Evaluation of DFAIT Publishing

Prepared for

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Inspector General's Office

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1.0 Executive Summary

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the current state and processes of publishing activities in the Department and to suggest how improvements may be made. This entailed a review of the state of publishing at DFAIT, in particular, how the production of communications material is handled in terms of procedures, quality and cost controls; a review of publishing policies and practices of other government departments and agencies; an assessment of the effectiveness of current approach to publishing; and the development of recommendations to improve the management of publishing at DFAIT.

This review was undertaken on the understanding that the Department wanted an examination of its publishing activities focussing on the current state of policies and procedures, an evaluation of the quality and costs of the materials being produced and a review of best practices found in other government departments and agencies. To carry out this evaluation, interviews were held with DFAIT staff identified by their divisions to provide information on the management and production of communications materials by those divisions. Interviews were undertaken with 10 external departments and agencies to assess their policies and procedures and to identify best practices. Sample DFAIT publications were collected and reviewed to assess their overall quality and their compliance with the Federal Identity Program (FIP) and other policies. Quantitative data on the volume of publishing and associated costs were not readily available.

1.1 Findings

Publishing at DFAIT comprises the production of a broad spectrum of communication materials to meet the information, communication and promotional needs of its divisions. It includes annual directories, reports, corporate planning documents, promotional flyers, newsletters and press releases, audio-visual products, Internet and other related products, and exhibits- all emanating from a diverse group of divisions with varying mandates and objectives. Likewise, the quality of the material varies greatly, running the gamut from plain, archival treaty documents to glossy professional promotional materials aimed at targeted businesses. Publishing activities are decentralized throughout the Department, although a core group of specialists are housed within the Communications Bureau. The level of publishing and communication expertise among the divisions is variable ranging from program managers with little to no experience in publishing to seasoned professionals with wide experience in publishing, communications and marketing.

While publishing activities represent an ideal application for costed results-based management, there is currently no easy method of quantifying the level of activity or the resources devoted to the production and dissemination of DFAIT communication materials nor are there widely available common standards for their production. With the records now maintained, it is not possible to assess the efficiency and cost effectiveness of DFAIT publishing activities. Graphically, there is no unifying or consistent corporate image across the Department as a whole, while there are strong program or divisional identifiers in some areas. In an era where

branding is an important component of any communications strategy, DFAIT's message is diluted by a mixture of images. It should be noted that these problems also extend to the Department's Web publishing activities.

Decentralization of communication and publishing services is characteristic of all external organizations reviewed, however, many have undertaken steps to ensure consistency of messaging, images and quality across their respective departments. The key to their success has been a central corporate group of experts that acts as a "centre of excellence" in matters relating to publishing. This report identifies a number of policies and procedures that could be considered best practice and that could be adopted or adapted by DFAIT.

1.2   Summary of Recommendations

1. That DFAIT adopt a plan, to be implemented over the next 15 months, that will enable the Department to comply with Central Agency directives to plan adequately, to track costs and to report on results achieved in departmental publishing. The Treasury Board Secretariat has committed to monitoring implementation of action plans relating to the Federal Identity Program on an ongoing basis, including progress audits of federal departments and agencies.

2. That the B-Bureau develop a performance framework and other planning tools for the publishing activities handled by BCS to serve as an example to other DFAIT divisions and bureaux active in publishing throughout the Department.

3. That DFAIT develop immediately and then maintain systematically a complete catalogue of departmental publications, including the resources devoted to their production and dissemination.

4. That the B-Bureau develop Corporate Graphic Standards for the communications materials it produces and that it actively encourage the Department to employ these standards to encourage a common look.

5. That the B-Bureau re-establish a intra-Departmental Publications Advisory Committee to develop, review and revise policies and standards for the production of printed material.

6. That the B-Bureau develop and disseminate a Directory of Corporate Services available for project development and production.

7. That BCS review and revise its mandate with a view to establish it as the Centre of Excellence in the production of communications material.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the current state and processes of publishing activities in the Department and to suggest how improvements may be made. This entailed a review of the state of publishing at DFAIT, in particular, how the production of communications material is handled in terms of procedures, quality and cost controls; a review of publishing policies and practices of other government departments and agencies; an assessment of the effectiveness of current approach to publishing; and the development of recommendations to improve the management of publishing at DFAIT.

2.2 Issues to be addressed

A number of issues and approaches were identified for consideration during the course of this review. They were as follows:

2.2.1. Determine the state of publishing at DFAIT.

- Examine existing government-wide and DFAIT policies and regulations which may exist with respect to publishing, and the degree to which these are applied;
- Examine whether DFAIT divisions are aware of, and adhering to existing policies and regulations. Are they aware of the role and mandate of BCS?
- Examine the processes, outputs and organization of all areas of BCD and their role in the production of published material;
- Examine how the many divisions involved in publishing are handling the production of communications materials, what resources are used, and what is spent by each division on the production of publications;
- Examine how and why particular publishing decisions are made by different responsibility centres within DFAIT;
- Identify the roles played by officers and support staff in DFAIT's divisions vis-à-vis publishing. What type and level of work are done in-house, and what, and how much, is contracted out?

2.2.2. Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the current approach to publishing at DFAIT.

- Provide an assessment of the roles of the various participants in DFAIT's publishing activities and their respective efficacy to determine whether improvements may be feasible and desirable;
- Determine whether there is any evidence of lack of coordination or duplication and overlap in the department's publishing activities.

- Compare DFAIT's publishing approach to that of OGDs and other comparable organizations.

