponding 1982 chart for professional staff at headquarters and other established offices (chart D.). Actions to cope with these library human resource problems are discussed in Chapter III.A.3.

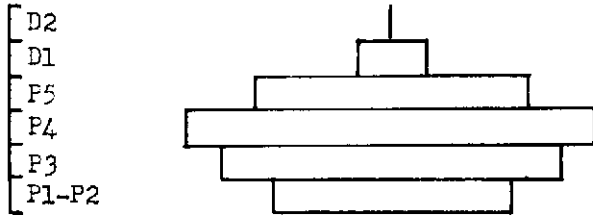
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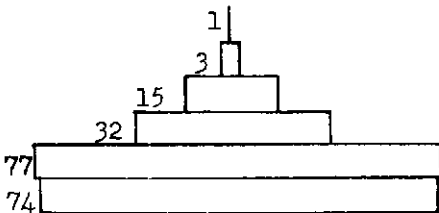
A. United Nations Librarians,  
1970



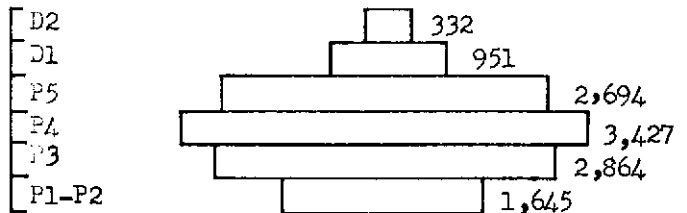
B. United Nations Information  
Officers, 1970



C. United Nations System  
Librarians, 1982



D. United Nations System Professional  
Staff at Headquarters and other  
established Offices, 1982



C. Users and services

33. The main aim of the libraries is to provide services to staff, members of accredited delegations and missions, and outside clients who need to use United Nations system materials. Because most of the libraries have no statistics or estimate them in widely differing ways, it is not possible to establish the total number of users served in a given period. However, a very rough estimate of proportions of users would be staff members (50 percent), members of missions and delegations (10 percent), and outside users (40 percent). The figure for missions and delegations is of course higher at central headquarters libraries. The workload involved in serving outsiders can be much heavier in field locations, particularly where local library facilities are very limited.

34. Most of the library materials are lent, copied or circulated rather than used on the library premises, since requests are generally for users' daily practical work rather than long-term research projects. Twenty libraries have no reading rooms at all, and 50 reported having serious space problems for users and collections. Nevertheless, 62 libraries have so-called "open-shelves" where users can browse on their own.

35. The reference requests which the libraries receive are primarily for a particular book or journal (50 percent), for bibliographic search (25 percent), or for factual information (20 percent). The compilation of bibliographies on request forms only a very small part of library services - (about 5 percent).

36. In addition to these requests, most of the libraries regularly inform their users of new materials received, through acquisition lists or copies of tables of contents of new journals. Only a third of the libraries organize exhibitions of newly-acquired materials, and only a very few libraries reported that they provide SDI (selective dissemination of information): that is, regular communications to certain readers on new books and periodical articles on selected subjects of interest to them.

37. The circulation of periodicals is a basic but rather controversial service. A few small libraries consider it essential, and understandably so. But other, larger libraries complain that it is costly (multiple subscriptions are taken out to the same periodicals, which are sometimes readily available on local newstands), time-consuming (extra staff time is required for processing), brings many losses to library holdings, and results in many complaints from users (about delays or about items clipped out as the material moves from user to user on a circulation slip). Some individual users also request an extremely large number of titles for perusal.

38. Twenty-nine libraries reported that they have designated outside libraries in various countries as "depository libraries" for material of their organizations, which is generally provided free of charge to be made available for free public use. Although these depository libraries can serve as important channels for dissemination of United Nations system information, only the United Nations headquarters library provides regular training, advisory help, and follow-up on the use made of this material.

39. In general, the attitude of the libraries toward the above services to users is a relatively passive one: they wait for user requests rather than actively promoting them. This is not only an impression gained from the survey, but a fact acknowledged by some libraries in their responses.

40. The libraries have made only occasional surveys of users' needs or their actual use of library collections and information tools, most noticeably by the United Nations Headquarters library. Studies of the effectiveness of different forms and types of library services seem also to be very infrequent.

41. The "passive" nature of services is confirmed by the lack of any clear trend among the libraries toward introducing changes in patterns of service to meet new professional or technological developments. Only one-quarter of the libraries reported any changes during the past few years, such as computerization of bibliographical search or expansion of services. The technical basis of user services thus remains very traditional. Less than half the libraries provide even some services to users from computerized data bases or data banks, whether inside or outside the organization.

42. Despite the value of professional assistance to related libraries of Member States or to accredited missions in maintaining their collections of United Nations system documentation as a vehicle to promote use of the system's information, only one-fourth of the libraries assist Member State libraries to use their organization's documents effectively and only 13 assist Member State missions to their organizations. Another important form of promotional user service, preparation of bibliographies to anticipate user interests, is found in only one-third of the libraries. In addition, only one-third of the libraries train users to use the library and its information sources on their own.

43. The libraries cited a lack of staff and inadequate information tools as the main obstacles to a more active approach to user services, as well as the need for more formal communication channels to discuss changing user needs. The prime means foreseen to improve quality is the computerization of library services. Increased co-operation among libraries was rarely mentioned as a solution and then mostly by large central libraries.

44. These findings suggest that a root cause of problems with United Nations system library services is a psychological one. Contemporary thinking in the library profession worldwide stresses "library systems rather than separate libraries", but this approach has not yet reached these libraries. The main avenue for improvement of their library services lies in co-operative actions in acquisition, in information tools, in use of these collections and tools, in greater scope of services to users, and in the progressive creation of a network of libraries of the United Nations system.

#### D. Collections

45. As in other areas, there are no common standards for comparing the size of the libraries' collections, and many of the libraries have only a general idea of exactly what they possess. The largest libraries in the system, those of the United Nations Office at Geneva and United Nations Headquarters, each have several million documents, books and other publications, while the smallest libraries have only a few thousand volumes.

46. The libraries acquire three kinds of material. The first category, publications and documents produced by the parent organization, is the largest, most important and most heavily used component in almost all the libraries. Most of the central libraries and half the specialized libraries serve as formal depositories for the publications and documents of their organization, several keep publications but no documents, and in a few cases another unit of the organization performs the depository function.

47. The second category of acquisitions, publications and documents produced by other United Nations system institutions, is acquired on a more or less selective basis, and is often discarded after 3-5 or more years of retention. The main mode of acquisition is free distribution. It would appear that continuing investment in new technologies will lead to improved distribution systems, strengthened loan and copying arrangements, and progress in facsimile and on-line transmission of texts, so that the costs of the duplicative processing and retention of this kind of material by the organizations can be reduced in the future.

48. The third category, material from outside the organization, is acquired very selectively. Most often, this material is purchased. Exchange agreements are used as well, but are limited by the scope of mutual interests of the partners and availability of materials they are interested in. Gifts are a third means of acquisition, but while substantial for a few libraries they are often a highly irregular source. In addition, one-third of the libraries have funds elsewhere in their organizations' budgets for the acquisition of books and periodicals. While this amounted to more than \$1 million a year in 1982 and 1983, these sources of funds seem also to be rather unpredictable. Finally, government publications are an important "outside" information component for the organizations' research needs. Particularly for system libraries in developing regions, however, efforts are needed to improve the timeliness and coverage of acquisitions of these publications, and to consider ways in which governments might contribute more of them free of charge.

49. Budgetary constraints have affected the acquisition of general literature in all the libraries. At present, most of the acquisition budgets go for subscriptions to periodicals, the costs of which have been increasing sharply (see paragraph 37 on periodical circulation problems). In recent years, most cuts in acquisitions have concerned monographs and materials delivered by airmail (which badly hampers the speed of library services), and reference materials, which also restricts the quality of service. If budgetary austerity and the persistent and strong increases in book and periodical prices continue in the future, this general situation will become even worse.

50. These severe budgetary pressures, when combined with the explosive growth of information materials available worldwide, require great care and expertise in selecting new material for the libraries' collections. Only a few libraries, such as the ILO, WHO and UN Headquarters, have a stated, written acquisition policy. In addition, only a few make use of staff members on selection committees or emphasize regular, general consultations with users on acquisitions. Most of the libraries rely on the choices of librarians plus recommendations received from individual users. This risks the accumulation of a haphazard and patchy library collection.

51. Since the libraries usually have a 5 to 20 percent annual growth in the number of titles in their collections, and since most suffer from space problems, more than half of them also conduct regular "weeding" to eliminate outdated or unused material and make room for new titles. Once again, however, only a few have specific, written

retention policies while the others use a haphazard process which again may harm users' interests.

52. One way of coping with these difficulties and maintaining an effective collection is co-operative acquisition between libraries of the United Nations system located at the same duty station in order to pool their scarce acquisition resources. This would be particularly useful in Geneva, where many libraries are located. While this step was specifically recommended for UNOG as far back as 1949, however, it has never been implemented.

