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Internal Audit Division I  
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3 February 2005

To: Mr. Jian Chen, Under Secretary-General  
Department of General Assembly and Conference Management

Ms. Catherine Bertini, Under Secretary-General  
Department of Management

From: Patricia Azarias, Director  
Internal Audit Division I, OIOS

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Azarias".

Subject: **OIOS Audit No. AH2004/550/1: Audit of the Documents Reproduction and Distribution Function**

1. I am pleased to present herewith the final report on the subject audit, which was conducted at Headquarters during the second quarter of 2004. Your comments have been taken into account in finalizing the report. We are re-submitting for further consideration on your part recommendations 1 and 3. Recommendations 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 remain open in OIOS' recommendations database pending verification that they have been fully implemented. Recommendation 6 has been closed.

2. The Internal Audit Division I is assessing the overall quality of its audit process and kindly requests that the attached client satisfaction survey form is completed by your office after consulting with the managers who dealt directly with the auditors.

3. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for the cooperation and assistance extended to the auditors on this assignment.

United Nations  
OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES  
**Internal Audit Division I**



**AUDIT REPORT**

**Audit Subject:** Audit of the Documents Reproduction and Distribution Function

**Audit /no. and Location:** AH2004/550/1, Headquarters

**Report date:** 3 February 2005

**Audit Team**

Pauline Chow, Team Leader  
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**OIOS Audit No.AH2004/550/1: Audit of the Documents Reproduction  
and Distribution Function**

**Executive Summary**

OIOS conducted the audit of the documents reproduction and distribution function at the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management in the second quarter of 2004. The main audit objective was to assess to what extent the improvement measures set forth in the Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/289) dated 9 August 2002 on Improving the performance of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, pertaining to reproduction and distribution of documents, were implemented.

OIOS found that that DGACM implemented a number of the improvement measures outlined in the Secretary-General's report. As a result of these efforts, the two units formerly responsible for the reproduction and distribution functions respectively were merged into one, and the functions themselves streamlined. However, OIOS also identified scope for further reduction of the direct costs of printing and distribution in various areas. In OIOS' view, increased efforts are needed from the departments responsible for implementing the UN Official Document System (ODS) which is the basis of the Secretary-General's strategy for reducing the printing and distribution of paper documents.

The initial distribution of printed documents to delegates was reduced by only four per cent over the last decade. In 2003, about 5 million copies of documents under the "A" symbol alone were printed in English. DGACM needs to facilitate the use of ODS by Permanent Missions to reduce the printing and distribution of hard copies. OIOS however acknowledges DGACM's comment that the reduction of printing is mostly dependent upon the reduction of requests for paper documents by Permanent Missions.

There was also scope for significant reduction concerning the Daily Journal. Since it is available electronically on the ODS, DGACM should increasingly reduce its printing and distribution for staff members. The printing and distribution of UN administrative issuances and telephone directory should be phased out and replaced by electronic dissemination.

As a result of the UN making the ODS access free of charge in the near future, the demand for printed documents could be reduced. DGACM needs to anticipate the future requirements for printing and distribution, and the implications thereof on its resources.

There was also a need for reporting non-expendable equipment on a periodical basis as required by UN Property Management Manual and Administrative Instruction ST/AI/2003/5.

OIOS is issuing eight recommendations to improve the management of the documents reproduction and distribution function. *DGACM has agreed with most of these recommendations.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

1. The Interpretation, Meeting and Publishing Services (IMPS) has an approved budget of \$110 million for the biennium 2004-2005, which represents around 38 percent of the total amount of \$288 million appropriated for the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM). Under IMPS, the Publishing Section, a consolidation of the former Reproduction and Distribution Sections, has about 167 staff members and a budget of \$31 million, one third of the IMPS appropriation. As stated in the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005, the Publishing Section is responsible for reproducing and distributing relevant parliamentary documents and publications to Member States for meetings; for providing administrative instructions, information circulars and other information to staff members at Headquarters and offices away from Headquarters; and for managing the electronic storage of material on the UN Official Document System (ODS).

2. Documents are printed, distributed and stored under three categories: (a) daily distribution of documents to Missions and within the Secretariat called "initial distribution"; (b) storing of documents for "second distribution" in meeting rooms and upon the request of delegates and Secretariat staff; and (c) shipping of reports and publications outside Headquarters, including overseas.

