

**Information Resources Committee**  
Report to General Synod  
March 6, 1998

**Overview of the Committee's Work**

The committee was created by the 1995 strategic plan, with a mandate to "develop and oversee a communications policy for the national church, including work done through the Anglican Journal, Archives and ABC advisory boards," and to coordinate that work with all other communications work. The triennium has been marked by responsiveness to a new mandate, a new structure, ongoing work, and specific directions from General Synod.

**In response to the mandate**, the Committee has taken significant initiatives in policy development, evaluation and analysis, and provision of services:

- developing and prioritizing work in communications through analysis of our key audiences and their needs. This work is ongoing;
- creating a policy framework to guide the work of ABC publishing;
- clarifying the committee function as publisher of the Anglican Journal, while ensuring the Journal's editorial independence;
- conducting a detailed evaluation of the General Synod broadcasts and developing recommendations for future broadcasts;
- clarifying the functions identified in *Preparing the Way* to distinguish between the Committee's *policy and oversight* functions, and the staff's *implementation* functions. For example, the term "provide support in media relations" (noted in *Preparing the Way*) is a staff function and so was removed from the Committee terms;
- working with staff to develop a budget presentation format that assists the Committee in its oversight functions;
- in keeping with our key audience analysis, approving the expansion of *Ministry Matters* from two to three times a year. The periodical serves key parish and diocesan leaders, both lay and clergy;
- also in keeping with our audience analysis, approving an Anglican Video special production on prayer and healing. As a broadcast, this documentary will be accessible to members of the church, but will also reach beyond current membership to present the Anglican Church as a source for spiritual growth. Additional print resources and study guides will make the documentary useful for group or individual reflection. It will air in the Fall of 1998;
- directing greater budget energy, in the latter part of the triennium, into Anglican Journal Editorial and website development;
- approving priorities for archival research assistance in relation to residential schools litigation, and noting the advisory board's approval of revised research procedures, and of the Association of Canadian Archivists Code of Ethics;
- creating a new information resource, *Faces and Ministries*, a special issue of *Ministry Matters* which provides an overview of the ministry conducted in and through the staff of General Synod. This will be a useful resource for diocesan and parish leaders over the

next triennium, and will be evaluated for possible re-publication before the next General Synod.

initiating policy development on significant questions related to information management and focused, in the current instance, on the degree to which baptism records are, or should be, considered public information;

seeking to learn from all opportunities for dialogue and feedback with our key audiences, including:

conducting a series of focus groups (in Nova Scotia, Ottawa, Niagara and New Westminster) to probe the use of music in worship and identify issues in the introduction of *Common Praise*;

through staff, making personal visits through the course of the triennium to most diocesan book stores or resource centres, and seeking to enhance relationships with them;

authorizing a professionally-designed readership survey of Anglican Journal readers. The survey was designed primarily to serve the needs of advertising, but it also provides useful information about our active members;

continuing a regular series of archival training workshops, organized on a Provincial basis

organizing a series of introductory workshops for *Common Praise*, and analyzing the workshop evaluations.

### Figure 1

Committee Structure  
(from 1995 General Synod)

**Information Resources Committee**  
**Anglican Book Centre Advisory Board**  
\* merchandising  
\* publishing  
**Anglican Journal Advisory Board**  
services  
\*editorial  
\*circulation  
management  
\*advertising  
**Archives Advisory Board**  
\*General Synod Archives  
\*facilitating diocesan networks  
**"Other"**  
\*research and reference services  
\*video production  
\*data management  
\*Ministry Matters  
\*website development  
\*resource distribution

Staff Structure  
(from June 1995 restructuring)

**Information Resources Department**  
**Anglican Journal Editorial Group**  
\*editorial matter  
**Information Services Group**  
\*research/reference  
\*archival services  
\*circulation and data  
\*resource distribution  
**Merchandising & Distribution Group**  
\*merchandising  
**Resource Production Group**  
\* publishing  
\*video production  
\*Ministry Matters  
\*website development

**In response to the new committee structure** -- and the new staff structure established subsequently (see figure 1) -- the Committee has worked consistently throughout the triennium to assess the effectiveness of its structure in carrying out its mandate. This work has produced revised

Terms of Reference (Appendix A) which the Committee believes are a next step in the spirit of *Preparing the Way*. The revised terms of reference, if approved by this General Synod, will offer the next Information Resources Committee a solid policy foundation on which to build.

**In response to ongoing work**, the Committee has exercised oversight of the work conducted through the three advisory boards and the other communications work not represented by an advisory board. Some noteworthy elements:

a joint task force, with Faith Worship and Ministry, has been at work through most of the triennium focusing on completing the production of *Common Praise* and ensuring its effective introduction to the church. It is anticipated the new hymn book will be available for shipping by summer. Barring unforeseen delays, parishes which have ordered the book by mid-July will receive their order by September 1. *Common Praise* is being received enthusiastically in introductory workshops.

financial management in relation to the Anglican Book Centre has been a concern through most of the triennium. The advisory board, committee, and staff have found their energies directed more toward attempting to secure accurate information, and less toward the critical task of analysing the information and directing the operation. Beginning in 1998, the situation has significantly improved. The 1997 year end inventory was completed to the satisfaction of both staff and auditors. Detailed year over year sales data became available for the first time. A new financial management software package for the General Synod, anticipated to begin operation by the second quarter of 1998, will permit the development of a customer database to improve both sales analysis and service levels.