53. A second possibility is a more active use of local resources. Many of the libraries are surrounded by large and well-stocked libraries of the host countries and can arrange inter-library loan agreements (although in most cases this is a paid service) to expand the range of their collections and services to users. However, not all libraries make full use of this favourable possibility.

54. A third approach, the use of microforms and especially microfiche, is presently quite limited among the libraries of the United Nations system, although some larger libraries, such as those of United Nations headquarters, FAO, ILO and UNESCO, have found it very practical and worthwhile. The primary reasons for limited use are delays in microform production in comparison with the "hard copies" from which they are prepared, a lack of funds for equipment, and the cost involved (while most "hard copy" materials of the system are distributed free of charge, most microforms are not). Nevertheless, considerable potential for improvement also exists in this area (see section III.A.5).

#### E. Information tools

55. Library collections are important information resources, but to effectively tap these resources librarians and their information tools - catalogues, bibliographies, indexes - are essential. A wide variety of such tools are available to facilitate access to general literature from outside the United Nations system, and as reference collections they play an extremely important role in the libraries' services. Access to materials produced within the United Nations system is provided by catalogues and indexes prepared by the organizations themselves.

56. Most of the libraries prepare such indexes and catalogues, while the remainder rely on other units of the organization (the central library units, or publications or information units). All the organizations produce sales catalogues of their publications. The United Nations and the large specialized agencies also prepare comprehensive indexes (although WHO excludes internal documents and those for very restricted target groups, in order to avoid an unnecessary proliferation of information). The FAO headquarters library, for example, publishes a bi-monthly computerized listing of its current documents for 4,000 addressees worldwide, updates documentation in the FAO AGRIS information system monthly, makes texts of all these documents and publications simultaneously available in microfiche, provides special computer-generated bibliographic services on request (both retrospective and current), and distributes cumulative microfiche indexes to subscriber libraries to avoid the need for them to re-catalogue or re-index the material.

57. Other organizations and libraries in the system, however, have not progressed this far, and some significant general problems exist. There are often considerable delays in indexing new documents, and indexes are often accumulated and published only a few times a year and then disseminated slowly. The bibliographic data, subject analyses and other material which they contain vary widely in format and do not always provide adequate information for users. Such problems compel many other libraries around the world (and other libraries in the system) to prepare their own catalogues and indexes for these documents, which is duplicative and wasteful. Even more seriously, when these information tools are inadequate, incomplete, or tardy they seriously hinder the ability of policy-makers and researchers around the world to gain access to the material and to use it, thereby discouraging action in support of United Nations system programmes and goals.

58. The need for better organization and co-ordination of the growing flood of information among the thousands of libraries worldwide has long been recognized. Since the mid-1970s, UNESCO has supported several important international programmes in this area in co-operation with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), and the International Federation for Documentation (FID).

59. Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) aims to establish a complete worldwide system of bibliographic control over all publications produced in all countries. Universal Availability of Publications (UAP) deals mainly with international inter-library loans and copy service channels through which information published in other countries is made available to anyone who needs it. A programme on National Information Systems (NATIS) sought the creation in each country of an integrated system of libraries, documentation centres and archives, and international co-operation between such systems. International efforts to implement these programmes, which are now incorporated in the broader General Information Programme (PGI) of UNESCO, have progressively improved intellectual and physical access to published information as well as the organizational and economic aspects of information services.

60. The need to improve informational access to the system's publications and documents, make its information more widely used, and avoid duplication and resource waste has been recognized in a series of international symposia during the past decade. The general goal should be to develop a common system of cataloguing and indexing of materials produced by the system. Just as each country is responsible under UBC for providing bibliographic control for all its publications in internationally-agreed form and frequency, so too should each United Nations system organization develop full bibliographic control of its documentation in a generally agreed fashion.

61. At present, only about one-third of the catalogues and indexes of the United Nations system libraries are computer-based, although the larger libraries and a few small ones such as ESCAP have made considerable progress in this area. Other libraries are being or will be computerized, and this computerized bibliographic control is the main technological trend which should support improved accessibility of system materials. Continuing computerization, recruitment and/or training to further develop staff skills in computerized information work, and agreement on common standards and formats could make a progressive sharing and exchange of the organizations' data bases feasible in the next several years.

62. The problem, therefore, is no longer so much a technical one as it is one of co-operative action. Some promising steps toward the creation of a common system, based on the principle of UBC, were taken in 1975 when the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) re-established a Working Party on Indexing of Documents, composed primarily of central library officials. The ACC instructed the Working Party, in light of the increasing concern of governments and other organizations with the availability of information in United Nations system documents, to explore

"... primary means for making information in the documentation of the various agencies more widely accessible ... by determining what information contained in documents might be exchanged, how they might be described bibliographically and what common indexing terms might be usefully employed."

63. The Group recognized that compatible indexing vocabularies were a prerequisite to effective retrieval of information, and it therefore established a Task Force on Indexing Vocabularies. Together with IOB, the Task Force developed a list of broad terms for United Nations system programmes and activities which was published in late 1979. Despite progress in this and related areas, however, the Working Group and the Task Force were abolished in 1979 as part of a restructuring of the subsidiary bodies of ACC.

64. During the 1980-1982 period, little further progress was made toward achieving the broader objectives stated by the ACC in 1975: making United Nations system information more widely accessible through new information exchange and bibliographic description efforts. The pressure for action to improve the use of the system's documentation, however, continues. The International Congress on Universal Availability of Publications, held in Paris in May 1982, raised the problem yet again. In its general recommendation requiring joint action at national or international levels by governments, professionals and international organizations, it was specifically noted that

"intergovernmental organizations, in particular United Nations agencies, should make all efforts to improve the quality of production, bibliographic control, distribution, access and availability and use of their documents and publications".

### III. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

65. It is no longer possible for a single library to satisfy user needs with its own resources, because of the rapid and continuing increase in the volume of publications and documents, the speed and complexity of development of human knowledge which this material reflects, and the accelerating costs of assembling and maintaining library collections and providing library services. These phenomena raise important issues of resource sharing and access to information, to which the only effective response is co-operative efforts by libraries or, in other words, systems of libraries.

66. The "systems approach" is one of the most significant feature of contemporary librarianship, as in many other fields. Increasingly, information knows no frontiers. As illustrated by the UBC and UAP programmes supported by UNESCO, the creation of library systems is under way in varying stages in all countries of the world, and the concept of a worldwide library system is beginning to emerge. The following sections on co-operative activities, management improvement and new technology and information systems summarize some ways in which libraries of the United Nations system can develop a more coherent and effective network of library services and also participate more actively in the emerging international library system.

67. During 1983, at the request of ECOSOC, ACC established a small new mechanism, the Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information Systems (ACCIS), to replace IOB. The aims of ACCIS are to ensure more efficient operation of existing or planned United Nations information systems from the national user perspective, and to enhance the capacity of the United Nations system to collect, store, retrieve and disseminate information. The ACCIS work programme for 1984-1985 covers five areas: information needs of Member States; tools for accessing system information; a register of development activities; proposals for new information systems; and basic co-ordination services, including the monitoring of information technology. ACCIS should thus be able to provide general informal support to system libraries, as well as more direct assistance to co-operative library activities in several areas as noted below.

#### A. Co-operative activities

68. The findings on current operations discussed in Chapter II, supported by the opinions which library officials expressed in responding to the JIU questionnaire, confirm that United Nations system libraries have not participated effectively to develop a co-operative library network. The libraries have generally acted in

isolation from each other, which leads to resource waste through duplication of work and does not help them keep pace with new developments in library and information services in other organizations and internationally.

69. As a result, the libraries have not been recognized within their organizations as providing a vital information support role to general United Nations system goals and activities. If the libraries change their approach to emphasize a basic principle of co-operation, they can pragmatically and progressively work toward a library network within the United Nations system, based on internationally-accepted standards and the newest technology. While this could lead to resource savings, the main aim would be better use of existing library resources to provide better coverage, higher quality, and greater speed and responsiveness of library services.

70. The proposed development of library services on a co-operative basis would begin with an assessment of possible areas of co-operation, degree of participation, feasibility of specific projects, and co-operative mechanisms. The Inspectors recommend that an inter-library panel be established, and they suggest eight specific areas in which co-operative activities should be considered. These activities concern first and foremost efforts to strengthen the United Nations library network itself, followed by efforts to improve linkages with the broader international library community.

#### 1. Inter-library panel

71. The first step needed is simply to bring representatives of the libraries together on a regular and continuing basis. The 1948 Committee of Library Experts placed "special emphasis" on system library co-ordination through an inter-library consultative committee, and in their responses to the JIU all the library officials made clear their recognition of and interest in exchanges of experience and ideas on matters of common concern. Many of the participants in the ACC Working Party on Indexing were librarians, and this provided a promising opportunity to develop more organized patterns of inter-library co-operation. Since this group was abolished in 1979, however, the library officials acknowledged that contacts and joint projects have been very limited and infrequent.