2.2.3. Suggest how the management of publishing at DFAIT may be improved.

- Determine whether it would be beneficial and feasible for each departmental division to prepare an annual work plan for its communication projects;
- Determine whether a centralized or decentralized approach would be preferable for the current DFAIT environment;
- Determine whether a Publishing Committee would be beneficial to DFAIT's publishing activities;
- Assess whether the introduction of new project tools by BCS will improve the management of publishing;
- Suggest ways in which DFAIT might improve its ability to track its publishing activities, along with associated expenditures;
- Suggest ways in which DFAIT could improve its ability to determine the impact of its publications on the target audience; and
- Suggest ways that BCS market its services to its Bureau and the Department.

2.3   Methodology

2.3.1   Approach

This review was undertaken on the understanding that the Department wanted an examination of its publishing activities focussing on the current state of policies and procedures, an evaluation of the quality and costs of the materials being produced and a review of best practices found in other government departments and agencies.

2.3.2   Data collection and analytical methodology

To carry out this evaluation, interviews were held with 22 DFAIT staff identified by their divisions to provide information on the management and production of materials by those divisions. In addition, 16 senior managers and staff of BCD were interviewed. Interviews were also carried out with 10 external departments and agencies to assess their policies and procedures and to identify best practices.

In an attempt to develop a database of current publishing activities, this review compiled the results of a survey of departmental publishing activities carried out in late 1999 by the Communications Services Division (BCS). Information on the number of publications was also

obtained from the Enquiries Services' (SXCI) database of all publications stored off-site. Additional materials (over 250 samples) were collected during the interview phase of this study.

2.3.3   Constraints

Although the evaluation methodology originally included a quality assessment workshop using outside publishing experts and representatives from the actively publishing divisions, timing prevented the organization of such a session. Sample publications were reviewed, however, to assess their overall quality and their compliance with FIP and other policies. The response to the BCS survey to all HQ divisions requesting publishing activity information indicated that 30 divisions were publishing communication materials at varying activity levels. The information gathered provided a snapshot of the materials produced in 1999. The most critical gap in information collection for this evaluation was the inability to obtain reasonable and reliable information on the costs of printed materials both for development and production costs. Information was obtained from the financial services' database using standard line objects assigned to printed material but the figures obtained were not considered reflective of total publishing activities.

This report was revised in the summer of 2000 to take into account additional information gathered on the publishing activities and processes within BCD. The initial evaluation was drafted with a view to assessing activities primarily outside those of BCD.

3.0   Background

3.1   DFAIT's Communications Bureau

The Communications Bureau's (BCD) mandate is to ensure that communications plays an integral role in Departmental policy development and program delivery, thereby positioning the Department to make a significant contribution to the Government's foreign policy, international trade and domestic agendas. The Bureau comprises six divisions including Foreign Policy Communications (BCF), Trade Policy Communications (BCT), Media Relations (BCM), Communications Programs and Outreach (BCP), Communication Services (BCS) and Public Environment Analysis (BCDE).

According to the 2000-2001 Bureau Business Plan, BCS has primary responsibility for advice on communications (publications, audiovisual and multimedia, Internet, etc.); project coordination; advertizing; and publishing and editing services. It has an overall responsibility for publishing (printed or otherwise) and Internet-related communications matters (through co-chairing the Web Advisory Committee) for the entire Department.

3.2 Context of evaluation of publishing

Decentralization of publishing activities at DFAIT Headquarters over a decade ago has resulted in the proliferation of parallel communication units throughout the Department. This has also resulted in the production of a wide variety of communications material, numerous design elements, variable editorial and printing quality and an inconsistent overall image. Government-wide, this situation is by no means limited to DFAIT as most departments have decentralized their communications and publishing activities. In March 1998, The Secretary of the Treasury Board directed all Deputy Ministers to implement actions to strengthen the presence of the Federal Government especially in the area of the Federal Identity Program (FIP). This resulted in a review of communication material throughout the government. The Treasury Board Secretariat has committed to monitoring implementation of action plans relating to FIP on an ongoing basis, including biannual progress audits of federal departments and agencies.

In September 1999, a background memorandum was prepared by BCS outlining concerns with departmental publishing and was presented to DFAIT's Executive Committee. The Executive Committee approved a number of recommendations with regard to the Department's publishing activities at Headquarters (HQ) with the aim of assessing the overall quality of publications, the costs of publishing and of developing and implementing procedures that would improve cost-effectiveness and on-going evaluation. The objective was to determine the most cost-effective way of dealing with a number of specific problems identified in departmental publishing, including the following:

- Confusing array of logos;
- Inconsistent application of the Federal Identity Program;
- No complete list or catalogue of departmental publications;
- Need for better resource management and quality control in many publications;
- No accurate identification of publishing costs, and inadequate means to monitor and control them.

It should be noted that the problems identified above also extend to the Department's Web publishing activities.

This evaluation was initiated to address the recommendation of a need for a review to identify, track and control costs and to consider the establishment of a publications committee.

4.0   Description of publishing within DFAIT

4.1   Purpose of activities

Publishing at DFAIT comprises the production of a broad spectrum of communication materials to meet the information, communication and promotional needs of its divisions. It includes annual directories, reports, corporate planning documents, promotional flyers, newsletters and press releases, audio-visual products, Internet and other related products, and exhibits - all emanating from a diverse group of divisions with varying mandates and objectives. Likewise, the quality of the material varies greatly, running the gamut from plain, archival treaty documents to slick, professional promotional materials aimed at targeted business.

The production of communication materials by government departments and agencies is guided by a number of policies produced by the Treasury Board Secretariat and available on their Web site. These include:

- Government Communications Policy (1997-01-08)
- Alternative formats - Access for all (1995-03-21)
- Planning Information Products: effective, no-frills publishing practices (1995-03-21)
- Government of Canada Internet Guide (1998-10-20)
- Federal Identity Program (1995-07-31)
- Policy on the Use of Electronic Networks (1998-02-24)

In addition, DFAIT has publishing guidelines formulated to "give employees of DFAIT involved in the production of publications a framework within which all DFAIT and other information products - for internal or public distribution, in Canada or abroad - should be produced." These guidelines (http://intranet.lpb/department/SXD/Guides/CorrCh15/chp15e.htm) are based on those found in the *Communications Volume* of the *Treasury Board Manual (Information and Administrative Management Component)*.

