

Since this reorganization, the Passport Office has operated quite independently from External Affairs, financed solely by the fees it collects. In recognition of its specialized and user-funded orientation, it has recently been made a Special Operating Agency of the federal government, although still technically part of External Affairs and International Trade Canada (EAITC).

The demand for passports has continued to grow over the years. The first automation equipment was installed in approximately 1976 as an aid in producing an ever increasing number of passports. The current computer system was installed 5 years ago to upgrade production facilities, and has been expanded as required since then to meet ever increasing demand for service, which since 1986 has averaged 6.5% annually. Actual counts of passports during this period is as follows:

Passports issued: <u>Year</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Increase</u>
1986/87	981,000	
1987/88	1,061,000	8.1%
1988/89	1,100,000	3.6%
1989/90	1,195,000	8.6%
1990/91	1,269,000	6.2%

In addition to its primary mandate, the PPO has formed cooperative links with a number of counterpart organizations in other countries, such as the State Department in the USA, the UK Passport Agency, and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Immigration officials from many of these countries are also involved in such cooperative efforts, including Employment and Immigration Canada. Although different countries define and use their own passport and border entry requirements, they have also worked together under the initiatives of the International Standards Association (ISO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in the development of common standards for passport size and formats. ICAO, with regard to its UN air travel support role, is currently spearheading international efforts in this regard, and the Canadian PPO has been an active participant in the ICAO program to define Machine Readable Passports (MRP's). The PPO itself converted to production of MRPs in 1985.

The primary thrust of these passport developments has been to increase the security