72. The libraries, of course, are only one element of the information systems in their organizations, and the library heads cannot themselves resolve basic information development issues. Similarly, an inter-library panel would have to recognize the differences in level of development, size and working practices among the many libraries, as well as the specialized interests and linkages which many of the libraries have in their fields of expertise with other libraries and information units outside the United Nations system.

73. At the same time, however, the libraries could identify specific areas (such as those discussed below) where most or all of them could co-operate in a meaningful way. They could share ideas and experience on new approaches and use of new technologies, including in particular advice and informal assistance from the more advanced libraries to those which are less-developed. They could agree on and apply internationally-adopted rules and standards for library staffing and operations in so far as possible and practicable. They could also reach out in an organized way to establish more effective joint links with other information units within the United Nations system, and with important information units and services outside the system. Through such actions, the libraries could ensure a more coherent and cost-effective network of libraries within the United Nations system, and the co-operative provision of the best possible library services to users of all types.

74. The Inspectors do not think an elaborate new mechanism or ambitious system-wide master plan is required. What is needed is a regular consultative procedure, involving all heads of central libraries as representatives of the libraries in their organizations, to serve as a focal point for more systematic inter-library improvement actions. The proposed panel could perhaps meet annually, establish its own terms of reference and on-going work plan in as simple and pragmatic a way as

possible, and report jointly and regularly back to the organizations on what has been accomplished and what needs to be done. What is critically important is that the organizations make a basic commitment to participate in this panel, in order to strengthen library co-operation and make the libraries more fully capable of fulfilling the important role they should play within the information systems of the United Nations system.

## 2. Indexing of United Nations system documentation

75. This is perhaps the most important co-operative task, since it concerns the development of improved bibliographic control over and access to information materials produced by the system, thereby helping to promote the system's work and goals. As discussed in Chapter II.E on information tools, the present catalogues, bibliographies and indexes of the system overall do not yet adequately cover the documentation produced. They vary considerably in format and are often delayed in issuance. This leads other libraries to do their own indexing, and hinders the use of United Nations system documentation worldwide because it is not timely, well-organized and easily accessible to users.

76. The unfinished exploratory work of the ACC Task Force on Indexing Vocabularies, which was discontinued in 1979, is presently being revived in several areas. The United Nations Information Services Unit in DIESA at headquarters has been working to revise a macrothesaurus, including informal consultations with other system organizations, which should be completed in 1984. The United Nations is also working to establish its UNBIS bibliographic system at all its headquarters and regional units, and in informal consultation with other agencies as a generic indexing vocabulary. In addition, in late 1983 UNESCO began inter-agency work toward a generic indexing vocabulary under the Global Network for Science and Technology. The 1984-85 work programme of ACCIS will keep abreast of these and other developments, in light of the ECOSOC directive (resolution 1982/71) that ACCIS

"compile, update and popularize common indexing vocabularies at the generic level and formulate standards, drawing upon the technical expertise of the appropriate organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system ..."

77. These various programmes provide useful starting points to renew the quest for common indexing vocabularies and better bibliographic control of the system's documentation, but their very diversity suggests that once again these goals may be frustrated. The libraries of the system can provide essential support, pressure and technical expertise for meaningful progress in this area, and this task should become the top priority of the new inter-library panel.

78. The process of better bibliographic control and indexing should follow the basic principles established for countries and organizations under UBC, whereby each organization should select and index its own materials using international and mutually-agreed standards for such matters as format, scope of coverage, frequency, number of languages in which indexes are issued, bibliographic description, subject analyses, and special bibliographies in certain areas. These indexes could be manual or computerized, depending on the situation of each agency. But together they should eventually constitute a co-operative and compatible system, capable of further expansion and computerization in the future.

79. Establishing common understandings of basic principles and use of indexing terms among the organizations is not a simple process. The specialized agencies in particular are committed to the specialized subject vocabularies which are already used in their respective fields. The workload involved in moving to a compatible system might also be considerable, but the benefits of a firm co-operative effort should be quite substantial and must be further addressed. The proposed panel of library directors should work carefully to establish a consensus on common standards which necessitate a minimum of change in established specific procedures. All central libraries of the system and other units which prepare printed catalogues and indexes should participate in this common effort, as well as specialized libraries in units with substantial document production.



80. The experience of the past three decades clearly shows the difficulty of this task: the 1949 United Nations library policy document called for co-ordinated system-wide indexing and cataloguing work; a Working Party on Indexing and Documentation was first established in 1966; the UNDP Capacity Study of 1970 highlighted the need for more consistent structure and ease of retrieval of the system's documents; the 1975 initiative of ACC to explore means for improving information exchange, bibliographic description and common indexing terms led to the ACC Task Force which was then disbanded; and the 1982 ECOSOC resolution (and the 1982 UAP International Congress recommendation) only repeat the original, still unfulfilled, need. Action, however, has become even more essential, in light of the "information explosion", the clear desirability of common terminology to achieve bibliographic control of system documentation, and the growing concerns about user difficulties in gaining access to United Nations system documentation.

### 3. Human resources planning for library staff

81. The data on staffing summarized in Chapter II.B. indicate that librarians of the United Nations system, at both the senior general service and the professional levels, have many problems, including that of being a stagnant occupational group. The major problems are:

(a) people without strong librarianship background serving as professional-level heads of libraries, professionally-qualified librarians in general service posts, and 26 small libraries (fully one-third of the 78 total) with no professional posts at all;

(b) increasing sophistication in the professional qualifications required, in light of rapid technological change in the library and information services field;

(c) a lack of common workload and productivity standards to help assess and determine appropriate staffing needs, levels and responsibilities;

(d) weak staff development activities and limited rotation possibilities;

(e) an overall grade level pyramid heavily weighted at the lower levels and with limited opportunities for advancement compared to other staff;

(f) many rather vaguely-defined lower-level posts scattered among several large and many small libraries, i.e., in too many cases a lack of clear library structures and well-defined operational functions.

82. The current work programmes of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) address basic policy issues of United Nations system personnel management such as career development, recruitment and promotion. Where considerable differences exist in promotion prospects among various occupational groups, as for librarians, the ICSC has recommended that the organizations try to even out such differences, to the extent possible, by human resources planning for their occupational groups, an active staff development approach, a review of job design for the stagnant occupations, and an age profile analysis to see the rate at which future openings might arise. The problems currently faced by library staff in the system need to be addressed in just such a concerted and determined way in order to recruit fully-qualified staff, carefully organize their work, motivate them, and ensure their continuing competence and ability to help provide the sophisticated information services needed by the United Nations system in the future.

83. Since staff costs amount to roughly 80 percent of the total budgeted costs of the libraries, these problems of staff resource use require concerted attention and action from those responsible for library direction. The development of common recruitment, workload and productivity standards is very much needed, taking firmly into account the changing professional qualifications and staffing structures and patterns required by new technologies. These standards should form the basis not only for better library operations but also for sound recruitment processes, improved job design and classification, a more organized and reasonable career development and advancement process based on professional skill requirements and respon-

sibilities, increased job rotation opportunities, and a much more careful matching of professional qualifications with posts.

84. This process of improved human resources planning would, of course, have to be developed in consultation and conjunction with ICSC and the personnel departments and policies of the various organizations. The new inter-library panel, however, could make a considerable contribution by addressing this problem on a continuing priority basis to ensure more effective use of staff resources and gradually develop a much-improved career pattern for librarians in the system. For example, the panel might create a computerized roster of all library staff serving in the various libraries, which could be used to fill openings that occur and to enhance career development opportunities.

85. The speed of professional and technical change in modern library service also requires a steady reinforcement of competence through seminars, meetings, professional literature, and information exchange among all types of library specialists. However, the present lack of staff training and career development opportunities for librarians of the United Nations system is hampered further by the fragmentation of this staff among so many small libraries and by tight general budgetary resources. Nevertheless, training opportunities should be organized for different types of library specialists in the system (cataloguers, indexers, acquisition librarians, reference librarians, etc.) in order to keep them abreast of the best professional achievements in the field and of the newest technology.

86. This training could be accomplished through seminars, lectures, exchange of staff for on-the-job training, and other processes carried out co-operatively for all staff at a particular duty station, through exchange of experience and materials, or through the utilization of local national facilities. Most of these activities should involve little cost, because senior staff members of the participating libraries could serve as instructors or local specialists might be involved on a voluntary basis. The inter-library panel could explore this area and the possibilities of biennial common training programmes in conjunction with the training or personnel offices of the organizations.

#### 4. Local co-operation

87. As the above item suggests, joint efforts at the local level are perhaps the most simple and cost-effective form of inter-library co-operation, because of the proximity and ease of establishing personal contacts and working relationships. A variety of possibilities exists:

(a) Co-operation among libraries at a particular duty station would be most advantageous in Geneva, where 13 United Nations system libraries, including several of the largest, are located. However, even in a city with only two or three libraries of the system, avenues of joint effort should be explored on a continuing basis.