It was recognized that planning of communication materials should be an important part of the annual planning process for most of the divisions that were interviewed. In policy divisions or new programs, planning of much of the material is ad hoc and is often driven by outside events, shifts in policy or as the need arises. Much of this is on an urgent basis to accommodate requirements for conferences, briefings, trade missions, etc. In other divisions, published products are an integral part of their annual planning and are major outputs of their work. For example, the high profile newsletters of the Department have editorial boards and regular meetings and editorial content is planned well in advance. The majority of communication projects handled by BCD are initiated from their Trade and Foreign Policy divisions (BCT and BCF); plans are developed for each of these initiatives and all major new departmental projects have a percentage of the overall budgets specifically assigned to communications.

The target markets for DFAIT publications are as diverse as the products. Divisions had excellent knowledge of their individual markets, be they external or internal, and many publications were targeted to highly segmented audiences.

4.2   Existing structures

Publishing activities are decentralized throughout the Department, although a core group of specialists are housed within the Communications Bureau. The BCS group offers a number of professional services including project management; advice on design and regulations; coordination of editing and proofreading; page layout; print procurement; liaison with printers and other suppliers; audio-visual productions; and Web site coordination. In the past 2 years, BCS has served primarily as an operations arm for BCD initiatives, however, it has been assessing how it can act as more of a resource for the Department, as per its mandate. The level of publishing and communication expertise among the other divisions is variable ranging from program managers with little to no experience in publishing to seasoned professionals with wide experience in publishing, communications and marketing.

The most active communication groups outside of the BCS group were identified as part of EED, TBD & TCD, JPD and LXD. The roles of these groups in project management, advice on design, coordination of editing, print procurement and other aspects of print and electronic publishing. duplicates to some degree those services offered by BCS. Activities in smaller divisions where publishing is not a major output are usually the responsibility of one or two communication specialists or program managers. Often communication materials are part of the assignment of Foreign Service or Trade Officers on a rotational assignment.

Awareness and familiarity of DFAIT or government-wide policies related to communications material is poor outside the active groups identified above, although most staff charged with publishing activities feel they are carrying out these activities in accordance with DFAIT policies and procedures.

4.3   Resources

The decentralization of communication functions over a decade ago has resulted in a lack of standardized tracking and controls to monitor these activities across the Department. For much of DFAIT's publishing activities, there are no readily available means of obtaining information on the number of items produced, the total number of copies printed, their costs of production, of inventory or of their distribution. A review by BCS in the fall of 1999 estimated the expenditures on communications materials at between $12 and $17 million annually, although this estimate would probably include the printing of all forms, letterhead, envelopes, and business cards as well.

Figures obtained from the Financial Services Division (SBR) for FY 99/00 to-date [see Table 1] are inconclusive as to total costs (estimated at $ 4.359 million), given the limitations of interpreting what is assigned a "publishing" code. All divisions interviewed were asked to identify costs, however, the majority were unable to readily supply the data. Divisional representatives felt it was important to be able to identify all costs, however, only a few made it a priority in the management of their materials.

Table 1:   DFAIT Publications Expenditures - FY 1999-2000*

Financial Code	Description	Expenditure ($)
40800	Publishing services acquired outside government	234,949.52
40801	Publishing services acquired from CCG-PWGSC	11,422.85
40810	Printing services acquired outside government	4,100,752.88
40811	Printing services acquired from PWGSC	12,038.78
Total		4,359,164.03

* As of 15 March 2000.

Staff resources devoted to communications and publishing were equally difficult to quantify, varying from individual staff with part-time duties in this area to the larger groups for Consular Affairs (11 PY) and Communications Services (29 PY).

4.4   Activities

In order to establish a base line of publishing activities and to begin to assess their total cost, a survey was sent out by BCS to all DFAIT Divisions in late 1999 asking for a list of communication materials produced in 1999. The response to this and follow-up reminders provided only a reading of the total activities of the Department (47 Divisions responded of 121 surveyed; 30 carried out publishing activities). The responses provide a starting point for establishing a more comprehensive list of materials on an ongoing basis.

Another source of information on publishing activities within the department was the database maintained by SXCI. This inventory of approximately 2,800 publications is used by the Enquiries Service to respond to requests from DFAIT's clients. This resource centre is useful in determining demand and inventory, but represents only part of the overall publishing picture as not all divisions make use of its services.

5.0   Evaluation Issues: Findings and Conclusions

5.1   The state of publishing at DFAIT HQ in terms of quality and cost controls

It is surprising to review the breadth and extent of publishing at DFAIT and become aware that there is no easy way of quantifying the level of activity or the resources devoted to the production and dissemination of the materials produced. Also, there are no widely available common standards for their production.

Given the diverse nature of the content, goals and target audiences, it is not surprising that there is no coherent and overarching look that readily identifies the communication materials as produced by DFAIT or on behalf of the Government of Canada. A lack of clear guidance in this area has led to a proliferation of material of varying graphic quality and standards. The result is there is no unifying or consistent corporate graphic image across the Department as a whole, while there are strong program or divisional identifiers in some active areas. In an era where "branding" is one of the most important components of a communication strategy, DFAIT is diluting its messages by allowing this mixture of images.