3. Following General Assembly resolutions 56/242 and 56/253, DGACM undertook in 2002 a comprehensive review of its functioning with the view to improving its performance. The related Secretary-General report A/57/289 dated 9 August 2002 (Improving the performance of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services) outlines the following measures pertaining to the reproduction and distribution functions:

- Introducing printing on demand through the ODS, together with finding out with greater accuracy the needs for the different types of document and working with interested Missions to demonstrate how they can use the ODS to download and print the documents they want;
- Reducing the storage and distribution costs for secondary distribution to Secretariat staff by instructing staff to find the documents they need electronically;
- Shipping directly to their intended recipients by the external printers documents printed externally that are intended for users outside Headquarters, saving both distribution time and shipping costs; and
- Merging the reproduction and distribution functions to increase the possibility for efficiencies and savings in time effort and space.

### B. Audit objectives and scope

4. OIOS' audit was to assess to what extent improvements related to the reproduction and distribution functions, as projected in the Secretary-General report A/57/289 dated 9 August 2002

(Improving the performance of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services), were implemented by the Department. In addition, the audit assessed whether internal control procedures related to staff administration and property control were adequate and implemented. The review covered the biennium 2002-2003.

### **C. Summary of results**

5. OIOS found that that DGACM implemented a number of the improvement measures outlined in the Secretary-General's report A/57/289 pertaining to the reproduction and distribution functions. As a result of these efforts, the units responsible for these functions have been merged into one and the functions themselves streamlined. However, OIOS also identified scope for further reduction of the direct costs of printing and distribution in various areas. In general, the responsible departments need to be more proactive in implementing the UN Official Document System (ODS), which is the basis of the Secretary-General's strategy for reducing of printing and distribution of paper documents.

## **II. DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. Reduction of printing and distribution of paper documents**

6. OIOS noted that DGCAM implemented a number of the improvement measures outlined in the Secretary-General's report. The Secretariat Distribution Counter was closed (ST/IC/2003/38 dated 23 June 2003 refers); the Reproduction and Distribution Sections were merged into the Publishing Section in August 2003; shipping of documents to the field by pouch or courier shipments was discontinued since early 2004; (iv) the three shifts in the Distribution Unit were reduced to two; and (v) stockpiling of hard copies of documents was discontinued from 2003. These changes resulted in the abolition of 13 posts and an estimated budget reduction of 0.65 million dollars (an average of \$50,000 per post). In addition, the overtime expenditures were reduced from \$0.78 million in 2002 to \$0.48 million in 2003 for the Publishing Section (see para.21).

7. OIOS also found that these efficiency measures did not however result in significant reduction of printing for both parliamentary documents and UN Publications. OIOS identified four types of documents for which printing could either be substantially reduced or discontinued: parliamentary documents, daily Journal, administrative issuances under ST/SGB, ST/AI and ST/IC symbols and telephone directory.

#### Parliamentary Documents

8. Data provided by the Information and Technology Services Division, Office of Central Support Services, show that more than 95 per cent of the Permanent Missions in New York are registered users of the UN Official Document System (ODS) and that each Mission is provided up to 40 passwords. OIOS also noted that since 1997, a yearly workshop is organized jointly by UNITAR and the Dag Hammarskjold Library, Department of Public Information, to train delegates in retrieving documents and publications from the ODS. In addition, the Secretariat provides a

secondary distribution of documents to the delegates by maintaining the delegates' distribution counter at the Secretariat building first level basement (B1) as well as outside the meeting rooms.

9. In spite of these efforts, the initial distribution of printed copies to delegates was reduced by only about four per cent over the last decade. This percentage is low by any standard. OIOS examined the distribution statistics maintained at the Publishing Section and found that in 2003, a total of 28.35 million copies of documents were printed and distributed. Document Control Section also informed OIOS that in 2003, a total of 2,331 documents under the "A" symbol alone were requested to be printed in English language. An average of 2,200 copies were printed for each "A" document totalling about 5 million copies (2,331 times 2,200) in English, which represented 17.6 per cent of the overall distribution of mimeo documents. Out of the 2,200 copies of each "A" document, an average of 1,200 copies or 55 per cent were distributed to the Permanent Missions. In addition, about 500 copies in the five other official languages were also distributed to those Missions upon request. As shown in the table below, the majority of Permanent Missions requested less than 5 copies in English of an "A" document, which altogether accounted for 248 copies only.