(b) Co-operative library activities are already fairly well-developed in Bangkok. The ESCAP libraries, other local libraries and several national institutions are enhancing local resource sharing through co-operative participation in the ESCAP bibliographic information system (EBIS), distribution of acquisition information, a joint project on a Union List of Serials, and other activities. Their experience also shows that local library co-operation can be expanded to the regional level in a significant way: a Sub-Committee of United Nations Inter-Agency Librarians (SCUNIAL) has met at least annually in the Asian region for several years to discuss such matters as a common system for inter-library loans and the sharing of certain documentation responsibilities and numerous additional centres in the region are examining the possibilities of joining the EBIS system.

(c) Co-operative acquisition of periodicals, books, publications and documents is an example of an important potential effort at the local level. Acquisition committees of staff from the participating United Nations system libraries would arrange co-ordinated purchasing of agreed materials and make them available to their users through inter-library loan, copying services, and catalogues and acquisition lists. By avoiding duplication, this process would free funds, staff and space in each library to acquire other material, and allow them to serve their users with better collections within the same total budgetary resources.

/...

(d) Co-operation between United Nations system and host country libraries also has much potential in a number of areas, particularly inter-library lending. Such activities can help strengthen individual libraries' collections and improve their acquisition policies.

(e) Conversely, some regional, specialized or information unit libraries in developing regions do not have well-developed national or university libraries with which to co-operate, and in fact are called upon to serve not only Secretariat personnel, but also regional and sub-regional organizations, diplomatic missions, university professors and students, government officials, and visiting researchers. The organizations should consider strengthening such libraries to encourage the catalytic support for organizational programmes which they can provide.

#### 5. Microform programmes

88. A good example of a technical facet of library operations with potential for inter-agency co-operation is the increased use of microform (a process for reproducing printed matter in a much reduced size) and particularly microfiche (sheets of microfilm containing rows of microimages of pages of printed matter). As discussed earlier, the larger United Nations system headquarters libraries have been increasingly using this medium.

89. The United Nations has had a long-standing microform programme, but it has been hampered by limited document coverage, publicity, and indexes. Nevertheless, response to the programme has been increasingly favourable, as national libraries recognize their serious space problems, the growing public acceptance of microform utility, and the value of well-organized and indexed (and thus easy to process and use) microform programmes. Thus, in 1980, the United Nations surveyed 500 libraries worldwide on their specific interest in and need for United Nations documentation in microform.

90. More than 200 libraries responded to the questionnaire and expressed considerable interest in obtaining complete sets of current documents, retrospective series, statistical materials, and especially mimeographed documents in microform. Most encouragingly, the libraries indicated an interest in joining a consortium of institutions that would guarantee an assured market for English language United Nations documents in microform, and were willing to contribute substantial funding for such a programme. This would allow subscribers to share costs, and the more subscribers, the lower the individual costs would be.

91. As this survey suggests, a co-operative microform programme could reach larger numbers of users of system documentation in a much more comprehensive and cost-effective way than at present. The wide-scale conversion of system documents into microforms, and eventually microform publication of the documents, could help system and outside libraries at all levels to solve many budgetary, space and other problems of holding United Nations system document collections. The inter-library panel should give serious consideration to in-house production of microforms using modern electronic means, and to other co-operative uses of microforms as well.

#### 6. Depository libraries

92. Another significant opportunity for extending the "outreach" of United Nations system materials to users around the world is through more effective use of the system of depository libraries which almost all the major United Nations system agencies and organizations have established in some form. In theory, this system spreads information about the system's purposes and activities worldwide, by making its publications and in some cases other documents available to national libraries where they will be kept in order and made available to interested users without charge. The size of the present network is impressive. A JIU analysis of 1980 IOB Directory data indicated that 18 central libraries were disseminating material to an average of about 200 libraries each (708 different libraries in total). These libraries were located in 148 different countries in all regions: Africa (101 libraries); Asia and the Pacific (124); Eastern Europe (70); Latin and Central America (99); North America (96); Western Asia (33); and Western Europe (185).

93. In fact, however, the data the libraries provided on their depository library systems suggest that these networks are not very well maintained. Only a few libraries provide for regular visits, instructions or training to depository libraries in the effective use of the materials sent. Sporadic feedback from depository libraries in recent years has identified general problems in the following areas: considerable delays in receiving United Nations system documentation and the related indexes; uncertain coverage and acquisition policies and procedures (particularly confusion as to what material will be distributed automatically and what must be commercially purchased by the depository libraries); and complexity of the documentation, which makes it difficult to manage and use without appropriate guidance and help from the issuing United Nations system organization. Most importantly, the documents sent are a mixture of free distribution, partial payment, and full payment arrangements according to various criteria. However, there has been very little if any analysis of whether these subsidized documents are actually used and are worth the costs involved in gathering and sending them.

94. Because of this lack of knowledge of actual effectiveness of these depository networks relative to the considerable potential they have as worldwide distribution channels for United Nations system information, the Inspectors believe that the new inter-library panel should make or commission a special joint study of depository libraries. This study should consider the conditions under which depository status is granted, the types and extent of materials sent, the total costs of free and other distribution, exchange and sales agreement patterns, the use of microforms versus hard copy materials, trends in depository library growth over the past decade, and assistance and oversight provided to operate the networks. Above all, there should be an assessment of how effectively the networks function to meet user needs. The results of the assessment should lead to actions to improve co-ordination and operation of depository library networks on a United Nations system-wide basis.

95. Another significant form of "outreach" to users, at present emphasized only by WHO but deserving of consideration by other organizations as well, is technical co-operation with related libraries in developing countries. Under its Health Literature Services Programme, WHO provides health science libraries in its Member States with education and training of medical library manpower and users, resource sharing and networking, and bibliographic activities. Programme operations are centered in the WHO regional office libraries and in the Member States, while design and planning are co-ordinated by the headquarters library and the Health Literature Service.

#### 7. Public information centres

96. A 1981 JIU report on the co-ordination of United Nations system public information activities (A/36/218 of 23 April 1981) noted that the system had some 148 information offices in 74 cities around the world in 1977-1978, and had spent some \$52 million on total public information activities in 1979. These centres generally provide publications, audio-visual materials, and other services for the local press and public. Although system-wide data are imprecise, these figures have doubtless increased since. The United Nations, by far the largest component, currently has more than 60 Information Centres (UNICs) covering about 150 countries worldwide, each with a professional Director and on average half-a-dozen local staff.

97. In a 1979 report on the UNICs (A/34/379 of 14 September 1979), the JIU found that reference libraries were essential to UNIC operations and were relied on by local students, teachers, researchers and publics. However, the libraries were generally small and congested, holdings were inadequate because of slow distribution and limited funds, information retrieval was poor or barely adequate, indexes and guides were often missing, and basic support equipment was limited. Most importantly, the approximately 50 local General Service staff serving the Centres as Research Assistants were generally rendering valuable services, but few of them were professionally qualified or had received any United Nations training in the important tasks of guiding researchers to relevant sources or pertinent United Nations information.

98. United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) officials informed the Inspectors that since 1979 21 of the 56 UNIC librarians have undergone 1-2 week training periods, and in December 1983 16 UNIC reference assistants attended a one-week seminar in Bangkok led by officials from United Nations headquarters, ESCAP and ECWA, and UNESCO and FAO regional offices. DPI has issued several hundred copies of a 180-page manual for handling United Nations documentation to UNIC librarians and others, and hopes that many Centre librarians can enhance their career status by moving to the new National Officer category now being established for UNIC information and reference assistants. DPI believes that the above steps, plus new standard criteria for recruiting librarians, have considerably improved UNIC library staff quality.

99. The Inspectors believe that further steps can help strengthen this component of the system's library network and its capacity to meet user needs, both for UNICs and the information centres of other organizations. The information centres should be included in co-operative library activities at local duty stations wherever possible, such as acquisition, retention of materials, training, and experience exchange. The organizations should consider information centre reference librarians' needs in their professional library training programmes, and ensure that information centre staff are familiar with services offered by the local depository libraries of the organizations. The potentials for improving information centre library collections, storage and ease of use should be considered in the microforms project discussed above. In each of these areas and on broader depository library issues as well, the new inter-library panel could deal directly with the inter-agency coordinating body for the system's public information programmes, the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC).

#### 8. UNESCO-supported programmes

100. UNESCO has long had many programmes relevant to the development of an international library system responsive to user needs. Its draft Programme and Budget for 1984-1985 contains related activities under major programme III for Communication in the Service of Man and in programme VI.3 on research, training and international co-operation in key areas in science and technology. In particular, UNESCO major programme VII on Information Systems and Access to Knowledge includes programmes on improving access to information (modern technologies, standardization and the interconnectedness of information systems); on infrastructures, policies and training required for the processing and dissemination of specialized information; and on improvements in UNESCO information and documentation systems and services as well.