Graphically, the most consistent materials in quality and compliance to the basic standards laid out in FIP and other guidelines were those produced by the Trade Commissioner Service, Consular Affairs Bureau and the material produced by BCS. Approximately 70% of all of the material reviewed for graphic quality had some form of compliance to federal and departmental identifiers, but the size of the trademarks, placement, legibility, etc., varied greatly and would not be judged compliant in the strictest interpretation of the guidelines. Other materials did not follow the basic requirements for FIP, Government copyright, or the standard Department identifier. It should be noted that the FIP and other guidelines are open to interpretation; however, their intent is the clear identification of government material. There is a wide use of logos, symbols and other program identifiers that are often the most visible and prominent graphic element of the material. The use of such identifiers is currently under review by the Department with the aim to reduce and control their proliferation, however, there is resistance to such efforts as these images become entrenched as critical to the visibility of these programs.

Although most of the DFAIT staff interviewed were aware that there were policies and procedures relating to publishing quality and standards, they were generally unaware of the specifics. Most assumed that by following past practice or by relying on in-house advice, they were following the required policies.

From a costing perspective, the extent of information available is perhaps reflective of the priority given to monitoring and controlling costs in these areas. While smaller programs with limited budgets and projects were able to detail development, production and distribution costs, many of the larger divisions were not able to do so. Development costs such as concept development, editorial development and market research are often not discernible from staff or

other program costs. Production costs are generally identifiable as most of these are outsourced but are open to interpretation because outside agencies often handle all aspects of a product but invoice for these under the moniker of professional services. Distribution is another area where there is a lack of information, as most divisions do not budget for it specifically. It is often bundled into the overall contract with an outside agency or handled via the internal mail/distribution system.

5.1.1 General observations

A number of issues relevant to the quality and costs of DFAIT publications were identified during the course of this evaluation and these are listed below:

- There is a poor understanding and awareness of current policies and procedures related to publishing in Divisions (especially where these communications activities are not a major component of their output).
- There is poor awareness of what materials require registration, copyright acknowledgment, ISBN, ISSN, or catalogue numbering.
- There is a lack of awareness of to whom one goes for services, what kinds of services are available, what options or alternatives are available, etc.
- Time constraints and urgency are characteristic of the atmosphere surrounding the production of most communications materials, especially in those divisions where these materials are not the major output of the division or from those divisions that are handling the production of materials on an ad hoc basis.
- Divisions rely on past publications or examples as guides for new products that can perpetuate old logos, identifiers, outdated graphics, etc. (e.g., a number of variations of the Team Canada logo and the Canadian Coat of Arms were noted).
- There is a concerted effort by all divisions to have all material available on the Web either in HTML or PDF format; many divisions plan to reduce their print runs (and concomitant costs) accordingly as their clients use this distribution channel. Some divisions have gone as far as publishing their materials exclusively online.
- For some divisions, the responsibility for handling materials for Web distribution is now being transferred to or assumed by technical staff; this makes timely updates and revisions more difficult and frustrating to the "source" division.
- A number of divisions expressed interest in, and awareness of, accessibility to materials in other formats (Braille, enlarged letter format, etc.) but were unsure of any guidelines, policies or resources. Some materials are already being produced in these formats such as those from Consular Affairs that are available in Braille, on audiotapes, etc.
- Planning was being undertaken by two Divisions to initiate plans and "new looks" for their communications activities; one plan was being developed in consultation with BCS and the other without any thought given to coordinating these undertakings.
- Staff felt, in most instances, that they lacked graphics expertise/guidance in-house.

5.2   Effectiveness and efficiency of the current approach to publishing at DFAIT HQ

5.2.1   Management of publishing at DFAIT

As mentioned previously, the planning of DFAIT publications is an integral part of most divisions' annual planning activities and the decision on how to proceed or on whose resources to rely is made at the divisional level. Smaller programs tend to plan on an ad hoc basis. Once the decision is made to produce a communication vehicle, the divisions have a number of options on how to proceed with the production of their materials. They can manage all aspects of the process themselves from communication strategy, content development, and graphic design to final production and distribution. They are also able to call upon some or all of the services available at DFAIT HQ such as those offered by BCS, Distribution Services (SBG), and Information Services (SXCI). Each of these divisions have separate and defined mandates but combined they provide all of the services and expertise necessary to carry out publishing. In addition, there are very active communication units in at least three other divisions, as well as numerous communications specialists throughout the Department.

DFAIT does have clear procedure guidelines for publishing printed materials available on the intranet, although most Divisions seemed unaware of this resource. During the initial part of this review, BCS indicated that these guidelines were being revised and updated. More important, the Department does not use a common project tool that could act secondarily as a registry of publications in development for any planning period. A basic checklist tool exists as part of the Intranet *Departmental Publishing Guidelines*, however, it needs to be revised to be more useful and reflect new technological and dissemination processes. An updated tool could provide the divisions and the Department with more specific and detailed information on all communications material including why the material is being produced, for what markets, at what costs and how it is to be disseminated. In addition, this planning tool could provide information on how proposed material was fulfilling the Department's goals and objectives for the year and how or if it should be evaluated. The variance in quality of published material across the Department is attributable to the lack of (and/or awareness of) clear established guidelines and project management tools.

The management of Publishing at DFAIT is complex and is complicated by a lack of clarity as to the role of BCS. Although most divisions are aware of BCS, they are not aware of its specific mandate, nor the mandates of those of the other service divisions of the Bureau or of the Department as a whole. There are differing opinions within the B Bureau itself as to the extent of the mandate of BCS, specifically its role vis-a-vis the rest of the Department. The quality of services provided by BCS was characterized as good to excellent by those divisions offering an opinion. Problems in service level were noted in a number of areas, but timeliness of response was the most repeated criticism. Divisions expressed concern that BCS did not have sufficient resources and expertise levels to handle all publishing projects, especially those of an urgent nature. Those divisions experiencing problems were not inclined to return and retest the services.