Table 1: Statistics of "A" document in English requested by Permanent Missions in New York

Request category	Number of Missions	Percentage of Missions	Overall number of copies by category
Between 1 and 5 copies	109	63%	248
Between 6 and 10 copies	43	24%	344
Between 11 and 30 copies	21	12%	397
More than 30, up to 90 copies	2	1%	125
Total	175*	100%	1,144

\* The remaining missions opted for copies in other languages

10. OIOS noted that DGACM did not set reduction targets. For example, limiting to five the number of copies distributed to the Permanent Missions would represent a reduction by about half of the current total. OIOS however agreed with DGACM's comment that a reduction in printing is contingent upon a reduction of the requests for printed documents by Permanent Missions.

11. One of the measures envisaged in the Secretary-General's report was to find out with greater accuracy the needs for the different types of document and to work with interested Missions to demonstrate how they can use the ODS to download and print the documents they want. DGACM has sent an annual letter to the Missions informing them of the availability of ODS for document retrieval, but this has not yielded significant reduction of the requests for printed documents. OIOS learned that in 2004, the UN Library sent out a detailed questionnaire to all the pertinent Depository Libraries worldwide to assess their internet capabilities in the context of the ODS implementation. DGACM should liaise with the Department of Public Information to analyze the impact of this strategy and, if it has been successful, consider applying a similar approach to the UN Missions in New York requesting large number of printed documents.

## **Recommendation 1**

DGACM should test the possibility of limiting to a maximum of five copies the distribution of each parliamentary document to Permanent Missions (AH2004/550/01-001).

## **Recommendation 2**

DGACM should coordinate with the Department of Public Information with regard to the strategy for ODS implementation (AH2004/550/01-002 ).

### DGACM's comments:

#### Recommendation 1

*DGACM has a legislative obligation to provide the number of copies required by Member States. This number is based on an annual survey of the requirements of Permanent Missions and DGACM strictly adhere to it. Any reduction in the number of copies would be contravening DGACM's obligation and beyond DGACM's control. DGACM requested that the recommendation be withdrawn.*

Status of recommendation 1: OIOS suggests testing with Permanent Missions, when surveying their requirements annually, the possibility to limit to five the number of copies of parliamentary documents to be distributed to them. The recommendation is re-submitted for DGACM further consideration.

#### Recommendation 2

*DGACM is currently liaising with DPI with a view to reducing and eliminating paper copies to depository libraries, whenever possible.*

Status of recommendation 2: Accepted by DGACM. OIOS requests DGACM to keep it informed of the progress in implementing recommendation 2, which will remain open in the OIOS' recommendations database until OIOS is satisfied that it has been fully implemented.

## Daily Journal

12. In 2003, about 6,000 copies of the daily journal were printed in English, and 300 to 1,200 copies in other official languages. The daily journal lengths ranged from one page to 59 pages. The statistics provided to OIOS indicated that 1.9 million copies of daily journal were printed in 2003 representing about 7 per cent of all the mimeo printing jobs done that year. The regular distribution pattern of daily journal in English is as follows: 1,300 copies to individuals of Departments; 15



copies to the 11<sup>th</sup> floor; 2,550 copies to delegates; 2 copies to library; 300 copies to UN Press; 30 copies to Overseas government/libraries; 1,000 copies to Meeting Services Unit; 200 copies each to Secretariat lobby, DCI lobby and DCII lobby; 5 copies to Records Unit at NL-318 and 25 copies to Delegates' distribution centre at B1-31.

13. Based on these statistics, about 3,600 copies of the daily journal in English (2,550 for initial distribution to delegates and 1,050 to Meeting Services Unit, 11<sup>th</sup> floor and delegates' distribution centre for secondary distribution) or 60 per cent were provided to delegates, and 2,000 copies or 40 per cent were for the Secretariat distribution. With the launch of the electronic version of the Journal of the United Nations, which provides hyperlinks to all official language versions of documents listed therein, and the inclusion in the Journal of a hyperlinked daily list of documents issued at Headquarters, staff members may download documents needed themselves. Therefore, OIOS believes that there is scope for significant reduction of printing of the daily journal.

### **Recommendation 3**

DGCAM should reduce progressively the distribution of the daily journal to the Secretariat, DCI and DCII buildings (AH2004/550/01-003).

#### *DGACM's comments:*

*As for recommendation 1, this recommendation cannot be implemented without the proper legislative authority. DGACM requested the recommendation to be withdrawn.*

Status of recommendation 3: OIOS requests DGACM to clarify the legislative authority in connection with the distribution of the daily journal to the Secretariat, DCI and DCII buildings. In the meantime, recommendation 3 remains open.