101. A 1971 Intergovernmental Conference for the Establishment of a World Science Information System (UNISIST), led to an ongoing UNISIST programme, subsequently incorporated in the broader General Information Programme (PGI), to improve tools of systems interconnection and information transfer and to develop scientific information policy, networks, manpower, and institutions, including libraries. UNESCO support for the important international programmes of UBC and UAP has already been cited. It also provides continuing advisory services, studies and other support to assist Member States to develop library and information services and improve user access to documentation and information; assistance to all types of national libraries; a records and archives management programme; and training of information personnel and information users.

102. These UNESCO-supported programmes appear to have significantly influenced the worldwide development of library systems and increased inter-library relations and co-operation. Many useful and interesting things have been accomplished or launched in different countries and regions, such as steps taken under the UBC and UAP programmes to improve bibliographic control and inter-library loan services, or plans to develop regional information systems. However, these programmes do not seem thus far to have involved the United Nations system libraries, which have largely continued their own fragmented activities divorced from this evolving international library framework.

103. A current UNESCO sub-programme (VII.1.3) under the PGI deals with regional and inter-regional co-operation among Member States and with the organizations of the United Nations system in the exchange and flow of information. A component of this sub-programme will seek to reconcile information processing and transfer processes in the United Nations system and the development of compatible information systems, working in part through ACCIS. The UNESCO representative to the new inter-library panel could play an important liaison role in facilitating improved linkages between United Nations system libraries' activities and the many relevant programme areas noted above. This clearer interchange and connection could allow the libraries of the system to make a meaningful contribution to these UNESCO-supported programmes, and let them benefit as well from the experience, ideas, contacts and projects being generated by these UNESCO activities.

#### 9. International library organizations

104. A final important component in building a more comprehensive network of United Nations system library activities, and greater "outreach" of system information to the international library network, would be a stronger relationship with such associations as the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the International Federation for Documentation (FID), and the Association of International Libraries (AIL). Some United Nations system staff have been quite active in these organizations on an individual basis over the years, but it seems that most library staff, particularly in the small libraries, have very little familiarity with these important professional groups.

105. These associations are particularly significant for a major initiative that they have undertaken: rather than mere general speculation about the usefulness-of-documentation issue that has concerned ECOSOC and the General Assembly for the past 20 years, they have actually attempted to determine the uses made and improvements needed in this field. At two international symposia on International Documentation in Geneva in 1972 and in Brussels in 1980, both sponsored by the above associations and UNITAR, an extensive set of working papers, case studies, analyses and summaries of experience were presented and discussed by both producers and users on the sources, acquisition, organization and use being made of international documentation.

106. The 1980 symposium, in particular, concentrated on:

- (a) determining the type and nature of users of international documentation;
- (b) proposals for improving use by increasing "receptivity" on the part of the potential user;
- (c) increased "selectivity" of use, including the importance of satisfying special groups of users in developing countries; and
- (d) new attempts to measure the influence and impact that international documentation actually has.

The symposium made a series of recommendations to its Permanent Committee and in general for actions needed to improve the production, organization and use of international documentation.

107. Both these symposia brought together representatives of many United Nations system libraries with other members of the professional library community worldwide. The United Nations system, however, has not yet been able to reciprocate and properly support the interest of the international library community in improving international documentation. Once again, the cause appears to lie in the fragmented character and lack of co-operative activities of United Nations system libraries. The new inter-library panel could provide a much needed "focal point" for more organized efforts to improve the effectiveness of system documentation, and to contribute more directly and productively to progressive development of an international library system overall.

## B. Management improvements

108. The systems approach to modern library services requires basic changes in library management. The libraries should themselves become "systems-oriented", through parallel efforts to strengthen linkages with other relevant units and organizations while also developing a complete cycle of internal management processes and programmes.

### 1. Systematic structure and linkages

109. The overall library structure of an organization should be the one that most efficiently and effectively serves users. It is often better to consolidate small specialized libraries at the same location into a larger centralized one, since many small libraries can lead to inflexible, fragmented use of library staff resources and some inevitable duplication of materials. On the other hand, new information and communication technologies, and particularly the rapidly expanding use of micro-computers and personal computers, may lead to new forms of decentralized but linked library structures as part of integrated, computerized information systems.

110. New libraries should never be established without carefully determining the need for the new unit and whether existing central services could be modified or strengthened to handle the area effectively. If new specialized libraries are determined to be necessary, central libraries should support them with training, processing, acquisition and other services as needed to ensure a smoothly-functioning overall system. Conversely, any specialized library should work in full co-operation with other units of the organization's library system, rather than hoarding its collection and going its own way. When a central library alternative is chosen in lieu of establishing a new specialized library, the central library has a firm obligation to be fully responsive to the service and information needs of the unit involved.

111. The organization with the strongest need to rationalize and effectively integrate its library and information service units is the United Nations. It provided more than half (44 of 78) of the system libraries in the JIU survey and has many other information and reference and documentation units as well. The library co-ordination process in the United Nations occurs at several levels:

(a) The Dag Hammarskjöld Library in New York has headquarters responsibility (under ST/SGB/152 of 4 March 1976) for reviewing new collection proposals and expansions, setting retention schedules or amalgamating collections, setting service standards, and advising on economy and efficiency in library services. Some success in rationalizing services has been achieved in recent years, but the sheer number of United Nations libraries in New York (more than 20) shows the challenge involved.

(b) In Geneva, serious problems in library co-operation have arisen (see section B.4 following).

(c) In Vienna, the previously existing libraries were merged into one library at the new Vienna International Centre, which is run by the IAEA as a unique inter-organizational library. Now that UNIDO is becoming a specialized agency, further development of library operational and co-ordinative arrangements will be needed among the IAEA, UNIDO, and United Nations units involved.

(d) Some of the United Nations regional commissions tend also to have clusters of libraries and related information services at their headquarters, including six libraries at ESCAP.

112. In addition to rationalizing library relationships, the libraries need to ensure that they fit well in the overall information system of their own organization, and to support and strengthen the effective operation of that system insofar as possible. The 1980 IOB directory of United Nations information systems listed a jumble of some 350 libraries, bibliographic systems, referral centres, clearing houses, information analysis centres, and data banks. All of these units collect, disseminate or analyze information or create records and publications, and all pro-

vide services to the general public or a specialized public. There is no guarantee, however, that they do this in a co-ordinated or efficient fashion.

113. As discussed in the preceding section, the libraries should also stress co-operation with other libraries of the United Nations system, with national and depository libraries, with UNESCO programmes in this area, and with international library organizations. Co-operative projects, training, and exchange of experience and ideas with all these groups and through the new inter-library panel should be a significant and specific element in the internal work programmes of each library, whether large or small.

114. The many areas of new technology also highlight the need for continuous information exchange among libraries. ACCIS publishes a bi-monthly newsletter on new developments in information systems co-ordination and information technology, which all system libraries would benefit from if they do not already receive it. In addition, in the late 1970s the United Nations headquarters library published a newsletter for libraries participating in the ACC Working Party on Indexing of Documents, but this ceased when the Working Party was discontinued. It would be worthwhile to re-institute this newsletter, under the auspices of the new inter-library panel, as a publication more specifically devoted to United Nations system library cooperation, technology and management issues.

## 2. Strengthened internal management

115. The libraries of the United Nations system need to develop stronger internal management. While almost all of the larger libraries have taken steps in this direction, the many smaller libraries have done little. This gives an overall impression of a passive, custodial approach to library collections, rather than a strong positive emphasis on providing the best possible library services.

116. The present management weaknesses begin with the objectives which guide the libraries' work. Only half the libraries had formal statements of objectives, and many such statements were very vague and traditional ones that were formulated years ago. In contrast, the objectives of, for example, the Joint ECLA/ILPES library conveyed a considerably more dynamic and programme-oriented approach:

"to provide a specialized working library to fulfill the needs of the ECLA and ILPES work programme: emphasis is on service and on immediate usefulness."

117. Objectives are of course only a statement of intentions, and the true test is the way in which they are fulfilled. The Inspectors believe that the important potential role of the libraries in strengthening the organizations' information services and activities demands much greater emphasis on management. The libraries - even the smallest with only one staff member - need to critically examine and continuously work to improve the services they provide.

118. One important task is to develop and apply workload standards: for cataloguing, indexing and the use of particular technologies (such as microfiche). A considerable number of these standards have already been developed at the international level by UNESCO and the International Organization for Standardization and should be accepted or adapted to libraries of the United Nations system. Many small libraries felt that their size excused the need to consider standards and workload data. However, while standards should never become an obsession, each library should have a firm knowledge of common standards and use them appropriately within its own scale of operations, so as best to apply its scarce staff resources to the most meaningful tasks and ensure that they are effectively carried out.

119. Broader library staffing and operational standards also exist, and deserve careful consideration as a guide for the individual libraries. For example, standards for specialized libraries which have been used in both developed and developing Member States include the following:

/...