There is a wide variance in the level of publishing expertise at DFAIT HQ. Several divisions have professional staff handling all of their communication and promotional publishing needs and thus there is some duplication of publishing services, such as project management and coordination, within the Department . These actively publishing divisions do not recognize any value-added in using BCS. Other divisions are unsure as to whom to turn for guidance and management of projects. By default, many seek the advice of the Reprographic Services (SRG) office of SBG. Its mandate is specifically administrative printing - the day-to-day requirements of the Department. This includes briefing books, documentation for meetings, directories and other standard departmental printing requirements. With a budget of $1.5 M, 85 % of their resources are devoted to their primary mandate. They are also able to provide advice and help on the management and procurement of published material. The services provided by this group were highlighted as good, although quality control issues were also raised. SRG often refers DFAIT staff to the complete services offered by the BCS group.

From the observations and findings of this review, there are several areas for improvement in the overall management of publishing activities. These include
- Clarification of the mandate and roles of BCS;
- Clear and readily available guidelines and procedures;
- Corporate Graphic Standards;
- A Directory of Services available at DFAIT HQ (such as BCS, InfoCentre, Distribution services, Reproduction services, etc.);
- Common standard planning tools/approval forms;
- Sharing of information and expertise across the divisions; and
- Communication and education on the use of the tools, guidelines and procedures.

5.2.2 Management of publishing in other government departments and organizations

The publishing activities and approaches of 10 Federal Department and Agencies were reviewed to provide a benchmark for DFAIT's own practices. The organizations included the following:

- Agriculture and Agri-food Canada
- Canadian Heritage
- Canadian International Development Agency
- Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- Environment Canada
- Health Canada
- Human Resources Development Canada
- Industry Canada
- International Development Research Centre
- Statistics Canada

All Government departments and agencies have experienced severe resource reductions in the past decade with resulting decentralization of many common services, in particular communications. Our survey indicated that despite this, there were significant inroads made to ensure consistency of messaging, images and quality across departments. The 1998 review by the Treasury Board on the implementation of FIP stimulated internal reviews and action plans that have improved compliance generally and have resulted in new approaches to managing the process.

Responsibility for publishing usually resides within the creative or publishing services sections of the corporate communication branches. In some Departments, such as Industry Canada and Health Canada, the Director General of Communications is designated the "Publisher" and is accountable for all communications materials - printed or electronic. Part of their mandate is to ensure compliance with Departmental and Government-wide policies.

Most departments have communications experts or advisors dispersed throughout the department; these advisors are generally responsible to the section or branch within which they work, although some are responsible to the DG of Communications. Their mandate is to provide strategic communication advice as opposed to operational advice. The sense that decentralization of communication services was a permanent shift in management practice was evident throughout the organizations interviewed.

The proliferation of Web sites within Government departments as the preferred channel for the distribution of information products continues to grow, as do the resources dedicated to these activities. This has led to increased challenges in assuring consistent messages, quality and format, and timeliness of information. Web Advisory Committees are everywhere and their mandates are to ensure that the sites are achieving the corporate communication goals.

As outlined below under "Best Practices," departments are making headway in addressing the concerns originally raised by the Treasury Board Secretariat to strengthen the visibility and presence of the Federal Government. The most successful have developed an action plan that assessed the extent of the problems, developed the tools and services to address the various issues identified and then marketed these tools and services within their organizations.

The following highlights what we consider best practices from these groups.

5.3   Best Practices

Although publishing (for the most part print production) is highly decentralized in the departments reviewed, several groups have put into place policies and procedures that could be considered "best practices" which might be adopted or adapted by other groups producing print materials.

5.3.1 Centre of Excellence

Staff at all levels appear to value having a group (or, as in the case of Canadian Heritage, one person) that is a recognized centre of excellence in all publishing matters.

What does it do?

This "group" (referred to as the Group) is responsible (to varying degrees, see below) for the following activities:

Standards and Guides

In addition to ensuring that Treasury Board publishing guidelines (http://www.tbs_sct.gc.ca/search/query_e.asp?who=pubs_pol) (e.g., FIP, language requirements, special formats, etc.) are followed, the Group develops a number of departmental style guides including corporate graphic standards, publishing project management procedures, and a house style guide. House style guides include rules on
- spelling
- punctuation
- numbers
- references
- language (e.g., gender neutral, plain language)
- acronyms and addresses
- etc.

and any issues that are particular to the department.

These in-house style guides are available on the Intranet. Where appropriate (e.g., where external authors or communication experts are preparing materials for publication) the Group also publishes the style guide on its Web site; occasionally, the Group produces a print version.

Copyright/Depository Services Program

The Department of Public Works is responsible for copyright for all government publications and has established the format for indicating copyright on all print (and Web) publications.

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Departments are also responsible for ensuring that copies of all published material are forwarded to:

- the Public Works Depository
- the National Library and
- the departmental library (or libraries)

The Group keeps abreast of these policies and keeps other publishing units informed of any changes.

Contract Services
The Group maintains a roster of freelance editors, translators, graphic artists, printers, etc., who are known to provide quality work and provides this information to other publishing units within the department. They can also provide assistance in preparing printing specifications and preparing tendering documents.

Linking to the Web
The Group has a good working relationship with the staff involved in developing and maintaining the Web site (regardless of whether they are in the same or in different branches) and works with them to develop standards for presenting material on the Web.

Catalogues
The Group usually assumes responsibility for producing print and electronic catalogues of all departmental publications.

How does it do it?
No department seems to have a central Group with the authority to enforce publishing policies and procedures. However, the successful "centres of excellence" are seen by their colleagues as experts in publishing/print production and the standards they set for their own unit tend to be adopted by other publishing units. Generally, the most successful Groups are those that lead by example rather than by "force." The "small" Group, with 1-3 staff members, generally limits the services it provides to

- giving seminars on specific topics and
- providing advice on a one-to-one basis.

