



Central Office of Information
the communication agency

1998-1999

and Accounts

Annual Report



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

COI'S VISION, MISSION, ROLE AND VALUES

Vision

"To be admired and respected as the expert in government and public service communication and to be valued as such by ministers, clients, staff and suppliers."

Mission

"To help departments and agencies secure their policy objectives whilst achieving maximum communication effectiveness and value for money."

Role

"To provide government with consultancy, procurement and project management across the spectrum of communication channels and to offer a direct representational service to the news media in the regions."

Values

"We should continuously strive for professionalism; honesty/fairness/transparency/integrity; enthusiasm; continuous improvement; and a proactive approach."





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Annual Report and Accounts 1998-99

Ordered by the House of Commons to be
printed 15 July 1999

621

London: The Stationery Office

£0.00



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

COI Targets

For the fifteenth successive year, COI met its financial target and continued its unbroken run of exceeding its efficiency target. Unfortunately, a late surge in activity caused the Customer Satisfaction Index to miss its target by a little under 0.5 per cent (see pages 7 and 8).

ACHIEVEMENT OF KEY TARGETS

| Target | Result | | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
| Breakeven | | | | | |
| Surplus (£000) | 85 | 0 | 657 | 1,151 | 2,363 |
| Surplus (% of income) | 0.08 | 0.00 | 0.52 | 0.10 | 0.79 |
| Unit cost reduction ¹ | 6.1% | 3.4% | 5.3% | 5.6% | 5.6% |
| All work delivered on time ² | 96.74% | 99.06% | 99.15% | N/A | N/A |
| All work in accordance with specification ² | 98.83% | 99.64% | 99.76% | N/A | N/A |
| Customer Satisfaction Index ³ | 7.90 | 7.96 | 8.21 | 8.29 | 8.21 |

1 Target 1994-95 = 2%, 1995-97 = 3%, 1997-99 = 2%.

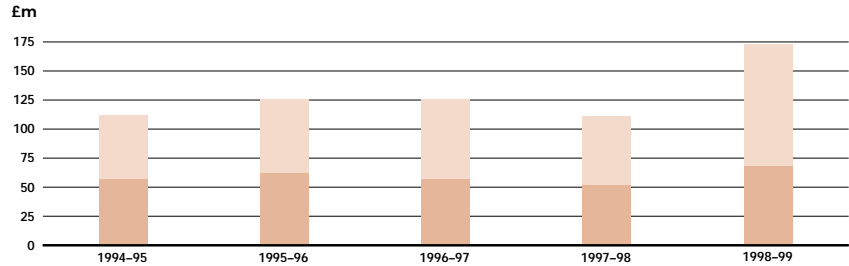
2 Target is to equal or better previous year's performance. Target discontinued from 1997-98.

3 Target 1994-95 = 7.7, 1995-96 = 7.9, 1996-97 = 8.2, 1997-99 = 8.25.

Business Trends

After two years of reduced activity resulting from COI's review and the 1997 general election, turnover rose above pre-review levels (see pages 5 and 6).

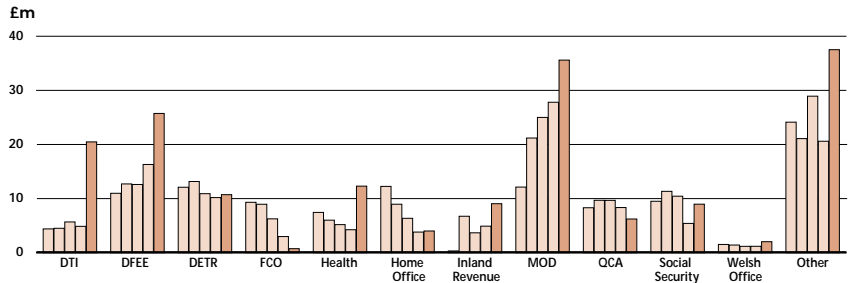
COI INCOME (AT CASH PRICES)



Meeting Changing Requirements

COI has been able to respond to changing client needs, both in terms of their volume and media mix requirements (see pages 5 and 6).

