ISSUES RELATING TO PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION
POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Report prepared by the Bureau of Statistics
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Since its inception in 1948, the statistical publications program of the Fund has centered around the monthly publication *International Financial Statistics* (IFS). Computer magnetic tape subscriptions which began in 1972, were essentially duplicative of the paper publications, although they incorporated data for earlier time periods which could not be included in the printed publications. During this same period, the statistical data collected by the Bureau of Statistics grew at rates substantially higher than those of the publications themselves. While early publications included a large proportion of the collected data, the current publications account for less than ten percent of the time series concepts in the Economic Information System (EIS), the current data base. To date, the paper publications have been considered the official record for the statistics they cover. Long periods of data are published in annual editions in order to allow the paper publications to provide consistent series over long periods of time. The magnetic tape publications have been bound to the paper publications in terms of concepts included and have been treated as a derivative activity whose main function is to ease the data entry burden for data users that have access to mainframe computing facilities.

A comprehensive review of the IMF's statistical publications program is now in progress. A developing view within the IMF is that the program should be broadened to include such alternative media as microcomputer magnetic diskette, Compact-Disk Read Only Memory (CD-ROM), and on-line data services, in addition to the currently employed media. As part of an extended program under consideration, each particular medium would be tailored to the purposes for which it is best suited.

Another developing view within the IMF is the need to free paper publications from being the publications of record for all Fund statistics.

1/ In January 1977 the data base included 316,000 time series and the January 1977 issue of IFS contained 429 pages. By January 1989 the data base had grown to 1,153,000 time series (or 294%) and the January 1989 issue of IFS had grown to 595 pages (or 40%).
and to increase their reference function to explore the data that are made available through other media. Computer magnetic tape and CD-ROM media are viewed as quickly becoming the publications of record. In particular, CD-ROM is viewed as offering the opportunity to include complete data records for use with personal computers, including substantial volumes of textual information relating to the data included in the product. Personal computer diskettes will serve a more narrow function, because of their limited capacity, of featuring specialized topics or very recent data. The on-line data services will be directed toward those users that have a need for very timely delivery of data and are likely to be willing to pay the fees for the timelessness of these services.

Overall, the IMF sees the opportunity for developing a publications program around a set of integrated multi-media publications each of which allows for increased effectiveness in reaching user sectors, while offering the potential for reducing the costs of the dissemination program, and for increasing cost recovery.