### Administrative Issuances (ST/SGB, ST/AI and ST/IC)

14. Documents printed on a regular basis are the administrative issuances (under symbols ST/SGB, ST/AI and ST/IC) including the 100, 200 and 300 series of the staff rules and regulations and related amendments. In 2003, approximately 600,000 copies of these documents were printed. OIOS inquired with the Chief, Human Resources Policy Service (HRPS), Office of Human Resource Management, whether it is necessary to print them when they can be easily retrieved from the ODS and UN Intranet. The Chief, HRPS commented that unless there is a General Assembly resolution stating that staff members are deemed to be aware of rules published electronically - regardless of whether they have access to a computer or not, it would be difficult to hold staff members accountable for non-compliance with the rules. HRPS also informed OIOS that a proposal to that effect was presented by the Department of Public Information to the Staff Management Coordination Committee in 1997. Staff and management representatives had expressed a number of reservations at the time. The Chief, HRPS added that while the majority of staff members now have a personal

computer at work there are still many staff members who do not, e.g., staff in security functions, printing and distribution, trades and crafts and many staff serving in missions.

15. There are currently two staff-related information, *i.e.* monthly salary statement and annual pension statement, which are no longer sent to staff members in hard copies, but are sent by e-mail and retrievable from the UN intranet. OIOS is therefore of the view that the same arrangements could be made for transmitting administrative issuances to staff members who do not have a personal computer at work. This initiative should be implemented by the Department of Management, in implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/211F of 15 September 1997 encouraging the Secretary-General to develop a policy for the further expansion of the then optical disk system of the United Nations, *inter alia* on the understanding that provisions would be made for making it available to all staff of the Secretariat.

#### **Recommendation 4**

The Department of Management, should prepare a proposal for electronic dissemination of administrative issuances, to be considered by the General Assembly (AH2004/550/01-004).

#### *DM's comments:*

*Administrative issuances, which include Secretary-General's bulletins promulgating Staff Regulations and Rules, are already disseminated electronically through a variety of means. Consultations will need to be conducted with the Office of Legal Affairs, Funds and Programmes and staff representatives, before deciding to propose to the General Assembly to eliminate distribution of administrative issuances in hard copy.*

Status of recommendation 4: The recommendation will remain open pending notification by DGACM of the results of its consultations with the Office of Legal Affairs, Funds and Programmes and staff representatives, and resulting decision.

#### Telephone Directory

16. At UN Headquarters, the telephone directory is already in UN Intranet - iSeek and can be accessed electronically by using additional search for both white and yellow pages presented in PDF format. OIOS, however, noted that the telephone directory is still being printed twice a year, in March and August. Each issue of the 300 pages long book is printed in 15,000 copies -- e.g. nine million page impressions per year, and distributed desk to desk. In addition, the directory is not current because it does not include information on staff members who joined the Organization after its production cut-off date. OIOS also learned that UN Office in Vienna has no longer had printed telephone directory.

## **Recommendation 5**

DGACM should coordinate with Department of Management in setting a plan to phase out the printed telephone directory and encourage the staff members to make full use of the electronic version (AH2004/550/01-005).

### *DM's comments:*

*DM is considering phasing out the printing of telephone directories since both white and yellow pages are available on line. This is done while ensuring that all users, including offices away from Headquarters and peacekeeping missions, have access to the information electronically. Included in this review would be reception areas and public phone booths near conference rooms and other similar places where hard copies are currently made available. With regard to UN Agencies without access to the internet, the posting of the telephone directory on the extranet would also be considered.*

Status of recommendation 5: Recommendation 5 will remain open pending satisfactory review of evidence that recommended action has taken place.

## **B. Printing on Demand**

17. As stated in a 2004 study of printing on demand requested by DGACM (Romano report, phases 1 and 2), printing on demand is a method of document creation which streamlines document production and distribution through the use of digital printing technology. It contributes to decreasing waste because of over-ordering. According to the Publishing Section, the current document production averages 20 million page impressions (PI) and the digital printing capacity is about 4-5 million PI. Therefore, approximately 20-25 per cent of documents are produced on digital equipment. Further, according to the records maintained at the Delegates Station 1-B for secondary distribution, in 2003, delegates made about 2,000 requests per month for documents, out of which one third were printed on two high speed digital printers on the premise while the remainder came from the stocks of documents already printed by Publishing Section. In OIOS' opinion, DGACM should gradually decrease the production of paper documents for stocks at the Delegates Station and meeting rooms and increase the use of printing on demand for the delegates' requests.

