

Appendix 7

Government information services

Information Canada* was established in April 1970 to act as a central source of public information on federal government policies, programs and services; to co-ordinate federal information programs involving more than one portfolio and to initiate special programs where the public need is clear but the responsibility does not fall under the jurisdiction of any one portfolio; to provide professional resource assistance to help other federal agencies improve the quality and effectiveness of their information work; and to market and distribute federal publications.

The agency now has 11 inquiry centres across Canada, one in a major city in every province, in addition to the national centre in Ottawa. Information Canada also makes special efforts to reach citizens beyond large urban areas by using mobile information officers and by establishing communication networks with community information centres and libraries. Some of these centres have already been linked to the nearest Information Canada inquiry centre via telephone and telex and have access to a complete bank of federal information.

Hundreds of government publications are available through Information Canada's six bookstores, through central and regional mail order service, and through any of Information Canada's "authorized agents", commercial booksellers authorized to carry government material. Information Canada has over 100 such agents, and estimates that there will be 200 by 1975-76.

Information Canada Expositions designs and mounts domestic and international exhibits on behalf of client federal departments. It is also responsible for co-ordinating the federal presence at exhibits where several departments are participating. To fulfil this responsibility, Expositions is experimenting with the new "Umbrella Concept", as developed for the "Salute to Aviation" exhibit in Calgary and Toronto.

The Photothèque, also part of Audio-Visual/Expositions, has a library of over 300,000 photographs on Canadian subjects and offers a photographic advisory service to assist other government departments. It also arranges to cover photographic assignments for departments upon request.

Federal government information services are not centralized in Information Canada but act independently. They are at the service of the public to answer inquiries about their specific responsibilities, while Information Canada acts as a central contact point.

Statistics Canada, established in 1918 as the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, is Canada's central statistical agency and the country's main collector and publisher of information about Canadian economic and social life. The agency, given its present name in 1971, has been a separate department of government since 1965 and reports to Parliament through the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

One of Statistics Canada's key jobs is conducting the Census of Canada at five- and ten-year intervals; the latest ten-year census was in 1971 and the next five-year census will be in 1976. The bureau also undertakes a comprehensive Census of Agriculture at the same time as the general census and regularly surveys the social and economic change under more than 20 broad subject-matter headings such as the monthly labour force and consumer prices surveys.

The growth of Statistics Canada, both in personnel and in the complexity of statistical activity, has paralleled Canada's development as a modern industrial state. The agency's staff, which includes the largest single body of social scientists in one organization in Canada, numbered about 5,500 employees at the end of 1974. Several hundred additional persons are employed part-time on such projects as special surveys and censuses.

Statistical collection by the bureau covers every area of Canada and ranges from national assessments such as the national accounts to census detail. The information produced describes quantitatively Canada's economic and social environment and is used as an aid to decision-making and research. The public sector uses the information for the development of social and economic policies and the private sector for decisions in marketing and the establishment of branch plants and retail outlets.

Most Statistics Canada information is made available to the public through publications but for users requiring information in a more sophisticated form there is an increasing output on micro-film, computer tapes and special tabulations. At the most recent count, more than 2,500 publications were issued. Of these, some appear monthly or more frequently, some quarterly, some annually, and others every two or three years. The publications flowing from the national censuses include 278 for 1961, 122 for 1966 and more than 300 based on the 1971 Census. Some general publications are issued occasionally and include special studies and manuals. Statistical reports are published in English and French. About 1.3 million copies of Statistics Canada publications are issued yearly on a subscription basis.

*In December 1975 the federal government announced that Information Canada would be disbanded at the end of the fiscal year (March 31, 1976). However, it is expected that the Expositions and Publishing branches will continue to operate under another department.