(a) each library shall have at least one professional staff member (fully one-third of United Nations system libraries do not meet this standard);

(b) librarians must have librarianship qualifications sufficient for (national) professional accreditation (too many individual system librarians do not presently meet such a test);

(c) library objectives should be explicit, in writing, periodically reviewed and revised, and include a functional prescription of what is needed to attain them (as discussed above, most system library objectives are vague or non-existent);

(d) sixty percent of the total library budget should go for salaries, with 25 percent for acquisitions (the system libraries as a whole appear to greatly exceed this level, with roughly 80 percent of budgets used up for salaries alone);

(e) to check adequacy of staff and workload, statistics shall be kept of all services, and reports to management on library work should be issued regularly (another system problem area, see section 3. following).

120. A second area where more emphasis is needed is "outreach", not only to other libraries and information services as already discussed, but to users of the specific library. The passive assumption that users already know what the library has to offer and will express any needs as they arise may well lead to considerable misunderstandings on both sides, and to library operations which users find less and less relevant to their needs. Each library (relative to its scale of operations) should have a regular, organized combination of formal or informal user surveys, acquisition committees, training in library use, exhibitions of new materials, regular circulation of acquisition lists or other information, and other similar actions to reach its users with information and to gain feedback from them.

121. A third area is that of library planning. The "support services" or "continuous function" category into which libraries are usually placed implies that their work runs routinely on and on. In reality, however, the work of the organizations, information sources, information technology, and library services are all in a continuing state of change. Each library should develop and maintain a periodic internal plan as a longer-term framework to identify these new challenges and problems and to formulate actions to deal with them.

### 3. Work programmes, reporting and follow-up

122. To organize these various linkages and management tasks, each library should prepare and carry out its own internal work programme on an annual basis. Some larger libraries already have extensive work programmes, but even the smallest libraries should develop very simple ones with only a few specific projects included. The important thing is to address library operations in a more dynamic, forward-looking and orderly way.

123. The preceding paragraphs have identified some important areas that such work programmes could include - co-operative actions with other libraries, workload standards, statistics, and analysis, informing users and conversely learning more about their needs, and longer-range library planning. In addition, the discussion in Chapter II indicated a number of other areas that could well be included:

(a) formulating or updating specific policies on acquisition and retention of materials, on reference and loan services, etc.;

(b) establishing career development and training opportunities for staff;

(c) considering the feasibility of using new equipment, technology and processes in library operations;

(d) reassessing policies, costs and controls for circulation of periodicals and other materials to staff;

(e) determining whether problems exist with the amount of and controls over library-type materials purchased elsewhere in the organization, outside the library budget;

(f) monitoring and improving the management of the depository library network, where relevant;

(g) exploring what the status of library operations should be in 10 years, including areas for the special cost-saving measures that many of the libraries believe will become necessary in the future.

124. A final essential element in good library management is reporting and follow-up. The programme management actions suggested above are inherently useful to the libraries themselves. They will receive stronger priority, however, if they are also demanded and used at a higher level. It appears that in the past many higher-level officials responsible for libraries have taken them for granted. An oversight body, such as the United Nations Publications Board to which the United Nations Headquarters library reports annually on certain topics, may well not be possible for most libraries. However, the higher-level officials responsible for each library or set of libraries (heads of conference services, administrative, information or general services divisions, or heads of smaller divisions or units for specialized libraries) should improve library services and effectiveness by requiring an orderly work planning, programming and reporting process for library operations, and ensuring steady follow-up on actions taken and results achieved.

#### 4. United Nations library services in Geneva

125. The Inspectors were not able to make a detailed examination of individual libraries during their system-wide study. However, they did find one particular area where co-operative activities have disintegrated, as a result of which a thorough management review and subsequent reorganization is urgently needed: the United Nations Library services at Geneva. The problem primarily concerns UNOG and the United Nations Library at Geneva (the largest library in the United Nations system), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and UNCTAD, but also affects other units in the Palais des Nations, outside researchers and students, and co-operative activities with other agency libraries in Geneva.

126. The Geneva libraries have long been expected to serve as a solid example of inter-agency library co-operation. The 1948 International Advisory Committee of Library Experts cited in particular the opportunity for the United Nations and related libraries in Geneva "to provide an example of co-ordinated service which would be an inspiration to libraries all over the world".

127. A significant step in this direction was taken in 1966, when ECE and UNCTAD created a Joint ECE/UNCTAD Reference Unit to merge existing scattered reference points, and in 1967 UNCTAD also loaned several posts to the UNOG Library to help meet UNCTAD library service needs. Between 1967 and 1975, the total library service posts of the UNOG Library, ECE and UNCTAD grew substantially, rising from 39 to 64.

128. In the midst of this expansion, a 1971 Administrative Management Service (AMS) study concluded that the UNOG Library "does not yet meet modern requirements" and recommended that the Library rationalize its work methods to meet international standards, simplify procedures, and prepare for the transition from traditional methods to new operational techniques, especially the use of computerized systems. AMS also emphasized the need to develop detailed short- and long-term Library work programmes, and recommended that the Reference Unit be "attached" to the Library.

129. In November 1976 the Joint Reference Unit was "merged" with the UNOG Library, as the Economic Reference Service (ERS), financed jointly by ECE and UNCTAD, within the framework of the Library. Under the merger agreement, 10 of the 17 ECE and UNCTAD staff were to be placed in the ERS, with the remaining 7 redeployed elsewhere in the Library to provide supportive technical services. Following the merger, however, and despite the proviso that any staffing changes would be jointly agreed upon, most of these staff were unilaterally reassigned out of the ERS and into other sections of the Library. The actual staffing of the ERS fell as low as 3 posts, and in recent years has never exceeded 5.

130. Concurrently with these developments, UNCTAD and ECE users began registering complaints about the quality of the Library services provided them. Negotiations began in 1980 to resolve these complaints, and in late 1982 UNCTAD and UNOG agreed that UNCTAD would re-establish its own, separate "mini" ERS (with 4 posts) when space became available within UNCTAD. The remaining UNCTAD posts (presently 8 1/2) would remain in the UNOG Library. In early 1983, ECE withdrew all of its posts from the Library and established its own small ERS, with 2 general service staff.

131. The Inspectors were not able to make an in-depth study of the UNOG Library nor to determine all the causes of the above-mentioned problems. However, they feel that the following facts should be noted.

(a) An UNCTAD Users' Group concluded in 1981 that the basic reference services expected by UNCTAD had not been provided since the 1976 merger, resulting in a serious impairment in UNCTAD's research capabilities. The subsequent withdrawal of the ECE posts and the projected 4 UNCTAD posts illustrates a worsening situation and confirms this assessment. In addition, in 1982 a working group of UNOG Library staff identified serious problems in the organization and administration of the Library's work, the use of new techniques, training and career development, and relationships with library users. The Inspectors heard many other user complaints during the course of their study.

(b) Despite the 1971 emphasis of AMS on the need to develop careful, detailed short- and long-term work programmes to strengthen and streamline UNOG Library processes and meet international library standards, the Library informed JIU in its questionnaire response in late 1982 that it had no such work programmes. The Library's internal workload standards also are inadequately developed and applied.

(c) The 1971 AMS call for modernized Library operations, particularly through computerization, has proceeded with painful slowness. Only in late 1983 did the UNOG Library begin limited initial testing to introduce the UNBIS system developed much earlier in New York. The UNOG Library has fallen far behind the other large libraries of the United Nations system in this area, since all of them have long since computerized many of their operations.

(d) Many elements of library operations have changed in recent years, and this JIU report emphasizes careful statements of up-to-date objectives to guide the provision of effective library services. However, the UNOG Library informed the JIU in its questionnaire response in late 1982 that its objectives remain unchanged from those formulated by the Secretary-General in 1949 (A/C.5/298).

(e) This report also stresses the importance of highly-trained and up-to-date professional library staff to provide effective services in the "information age". The UNOG Library has grown from 23 posts in 1949 (16 professional and 7 general services) to 48 posts in 1983 (18 professional and 30 general service). However, this large increase in overall staff (not to mention the extra staff contributed by UNCTAD) has not resulted in increased efficiency or effectiveness, as demonstrated by the findings of the 1982 library staff working group. Moreover, the heavy increase in general service staff, particularly since most of them lack professional librarianship training and internal training activities are weak, does not seem appropriate for a modern, streamlined library and in fact does not meet suggested international staffing standards.

(f) The "inspiration" to co-ordinated library services which the 1948 Committee of Library Experts hoped Geneva would provide scarcely exists among Geneva libraries today. The UNOG Library, as the largest and essentially the "main" library in Geneva, should bear the primary responsibility for this inaction.

(g) The UNOG Library operating problems do not seem to be due to severe resource constraints. In fact, the Library budget has grown by 275 percent (not adjusted for inflation) from \$1.2 million appropriated in 1972-1973 to \$4.5 million requested for 1984-1985. These figures do not include additional resources from other organizations for acquisitions (such as \$150,000 per biennium from UNCTAD), a Library Endowment Fund of \$38,000 per biennium, or the substantial number of UNCTAD posts presently absorbed within the Library's operations.