## **Recommendation 6**

DGACM should gradually decrease the levels of stocks of

documents available at the Delegates Station and meeting rooms, and increase the use of printing on demand (AH2004/550/01-006).

*DGACM's comments:*

*DGACM accepts this recommendation and has already reduced printing of paper documents to the level of the meeting rooms only. Remainders are used in the Delegation Counter. All other requests are printed using printing on demand.*

Status of recommendation 6: OIOS is satisfied with steps taken by DGACM to implement recommendation 6, as indicated in DGACM's comments. OIOS will specifically follow up on implementation of this recommendation when auditing again the Publishing Section. In the meantime, the recommendation has been closed.

**C. Need for a comprehensive plan when ODS access to the public becomes free of charge**

18. Statistics provided by the Publishing Division indicates that the total page impressions for both documents and publications reproduced were reduced from 490 million in 2002 to 433 million in 2003. This reduction might be partially due to the UN effort to ensure the delegates and the missions away from Headquarters free access to the ODS. In this respect, according to the records of UN Publications Sales and Marketing Section, Department of Public Information, in 2003, there were 88 ODS subscribers in New York and 33 subscribers in Geneva with sales values of \$96,162 and \$41,422 respectively. However, the number of subscribers has been dwindling over the years, partly because documents are often available free of charge on the websites of the organizations concerned. The Secretary-General's Report, entitled "Simultaneous availability of parliamentary documentation in electronic form in the six official languages on the United Nations website" (A/C.5/56/12), underlined the need to revise the provision of GA resolution 51/211 F on the ODS access policy by providing free of charge access to the public. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report A/56/475 also encouraged the Secretariat to continue to work towards unrestricted and free access to the system for all accredited non-governmental organizations.

19. As mentioned in paragraph 11 above, the UN Depository Libraries Section, Department of Public Information, sent out questionnaires to 396 libraries around the world in early 2004 informing them of the plan to distribute its official records and documents to depository libraries mainly through the ODS, which is available on the internet. While currently password-protected, it is anticipated that the ODS access will be made free of charge worldwide in the near future. To this end, ITSD has requested \$1.5 million in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005. As a result, the demand for printed copies of documents could be further reduced. DGACM needs to develop a comprehensive plan to tackle the new development.

### **Recommendation 7**

DGACM should assess the new requirements for printing and distribution of UN Publications when the ODS will be provided free of charge to the public. This recommendation should be implemented in collaboration with the Department of Public Information and the Information and Technology Services Division, Department of Management (AH2004/550/01-007).

*DGACM's comments:*

*DM accepts this recommendation and will attempt to bring the property report up-to-date.*

Status of recommendation 7: The recommendation will remain open pending satisfactory review of evidence that recommended action has taken place.

### **D. Non-expendable Property Reports need to be up-dated and reconciled with FMD and Accounts Division**

20. In accordance with the United Nations Property Management Manual and the Administrative Instruction (ST/AI/2003/5), each department should ensure that the property or equipment records are accurately maintained and up-dated. At the end of each biennium, the report should be validated and signed by the Department Head as a true account of its inventory and submitted to the Facilities Management Division (FMD), which will then consolidate the reports into the required format for submission to the Accounts Division to be included in the financial statements for the relevant biennium.

21. During the audit, OIOS was provided by Chief, Publishing Section a list of non-expendable equipment in the value of \$4.2 million dollars spanning a period from 1973 to 2003. We, however, noted that such report has not been submitted by the Interpretation, Meeting and Publishing Division on a periodical basis, which was confirmed by Chief of Property Management and Inventory Control Unit, FMD in his email dated 20 April 2004.

### **Recommendation 8**

OIOS recommends that Publishing Section prepare a complete non-expendable property report before the end of 2004 and submit it to Facilities Management Division in the required format (AH2004/550/01-08).

*DGACM's comments:*

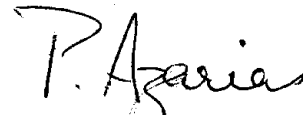
*DGACM accepts the recommendation and will attempt to bring the*

*report up to date.*

Status of recommendation 8: The recommendation will remain open pending satisfactory review of evidence that recommended actions have taken place.

#### IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

22. Thank you for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors by the staff of DGACM, especially the Publishing Section and Executive Office.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "P. Azarias".

Patricia Azarias, Director  
Internal Audit Division I/OIOS