The larger Group, in addition to providing advice, may offer its services on a cost-plus basis to other "publishing" units within the department. (In some instances, the Group also promotes and sells its services to other government department or agencies.) It promotes its services by guaranteeing

- high quality
- timely service
- cost savings.

The most successful Groups also offer "discounts" for volume on an annual basis. Profits generated are used to

- purchase new equipment
- provide staff training
- etc.

The most impressive Groups were in the process of developing electronic "tool kits" with all of the relevant policies, guides and templates to facilitate the production of communication materials in accessible "one-stop shops" on their Intranet and Internet sites.

5.4   Alternatives for improvement

A number of specific issues were identified as part of the terms of reference for this review as areas to explore to improve the management of publishing activities at DFAIT.

5.4.1   Would an annual work plan for all communication projects for each departmental division be useful?

Most high-profile communications material associated with initiatives coming from the strategic divisions of BCD are planned well in advance recognizing that some projects arise quickly out of the changing political environment and that these must be accommodated. Regular publications such as the Departmental flagship newsletters are planned in advance as part of normal internal annual and editorial planning processes, with input from numerous divisions. This is similar to the planning environment found in the external organizations examined. There was no evidence, however, that the results of such planning are compiled in any coordinated way across the Department, such as a roster of "coming material," other than for the information that is included as part of the annual strategic communications plan prepared in conjunction with the preparation of the Multi-Year Operational Plan or for the editorial plans for newsletters.

It would be useful to have a roll-up of all planned communications material - simply for resource allocation plans by central services, to avoid duplication of efforts by the various divisions and to give a "heads up" on any potentially controversial material. From our review, there are currently no information management tools that would allow such a compilation.

Planning is an integral part of any project management and is recognized as such by all staff in the divisions. It is not apparent that an annual work plan specifically for these activities is necessary as long as managers ensure that individual plans are prepared for each communication initiative within the mandate of the divisions. Staff would not be responsive to yet another document to be prepared or to another layer of possible review or approval. Rather, many of the smaller and less resource-rich divisions would benefit from the development of a standard but concise communication/publication project planning kit. The project planning tool available in the *Departmental Publishing Guidelines* on the Intranet as well as the recently introduced publishing and Web project registries could be adapted to serve this function. This should be available on the departmental Intranet and would provide a checklist-style tool that would aid in developing and managing projects. The tool could serve a corporate function in that any

registration or tracking codes that may be instituted would be components of the tool and these codes would facilitate future planning and evaluation.

5.4.2 Would a centralized or decentralized approach be preferable for the current DFAIT environment?

Decentralization of common services is a trend that continues in most organizations, especially in government. Our review of external departments and agencies indicated that this was especially the case for communication and publishing functions and that the results were of variable success. As indicated elsewhere in this report, many departments have used the opportunity to develop a corporate group that acts as a centre of excellence for their department and provides tools and advice for others. They set the standards for the department and monitor the materials for graphic and print quality and consistency of the communication messages. Rather than imposing regulations or trying to control the process, the successful departments have led by example and have set in place procedures (such as authorization forms for project plans) that reinforce the standards and requirements of the departments. Many of these groups charge for their services, the revenues being used to develop and strengthen their own resources.

DFAIT has a centralized group that has the expertise and potential to be a Centre of Excellence. Our review indicates that BCS has been successful in providing some or parts of its services to a number of divisions. It has, however, foundered in its role as an expert group for the Department, due in part to a lack of clarity in its mandate. At this time, BCS needs to assess its resources and develop an action plan to position itself to respond better to the publication and multimedia needs of the Department. It needs to ensure that it has the necessary human resource skills as well as the technical tools to meet current and future demands. BCS also needs to demonstrate timeliness in its response to requests and an ability to either manage or have managed any and all requests. One immediate resource identified during this evaluation that would be beneficial to the Department is a clear guide of all B Bureau services - who you contact, services offered, etc. Although this information appears on the Intranet, awareness is low and it should be revised and updated to be more effective.

The greatest challenge for BCS will be showing leadership in its relationships with those divisions with active communication groups that are well versed in publishing. These groups should be built into the process of developing any new tools or guidelines for use throughout the Department. Any inroads in persuading buy-in from these groups will only be made if BCS can show value added in the process.

5.4.3 Would a Publishing Committee be beneficial to DFAIT's publishing activities?

Publishing committees are used by organizations to carry out a variety of tasks. Generally, they establish publishing policies and procedures, including quality standards. They can also develop or oversee editorial content or select materials for publishing, such as in a book-publishing

environment. Although the *Departmental Publishing Guidelines* contain the outline of a DFAIT Publishing Review Committee and its membership, this committee has been inactive for some time. Given the size and diversity of the publishing activities undertaken by DFAIT, it would be unreasonable to re-establish a committee to oversee and approve all materials being published. Politically, there would be resistance within the Department to any new oversight or approval layer. Functionally, there would be far too much material for any one committee to review in a comprehensive or timely fashion. Only one external organization interviewed for this report had a Publishing Committee (IDRC) and its mandate was the evaluation and approval of new book proposals.

DFAIT currently has a number of ad hoc committees reviewing communication issues (e.g., logo use, Web Advisory Committee, Public Affairs Liaison Committee). These committees are advisory or consultative in nature and serve as fora for the exchange of ideas and information.

DFAIT and BCS should consider reactivating the Departmental Publishing Review Committee as a small, multi-divisional committee that would review publishing policies and standards, revise them as necessary and monitor publishing quality across DFAIT to improve compliance with Treasury Board guidelines and to strengthen the "branding" of the Department. The mandate of this committee should be advisory only. This committee could also provide advice to BCS in its efforts to develop, strengthen and market its services.

