MANAGING YOUR INFORMATION HOLDINGS:
Desktop Control of Publications

By Greg Mavin

One of the timeless challenges in office management is the control of published information such as documents, product catalogues, books, or reports. These information resources can be located just about anywhere in a mission and it is very difficult for staff to be aware of what is available. The last issue of *The Trade Post* (Vol.2, No.2, April 1995) reported on the efforts of the mission in Manila to grapple with this problem. Manila's very interesting initiative uses the *Windows Cardfile* feature to keep track of published material.

Inspired by Manila's efforts, Library Services Division (SKS) has developed and is now testing a software program to help manage and control information holdings at missions. This database software is a flexible, low-cost option for organizing documentation of many types. It is written in *Microsoft Access*, is fully compatible with *Windows* and can be networked. Separate screens allow for bilingual access and for local modification and entry of new records in the database. A test of the software is currently underway in the trade mission at Johannesburg. The software is also in use in the Trade Law Division (JLT), where over 1,200 books, articles and documents are entered.

The main feature of this software is that it allows missions to customize many of its elements according to local needs. Each mission can choose the form of contents for several fields in the database. A high degree of searchability is programmed into the software, so that a large variety of users including the public, if wanted, can take advantage of the resources throughout the mission. This software is essentially a type of OPAC or Online Public Access Catalogue, such as the one found in headquarters's library. However, since it is designed to adapt to a variety of situations, it is much more flexible than typical library catalogues.

Mission staff can use the software to create their own records. However, this software readily accepts records from other sources, allowing missions to take advantage of the high quality records that already exist for many documents in the headquarters's OPAC. If records don't exist in the headquarters's OPAC, missions can obtain records either through SKS on a cost-recovery basis or through another supplier identified by the mission itself.

SKS can provide you with advice and options for information management to meet your needs. If you would like more information about this software, contact me at (613) 944-0859 or fax at (613) 944-0222.

Greg Mavin is Supervisor, Books and Post Cataloguing, Library Services Division (SKS).

COMMERCIAL OFFICER'S HANDBOOK

For those of you going out to post or already at post you may be interested in the *Commercial Officer's Handbook*. This work originated in the Africa and Middle East Trade Development Division (GBT). It is an excellent example of teamwork. It was later adapted by the Latin America and Caribbean Trade Division (LGT) for their officers abroad.

The book contains many helpful hints, ranging from creating local trade links for Canadian business to supporting Canadian visitors — from facilitating a trade mission to handling international tenders — from sourcing and information tools to conducting interviews. For more information, contact Maria Bernard in TOO at 992-8050.