An operating loss in 1997 has reduced the Centre's level of retained earnings. However, the financial tools now in place (together with other measures) indicate a return to profitability in 1998. The committee commends the work of the Treasurer and the book store management in resolving the information issues, and is grateful for the cooperation and support provided by the Financial Management and Development Committee during this process.

other efforts in the merchandising and distribution section of ABC have focused on improving service (for example, a new phone system allows callers the option of placing their order automatically or waiting in a queue for the first available customer service representative), enhancing our marketing program (with new catalogues and attractive seasonal promotions) expanding our sales to other retailers (through regular personal sales calls), acquiring Canadian distribution rights for selected lines of merchandise (for example, Heritage pew bulletins) and increasing our penetration of non-Anglican markets. These activities are all showing signs of promoting sales growth.

the *Anglican Journal* underwent significant change during the triennium: a new editor, the Rev. David Harris, took office in January 1996, after working as a reporter, front page editor, and religion editor with the Halifax Chronicle Herald; a new design reflects current standards in newspaper typography and design, and improves readability; a

renewed focus on news reporting has stimulated readership and response; a half-time reporting/editing position has been added. The Journal has regularly been recognized by the Canadian Church Press and the North America-wide Associated Church Press (ACP), and this triennium is no exception. In 1997, the Journal garnered ACP's top award for excellence.

the General Synod Archives acquired and catalogued significant additions to the holdings of the Arctic collection during the triennium, assisted by grants from the Canadian Council of Archives, Anglican Foundation, and the Makavik Corporation.

Library staff have continued to provide research and reference services to national staff and committees, diocesan and parish leaders and others based on their unique collection of Communion-wide resources.

staff in several areas of Information Resources, especially library and circulation have been heavily involved throughout the triennium in a project, now nearing completion, to develop a common Church House database. The system will allow more accurate and efficient use of information.

Information Resources does not have primary responsibility for any of the priorities of *Preparing the Way*. However, it provides services and products that help to advance the plan's priorities in all areas. Attached, as Appendix B, is a list of Information Resources products and services over the past triennium, organized by strategic priority.

**In response to resolutions** referred by the 1995 General Synod, the Committee: endeavored consistently to emulate the values of flexibility, responsiveness and trust, and the other themes noted in the "New Ways Of Working Together," (from *Preparing the Way*) both with other committees and within its own operations (A91A) made an early identification of electronic communications facilities available to the Implementation Team. (B73) By the end of the triennium, all Information Resources Committee members were accessible by email, and the Committee was able to conduct some of its business (including reviewing this report) by use of an electronic mailing list.

All other referrals (A66, A67 and A81) have to do with terms of reference and have been dealt with in the proposed terms brought before this General Synod.

### **Ongoing and Future work commended to successor committee**

Continued policy development

in the areas of Information Services which do not yet have adequate articulation of policy;

in Merchandising and Distribution, to address issues related to the relationship between sales and mission;

in Resource Production, to develop a broader statement of policy, including video production and website development policies, along with the existing publishing policy;

development of a guideline for committees or other groups considering production of a

resource. The guideline should address the stages of resource development, including target audience, key messages, intended results, budget and other elements including -- as requested by the Mission Coordinating Group -- the methods of distribution for the proposed resource, and the choice of language or languages for the proposed resource.

#### Attention to ABC sales and marketing issues

begin development of database marketing as soon as permitted by the new information system; experiment with electronic commerce and electronic publishing;

the store's needs for adequate retail space, especially a presence on the street, must be addressed in any Church House relocation or redevelopment

management must continue its attention to sales analysis to ensure profitability

the reception of *Common Praise*, and decisions about whether to publish other editions of the book (e.g., words only or words and melody only) will have significant impact;

#### Enhance revenue generation

Advertising revenue in the Anglican Journal is in decline. The readership survey noted above was initiated to provide useful data to support increased sales. A further initiative in 1998 involves testing the effectiveness of an integrated revenue production strategy, in which on-page advertising, mailing list rental, broadcasting sponsorship opportunities, website relationships, and possibly other elements, are combined for greater impact. This model will need careful analysis and evaluation in the Fall of 1998 to determine next steps.

#### Increase attention on networking to serve diocesan priorities

The work of this triennium has been disproportionately focused on issues arising from restructuring and reorganization. With this accomplished, Information Resources should turn more toward *Preparing the Way's* emphasis on networking and providing service to dioceses: "Develop a volunteer and staff resource capacity to assist dioceses in handling financial, legal, communications, personnel, property issues." This might include establishment of a volunteer "experts" list in, for example, conservation of material heritage; or training programs for dioceses facing potential litigation arising from residential schools or other issues. It will involve expansion of research and reference services focused on diocesan priorities. Other kinds of services will be developed through our emerging use of electronic communications.

#### Freedom of Information and Right to Privacy

There is a need for some focused work on resolving the potential for conflict between the principles by which we seek to make public information freely available, while protecting individuals' rights to privacy. The question arises in this instance from concern about the uses to which baptismal records may be put, but it has broader application, particularly in relation to information resources which may be made available on the internet. There may be a need for a task force to look at this issue.

New ways of working together

The Committee welcomes proposals from the Financial Management and Development Committee, regarding the desirability of establishing a three-year budgeting cycle; and from Faith, Worship and Ministry, regarding collaboration in relation to the "Jubilee."

Respectfully submitted

Brian Pearson  
Chair