5.4.4   How can DFAIT improve its ability to track activities?

One of the weaknesses in the current review was the lack of a comprehensive database of all publication/communication materials. A centralized registry or the use of a specific financial or other code would help in collecting information on activities and improve the Department's ability to be accountable for its outputs. The environment at DFAIT seems antagonistic to yet another code or layer in the planning process. BCS has developed publication and Web project registries on the BCS Intranet site and discussions have taken place with Financial Services about the integration of a financial tracking code in these tools. To make such efforts worthwhile, it would be useful for this registration process to automate the receipt of ISSN, ISBN, or CCG catalogue numbers where appropriate, or to provide the registrant with some other useful information that simplifies their plans. Any registration process should be simple and yet include sufficient fields to track the major costs, the numbers of products produced, the target markets, etc. Given that the response to the introduction of new publication and Web registries has been poor, registration of all communication projects should be mandatory across the Department; a promotion strategy needs to be developed to explain the rationale and to encourage adoption of these registries.

Other organizations use project planning or tracking tools with variable success but most are able to track their publications through financial codes. The Health Canada Concurrence form is used for all newly published products and is signed off by the Director General of the source

Branch, the Director General of Communication and Consultation Branch and by the appropriate ADM. It also makes a point to relate the planned communication material to departmental priorities.

The introduction of any new tracking form should be with reasonable expectations. If it contains most elements of the publishing process, new clients and current ones with little experience should find it useful for their planning of projects. The more independent and self-sufficient divisions will only use it if it is useful for their own purposes.

Examples from other organizations:

Publishing Check List - Heritage Canada
Project Proposal and Authorization - Industry Canada
Publishing and Audio-Visual Concurrence - Health Canada

5.4.5   How can DFAIT improve its ability to evaluate the impact of its publications?

There is no systematic evaluation of DFAIT communication materials. Most divisions recognize the importance of evaluation but generally it had low or no priority. Many of the products produced are for one-time events and distribution can be limited to fewer than a couple of hundred copies. DFAIT staff has a good sense from anecdotal feedback as to whether something is well received or successful.

The Consular Affairs division has undertaken surveys of its publications (Bon Voyage, etc.) at Airports and the findings are used for planning subsequent editions. The BCS division has recently carried out a survey of *Canada World View* and the results will be used to develop editorial content and direction. In addition, a Reader Satisfaction and Evaluation Study was carried out in June 1999 for *CanadaExport* to measure usefulness and to identify new information needs.

Certain types of communication products lend themselves to evaluation - such as newsletters, regular publications, annual directories, etc. Evaluation can be as simple as a drop-in feedback card or tear out to a more comprehensive survey based on pre-testing with focus groups followed by a mail survey or other quantitative tools. Most of the materials published by the Department do not lend themselves to large resources devoted to evaluation but they could benefit from simpler mechanisms - such as "let us know what you think by contacting us by Email, etc." Short questionnaires at Trade shows and exhibits would also provide input. Annual publications (such as Directories) and all regular newsletters should build in a response card or some other mechanism to encourage feedback to improve the product.

Market research and evaluation are cornerstones of successful corporate and professional publishing and these techniques are equally applicable to many of DFAIT's publications.

Although several initiatives have been undertaken in this regard, planning for future communication materials should routinely incorporate these elements.

6.0   Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

To a great degree, this review has only confirmed the situational analysis prepared in September of 1999 in a memorandum for DFAIT's Executive Committee (BCS-0056). The lack of quantitative information on the number of publishing projects and their costs would challenge any analysis but this was compounded by the unavailability of significant information on the other aspects of the publishing process. Given the current intense environment of accountability for all government activities, it is reasonable to expect that steps should be taken: to ensure the quality of materials produced; to ensure the visibility of the Federal Government and the Department on these materials; and to have management tools in place that can be used to provide relevant and accurate financial reports and assess the efficiency of the process and the effectiveness of these communication materials in promoting the goals of the Department.

6.1   Improving Efficiency and Accountability

Recommendation 1: That DFAIT adopt a plan, to be implemented over the next 15 months, that will enable the Department to comply with Central Agency directives to plan adequately, to track costs and to report on results achieved in departmental publishing. The Treasury Board Secretariat has committed to monitoring implementation of action plans relating to the Federal Identity Program on an ongoing basis, including progress audits of federal departments and agencies

<u>Management response</u>:

To ensure the quality of departmental publications as well as the visibility of the Government of Canada and DFAIT on these materials, the Communications Services Division (BCS) is producing a Publishing Toolbox (see the Proposed Action section under Recommendation 2).

Given the current environment of government accountability, BCS is working with the Area Management Offices and the Integrated Management Services (IMS) representatives on new General Ledger Account codes for departmental publishing. With the support of senior departmental management, particularly MKM and SMD, the assignment of these codes by Area Management Offices will become mandatory and assigned <u>only</u> when contracts and requisition forms are accompanied by completed Publishing or Web Registry forms, already existing on the DFAIT Intranet site. Financial coding will be established for all areas of traditional and electronic publishing (writing, editing, graphic/web design, printing, distribution, marketing, etc.) The new system will permit the Department to track the costs of publications through financial codes and the culling of information for financial reporting as required.

Recommendation 2: That the B-Bureau develop a performance framework and other planning tools for the publishing activities handled by BCS to serve as an example to other DFAIT divisions and bureaux active in publishing throughout the Department.

Planning tools should be developed in consultation with the financial and information services divisions, as well as the appropriate communications groups. In order for the implementation of such tools to be effective, they should be demonstrably better than any current tools in use and should add value to the process.

Management response:

The B-Bureau is presently engaged in the preparation of a performance framework, which should be finalized by Summer. In addition, a number of planning tools are currently under development including a Publishing Toolbox for use by DFAIT divisions and missions wishing to produce their own promotional materials. The toolbox – to be available on the DFAIT Intranet by spring 2001 – will be written in a friendly, easy-to-read style and will direct users to documents, policies, guidelines, standards, templates, checklists, tips and useful links to add value to and help ensure the quality of departmental publications. The Communications Services Division (BCS) is developing the toolbox in consultation with other DFAIT units active in publishing.