132. The Inspectors conclude that the UNOG Library has fallen considerably behind the modern operations and responsive services provided by other large libraries in the United Nations system, with attendant serious negative effects on substantive programmes of United Nations organizations in Geneva. The new small ECE and UNCTAD reference units will not improve this situation: indeed, they are a further step backward.

133. The 1949 terms of reference state that administrative control of the UNOG Library is provided by the Secretary-General through the Director-General (and, since mid-1982, the Director, Conference Services Division) of UNOG, with policy control through the Director of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in New York. The Inspectors recommend that these officials ensure that the new Chief Librarian of the UNOG Library (the post became vacant in November 1983) will take prompt action to review, rationalize, streamline and modernize UNOG Library operations; provide responsive services to all types of users; and finally begin to meet the 1948 expectations of a leadership role in developing inter-library co-operation in Geneva.

134. The Inspectors are also concerned that the 1976 merger, the subsequent mingling of posts, and the 1983 disintegration have not been presented to governing bodies in United Nations proposed programme budgets for their consideration and approval. The UNOG Library budget sections from 1978-1979 through 1984-1985 have made no mention of the ERS, ECE or UNCTAD in the narrative descriptions of Library operations. The UNCTAD and ECE sections for these four biennia also make no mention of the "merged" working relationship with the UNOG Library, except for a brief (and inaccurate) parenthetical mention by UNCTAD in the 1978-1979 budget document. In contrast, the programme budget sections for the Library, Vienna for 1982-1985 contain a regular summary discussion of joint library service arrangements among IAEA, UNIDO and United Nations units, cost-sharing provisions, library book and supply needs, and continuing requests for approval of contributed library posts.

135. As regards actual staffing, the UNOG Library organization chart of August 1982 showed 63 total staff posts, with only 5 posts placed in the ERS and identified as ECE/UNCTAD. Subsequently, as noted above, ECE withdrew its 3 posts, and UNCTAD designated its 4 posts to be withdrawn. This left 56 1/2 posts (1/2 was recently added) actually in the UNOG Library as of December 1983.

136. The proposed programme budget sections for 1984-1985, however, show a considerably different picture.

(a) The UNOG Library section shows only 48 total authorized posts, as it has since 1980-1981.

(b) The UNCTAD budget section has shown only total funding for the ERS (\$1.07 million for 1984-1985) rather than posts since 1973, but in response to Member State requests for details about the staffing and main tasks of the Unit at a Trade and Development Board session in October 1983, a Secretariat representative stated that the ERS included 5 professionals and 7 general service staff and was located in the library to provide reference services to UNCTAD.

(c) The ECE budget section states that 3 general service posts (the change from the prior 4 is not explained) provide "reference services, in co-operation with the Economic Reference Service, operated jointly by ECE and UNCTAD".

137. At present, and outside the budgetary approval process, ECE has "cancelled out" its library post movements: it contributed 4 posts to the library merger in 1976 and by 1983 had reclaimed all of them. In contrast, UNCTAD contributed 13 posts to the merger in 1976 (including 6 professional posts), but now plans to reclaim only 4 for a "mini" ERS, leaving behind 8 1/2 posts in the UNOG Library despite UNCTAD's strongly expressed dissatisfaction with the Library's performance. (This calculation does not include an additional 5 posts which UNCTAD loaned to the UNOG Library in 1967, and which were then approved for and permanently transferred to the UNOG Library in the 1976-1977 budget).

138. The Inspectors believe that these incomplete and inaccurate budget presentations fall far short of the "transparency" which Member States expect. United Nations officials informed JIU that in future libraries will be part of the regular programme budgeting-evaluation-reporting cycles, and that the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination will take a closer look at their planning and budgeting.

139. Meanwhile, however, the Inspectors are also concerned that the inadequate budgetary review and control procedures which allowed this situation to arise and continue since 1976 might have led to similar problems elsewhere. They note that while the UNOG Budget Service reviews UNOG Library submissions, the UNCTAD and ECE submissions are reviewed by the Budget Division in New York. The Inspectors conclude that the Secretary-General should take action now not only to ensure the presentation of future Geneva library service budget proposals with the same explanations and detail as that provided for Vienna, but also to review the related budget preparation, review and control procedures to ensure that such problems do not exist in other budget areas.

### C. New information technology and systems

140. Of the three elements in this chapter, new technology and systems are not discussed last and most briefly because they are least important. In fact, new technology and systems will be closely intertwined with co-operative activities and management improvements and will have an enormous impact on the future operations of United Nations system libraries.

141. New information technology, combined with the changing nature and needs of library users, is already redefining the traditional functions of the library, and may bring much greater changes in the future. The 1980s are leading toward knowledge-based systems providing access to different levels of substantive information assembled by experts in a given field. This requires new kinds of librarians able to facilitate and adjust to constant technological change.

142. Computer technology has largely been used in libraries to improve internal library productivity. Now, however, the emphasis is beginning to shift to new computer and telecommunications technologies, and intellectual tools to analyze, store and disseminate information which the libraries can use to provide new and improved services to users.

143. An example of the pace of technological change is that of scientific publications, an area of particular interest to United Nations system organizations. In 1977, it was estimated that about 50,000 scientific journals were being published, with an expected total growth of another 50 percent by 1992. But increasing publication costs have forced publishers to raise subscription rates, cease publication or consider new electronic technologies, and have forced libraries to change their acquisition patterns and seek economies. Standard print technology for such journals may thus eventually be joined by selective dissemination services, on-demand publication, microforms, videotext, new uses of computers, and electronic journals. Eventually, the declining ability of libraries to buy needed materials will emphasize new forms of trans-national information networks that preserve all useful information while enabling its rapid and efficient retrieval.

144. The libraries of the United Nations system vary considerably in their use of these new technological developments. At present, only about one-third of the 78 libraries have computer-based indexes and catalogues, and less than half provide even some computerized services to users. As might be expected, almost all of the largest libraries have made considerable progress in providing computerized services, while the smaller libraries have as yet done little. The prospects for improvement are considerable, however, since many of the libraries reported that they are considering or already planning the computerization of various aspects of their operations and services at some time in the future.

145. Among the 22 larger central and specialized libraries, composing the largest collections and about three-quarters of the total budgeted costs, almost all produce some form of computerized data base for their own materials. About one-third

of these larger libraries also have access to computer data from outside libraries and information systems, and several provide access to computer data bases from other units in their organizations or in other United Nations system organizations. About one-third also provide on-line access to users, most frequently to those inside the organization, in some instances to other organizations of the system, but in only five cases to outside users.

146. Several areas might provide good starting points in individual libraries and for joint efforts. A good microform programme to reach users has already been discussed (section III.A.5), but greater microform use is also important for managing library materials. Microform would not only greatly reduce space problems, but free up staff resources because maintaining the collections and associated catalogues is much less time-consuming for microforms than for "hard copy" materials. However, this will require a reduction in the price of microforms produced in the system, elimination of delays in their production, and providing the libraries with necessary microform readers, printers, and storage equipment.

147. Computers should also be increasingly used for bibliographic control over library holdings and co-operative indexing of materials produced by the United Nations system. This in turn enhances library bibliographic services, since the resulting data bases can be used to compile all kinds of subject bibliographies, prepared at the request of users or in advance.

148. Computerization of user services can begin with control over materials borrowed by users. It also facilitates reference services by providing on-line connections with data bases of the library, of other information services of the organization, and with international or commercial data bases.

149. Modern computer and communication technologies are being increasingly merged, as the scientific base of telecommunications expands, costs come down, software services emerge, and micro-chips make computer systems more like telecommunications networks. For libraries, the tele-transmission of texts could encourage cooperative acquisition of materials, and speed up inter-library loan services. It could help eliminate a large part of the publications and documents presently duplicated in the holdings of many libraries.

150. These new technologies highlight the systems aspect once again. The impact of the new technologies on libraries becomes many times stronger when introduced on a co-operative basis, because they become more and more cost-effective as their scale of application increases. Thus, joint inter-agency activities directed toward the eventual development of a United Nations library system will again be particularly significant.

151. In addition to new technology, the libraries of the United Nations system must also be attuned to the proliferation of new information systems within the organizations, and the differing units, processes, subject matter and linkages involved. The 250 bibliographic systems, referral centres, clearing houses, information analysis centres and data banks identified in the 1980 IOB directory of United Nations information systems have undoubtedly increased since that time, but the growth of information systems and sources in other organizations, governments and commercial entities has been even faster. To effectively fulfill their service and bibliographic functions, the United Nations system libraries and other units must be knowledgeable about these systems and able to contribute to and draw from them as appropriate.

152. A significant example of the growing importance of these information-sharing responsibilities is found in the recent report of the Administrator of UNDP (TCDC/3/2 of 7 March 1983) on progress by the United Nations development system in promoting and implementing technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC). The report noted that the main agents for TCDC are the developing countries themselves, but that the United Nations system has an important supportive and catalytic role, particularly in promoting TCDC and collecting and disseminating information on TCDC needs and capabilities. At present, however, most agency efforts are ad hoc and un-coordinated.