Recommendation 3: That DFAIT develop immediately and then maintain systematically a complete catalogue of departmental publications, including the resources devoted to their production and dissemination.

Management response:

As a result of proposed action to be undertaken in response to Recommendation 1, the Communications Services Division (BCS) will be in a position to track departmental publishing activities and to compile a departmental catalogue of publications for posting on the DFAIT Web site. Also, reports on the financial resources used in the production and dissemination of these materials will be prepared by BCS for senior departmental managers and available for access to information requests, Central Agency inquiries, etc.

6.2   Ensuring Quality

Recommendation 4: That the B-bureau develop Corporate Graphic Standards for the communications materials it produces and that it actively encourage the Department to employ these standards to encourage a common look.

Although currently under development, these standards should be given the highest priority for completion. Their development should include consultation with all active communication units in the Department and templates for common print and Web products reflecting the standards should be readily available to all staff on the Department's Intranet site. BCS should undertake an awareness campaign to ensure that the standards are known and applied throughout DFAIT HQ and where appropriate for missions and posts abroad.

BCS should take the lead in monitoring the use of the standards and develop a practical strategy for their implementation. This could include the development of tiers of publications where the application of guidelines would vary (e.g., Tier 1 publications (high profile, targeted to DFAIT constituencies) would adhere to all of DFAIT's and Treasury Board regulations; Tier 2 (publications directed to foreign audiences) must ensure certain "branding" elements; Tier 3 (publications produced for strictly internal use, such as HR manuals, guidelines for procedures, etc.) would have more leeway).

Management response:

The B-Bureau is currently developing style guides for publishing at DFAIT to help ensure departmental compliance with Treasury Board guidelines on such things as the Federal Identity Program, Common Look and Feel, departmental identifiers, fair communications practices, official languages, copyright issues, etc. Also, a departmental editorial style and usage guide – which will define a DFAIT "house style" for the drafting and editing of texts for publication in both official languages – is being prepared.

Recommendation 5: That the B-bureau re-establish an intra-Departmental Publications Advisory Committee to develop, review and revise policies and standards for the production of printed material.

Although the *Departmental Publishing Guidelines* reference a Departmental Publishing Review Committee, with a mandate and established membership, this Committee has been inactive for some time. BCS in consultation with other divisions should review and revise this mandate as appropriate for DFAIT's current environment and with a view to improving DFAIT's compliance with Government publishing guidelines and to improve accountability for its communications materials.

Given BCS's mandate, it would be appropriate that the lead for this committee be their responsibility, however, it is critical to build in appropriate representation from key divisions. It would be worthwhile to review the mandates and activities of other committees examining publication or communication issues (such as the groups looking at Web sites and logos) to consolidate these efforts under one responsibility centre.

Management response:

Given the mandate of the Communications Services Division (BCS), it would be appropriate that it re-establish and lead this committee. In so doing, it will be critical to build appropriate representation from key departmental units involved in publishing activities. The Publications Advisory Committee will meet four to six times a year to examine departmental publishing activities; establish publishing policies and procedures, including quality standards; review best practices within the department, elsewhere in government and in the private sector; and work to strengthen the "branding" of DFAIT. The Committee will have an advisory or consultative role and serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information.

6.3   Clarifying Roles

Recommendation 6: That the B-bureau develop and disseminate a Directory of Communications Services available for project development and production.

Although this kind of directory exists partially in forms of organizational charts, phone directories and divisional Web sites, it should be consolidated and expanded in a comprehensive way to provide a guide for all staff. Given the rotational nature of many of the assignments at DFAIT, and that these assignments often involve but are not limited to the production of some communications materials, such a directory would be a useful tool for new staff to determine what resources are available and how to proceed. A directory would provide divisions an opportunity to profile their mandates and highlight their successes. Responsibility for the development of such a directory may mor properly be the purview corporate services or human resources, however, maintenance and updating could be the responsibility of each division.

Management response:

Although such a directory exists partially in forms of organisational charts, telephone directories and divisional Web sites, a Communications Bureau (BCD) Intranet site is currently under development to provide a comprehensive guide for all DFAIT staff to communications products, services and activities. Using the Horizons Intranet site as a model, the BCD site will be "client-focussed" and provide divisions and missions with an array of information – including guidelines, tools, templates and other useful tips – on communications planning, activities, products and services.

Recommendation 7: That BCS review and revise its mandate with a view to establishing it as a Centre of Excellence in the production of communication material.

Although BCS currently offers numerous professional services to DFAIT divisions in the production of their print and electronic needs, many divisions are unaware of their services or do not take advantage of them. This review identified a market for more services, however, it is evident that BCS does not have the resources to expand its activities at this time. The review of best practices identified in external departments and agencies provides a guide for BCS to assess its resources and services and prepare an action plan for it future direction. BCS's priority in 2000 should be the development and implementation of a realistic plan so that it can fulfil its role as DFAIT's centre of excellence in the production of communications materials.

Management response:

The Communications Services Division (BCS) has reviewed and revised its mandate with a view to establishing it as a Centre of Excellence in the production of communications materials, within the constraints of existing resources. Under the new structure, Ministers Offices and the Department are serviced by BCS via Communications Bureau strategists. Products and services emanating from the communications/action plans prepared by strategists in BCF, BCT and BCP will be developed by BCS in support of key departmental priorities, initiatives and events.

To help serve other DFAIT clients wishing to develop their own promotional materials BCS is in the process of developing a number of tools and mechanisms to improve the quality and management of DFAIT publishing (see the Proposed Action sections under Recommendations 1, 2, 4 and 5.)