153. The report concluded that scientific and technical information exchange systems need to be developed to provide essential TCDC information to a network of national information focal points. Much more attention is therefore needed to institutional network-building and to meeting user needs, along with greater efforts to develop simple, cost-effective information systems to provide countries with timely, co-ordinated and useful information.

154. The large specialized agencies in general have already established their own international information systems, which may or may not be part of the libraries but which illustrate the broad scope of activity which new technologies are bringing to international information functions. One such system, for example, is the International Nuclear Information System (INIS) of IAEA. Under its statutory responsibility to "foster the exchange of scientific and technical information on peaceful uses of atomic energy", the IAEA established INIS in 1970 as the first operational information system to employ decentralized input preparation combined with centralized processing of information. More than 70 countries and 14 international organizations provide inputs on virtually all aspects of peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology to IAEA headquarters in Vienna, where it is checked and merged using modern computer methods. The information is then redistributed twice monthly to national information centres for use by organizations and individuals as magnetic tapes with bibliographic descriptions, a printed abstracts journal, and microfiche copies of "non-conventional" literature.

155. INIS thus makes the latest publications of current scientific research available to Member States, while avoiding expensive duplication of information processing activities. Developing countries in particular receive information on new developments through INIS which they might not otherwise have access to, and the INIS information training programme also trains information centre staff in these countries in up-to-date techniques of information handling.

156. Despite such progress in several agencies, a recent international survey underscores the slow overall pace at which United Nations system information is being made publicly available using new technologies. The survey found that in mid-1983 there were some 1600 databases around the world which are accessible through online services connected to one or more international telecommunication networks. However, only 16 of these (one percent) were produced by United Nations system organizations: the United Nations (four), FAO and ILO (two each), ACCIS, IAEA, and ICAO (one each), and the IMF and World Bank (five). Ten of these data bases are numeric (factual), five are bibliographic, and one referral. While the number of new databases worldwide had tripled in the last three years, the number of United Nations databases has not changed at all, at least among those that are publicly accessible: all 16 mentioned above began in 1980 or earlier.

157. UNESCO has also recently completed and will soon publish a study under the UAP Programme on the use of United Nations system documentation in Member States. The study covered both depository libraries and information centres, and gave useful indications on the profiles of users. One of the study's main conclusions is that the documentation is not fully used because of the lack of communications between the system organizations and their users, and that these users (and potential users) would welcome a service giving direct access to the data banks of United Nations system documents.

#### IV. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

158. When the IOB Directory of information systems was published in 1978 it referred to the world-wide information collections of the United Nations system as a vast "library without walls". The Inspectors have found indeed that what presently exists is not a co-operative network of libraries, but many individual libraries which operate in a fragmented way. The 1978 and 1980 IOB Directories highlighted this problem by identifying some 100 libraries and 250 other assorted information services in the United Nations system, a number that has quite probably only increased since.

159. In its decision 1982/71 ECOSOC emphasized the need to co-ordinate and harmonize the information systems of the United Nations system to make these valuable resources available to users at the national level, particularly in developing countries. It also stressed the importance of associating technical experts of the United Nations system with information suppliers and users to ensure attainment of this objective.

160. In a follow-up report in 1983 on strengthening the co-ordination of information systems (E/1983/48), ACC noted that information is of little value when its existence is not known or when access to it is difficult. The report stated that there are indications that the existence of information available in the United Nations system is not widely known, especially at the national level.

161. As the organizations work through ACCIS to establish an infrastructure for the longer-term development of co-ordinated information systems, the libraries, along with other units, should play an important participative and technical role. The libraries, however, also need to act in their own right to develop a much more responsive, comprehensive and collaborative network of library services than that which presently exists.

162. If the librarians are to contribute more effectively to basic United Nations system information-sharing objectives, they must become skilled technical specialists providing high-quality information services in a rapidly-changing information environment. The few large libraries of the system have already made considerable progress toward modern and responsive library services, but the many small libraries are struggling. Inter-library co-operative activities, a strengthening of internal library management processes, and increasing use of new technologies can greatly facilitate the development of a cost-effective system-wide library network to provide the best possible information services support to the programmes of the organizations and to users worldwide.

163. Co-operative activities. The few large and many small libraries of the United Nations system need to overcome their general fragmentation, isolation, limited resources and low-profile activities through a collaborative "systems approach". This emphasis will gradually build a mutually-strengthened network of United Nations system libraries which can provide expanded and more responsive services to both immediate users in the United Nations system and to the broader international community. It will also allow the libraries to establish more effective linkages with the worldwide network of national libraries, the international library system, and the computerized international information systems which are emerging. The inter-agency steps toward such a co-operative network, begun in 1948 and 1966, revised by ACC in 1975 but dropped once again in a 1979 reorganization, need to be revived (paragraphs 8-14, 15-21, 45-54, 58-64, 68-80).

RECOMMENDATION 1. The executive heads of the organizations should designate the head of their organization's central library to participate in an inter-library panel which will help develop a co-operative and effective network of United Nations system libraries. This panel should meet periodically, establish a practical co-operative work programme, and report jointly back to the organizations on actions



taken and needed (paragraphs 71-74). Among possible specific areas of concern, the panel should consider:

- (a) as a top priority, actions needed to finally develop common indexing vocabularies and bibliographic control over United Nations system documentation (paragraphs 55-64, 75-80);
- (b) improved human resources planning, career development, recruitment and staffing standards, and training for library staff (paragraphs 22-32, 81-86);
- (c) inter-library co-operation at local duty stations (paragraphs 52-53, 87);
- (d) microform programmes and joint use of other available and emerging technologies (paragraphs 54, 88-91);
- (e) strengthening the effectiveness of depository library networks (paragraphs 92-95);
- (f) closer working relationships with public information centre libraries, relevant UNESCO-supported programmes and with international library organizations (paragraphs 96-107).

164. Management improvements. The individual libraries need to move away from a passive-reactive role toward a more progressive, responsive process of library management, emphasizing service to users and adaptation to rapidly-changing information service requirements. The larger libraries have made progress in this area, but all the libraries - large and small - need to maintain an organized and sustained programme of library management development. Such a programme should concentrate on the major library resource - library staff, and their professional skills, development, deployment and use so as to provide the most responsive and cost-effective services to library users (paragraphs 22-44, 108).

RECOMMENDATION 2. Each organization should take action to ensure that:

- (a) its network of libraries is an integrated and effective one which meets user needs without waste, fragmentation, delay and duplication, and that the central library provides necessary leadership, services and support to branch, regional and specialized library operations (paragraphs 109-111);
- (b) the responsibilities and functions of its libraries are clearly established and developed within its overall information system, so that the libraries have well-defined working relationships with other information units, systems and services (paragraphs 112-114);
- (c) most importantly, each library in the organization, no matter how small, establishes and maintains some basic form of internal management objectives, workload and staffing standards and analysis, longer-term planning process, and regular communication with users. Each library should incorporate these elements in an annual or biennial internal work programme, with subsequent regular reporting to responsible higher-level officials on actions taken and results achieved (paragraphs 115-124).

165. New technology. An organization which has poor information interchange with its surrounding environment will become increasingly detached and gradually stagnate. The "information age" is already bringing great changes in the international information environment and in library technology itself: microform and other programmes rather than "hard copy" collections, computerized bibliographic search and data bases rather than card catalogues, and "information science" education rather than traditional librarianship training. These trends and their impacts will doubtless only accelerate. High-quality information tools and staff skills are essential in the libraries to ensure the organizations' effective access to and dissemination of information, but at present these tools and skills are generally not well-developed and used, up-to-date or well-co-ordinated. A process of careful recruitment, staff development, information exchange, and awareness and use of

appropriate new technologies and approaches is needed so that the libraries can continuously adapt and serve their organizations as they should (paragraphs 25-29, 55-64, 140-157).

RECOMMENDATION 3. Each library, as a specific part of its staffing and organizational processes, internal work programme, and co-operative actions with other libraries of the system, should continually consider possibilities and actions needed to keep pace with changing information and library technology requirements.

166. United Nations library services in Geneva. Despite a long-standing emphasis on the potential for effective inter-organization co-ordination of library services in Geneva, the attempt to merge UNOG, ECE and UNCTAD library services has foundered. The UNOG Library, the largest in the United Nations system, appears to have fallen considerably behind the level of modern services provided to users by other large libraries in the system. In addition, proposed programme budget submissions to governing bodies since 1976 have not accurately presented the merger and considerable redeployments of library posts that have taken place among these three organizations (paragraphs 125-139).

RECOMMENDATION 4. The Secretary-General should ensure that the new Chief Librarian of the United Nations Library at Geneva will take prompt action to (a) review, streamline and modernize library operations and (b) provide responsive library services which effectively support the needs and substantive programmes of all users in Geneva. The Secretary-General should also carefully examine existing budget review and control procedures to ensure that Geneva library service proposals are properly presented to governing bodies in the future, and that similar problems do not exist in other parts of the budget.

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