INCOME ANALYSIS 1994-95 TO 1998-99

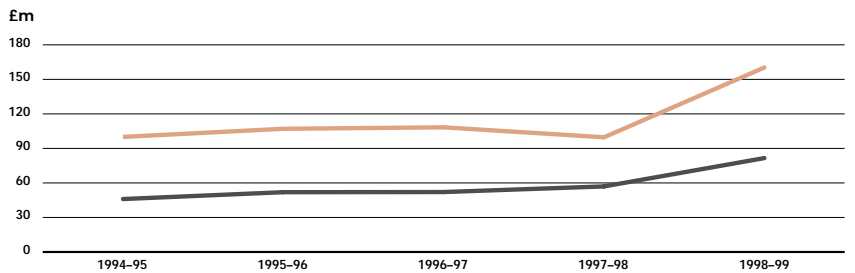


Volume Trends (Continuing Services)

The year saw a considerable increase in volume of activity in both advertising and non-advertising areas (see pages 5 and 6).

The index is based on 1994-95 = 100

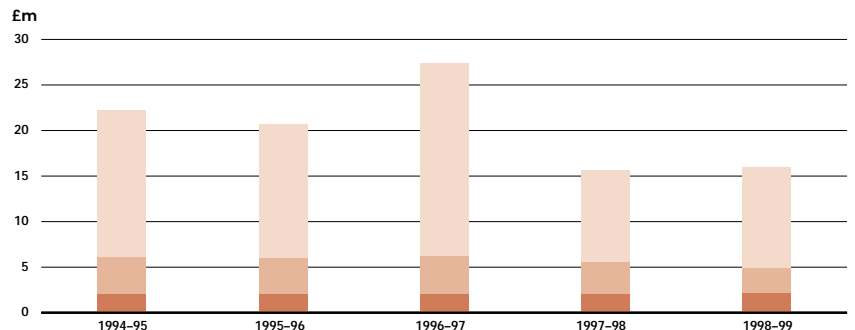
COI VOLUME INDEX 1994-95 TO 1998-99



Running Costs

Running costs rose by only 2.2 per cent during the year despite the large increase in activity (see page 6).

COI RUNNING COSTS (AT 1998-1999 PRICES)





A Year of Substantial Growth

When I joined COI during the final quarter of the year the agency was emerging from two years of disrupted activity arising from its restructure and the general election which followed soon after. The most striking indication of this was the high volume of work being placed by our clients. In the event, turnover for the year is nearly 60 per cent higher than for 1997–98. Perversely, the impact of this upsurge in activity on our achievement of targets for the year has been mixed.

Key Targets

We have exceeded our £1 million surplus target by £1.4 million, bringing the amount recovered to offset the costs of implementing COI's review to £3.5 million over the last two years. We have also exceeded our 2 per cent efficiency target with an efficiency improvement of 5.6 per cent. Our quality target, the Customer Satisfaction Index, on the other hand fell marginally short of our target of 8.25 out of ten with a score of 8.21. This shortfall against target is the result of a reduction in the proportion of clients who express themselves either extremely or very satisfied with our services and probably reflects the impact of increased workloads on our ability to maintain the highest standards of customer care during peak periods. More positively, we have been able to reduce further the small proportion of clients who found our service less than satisfactory.

Adding Value

COI campaigns frequently win industry accolades for their effectiveness. One of

this year's particular successes arose when HM Treasury commissioned COI to devise a communications strategy to raise awareness of the need for British business to prepare for the introduction of the Euro. The resulting campaign, with its innovative selection of media and impactful creative work, delivered three times the industry norm for response and was voted business television campaign of the year in the IPA Business Advertising Effectiveness Awards.

Last year, my predecessor spoke of the need for us to contribute to initiatives which transcend departmental boundaries. For many years the issue of the effectiveness or otherwise of PR effort has been problematical. Obtaining information on impact or effectiveness of campaigns has been both difficult and prohibitively expensive, and improvements in effectiveness and value for money have therefore been hard to obtain. Last year we decided to run a seminar for senior practitioners in all departments in order to establish the current state of the art in impact and effectiveness measurement, to facilitate the spread of best practice and thereby to improve government's communication with the citizen. The seminar was widely welcomed and there have been requests for the exercise to be extended further.

Using the same rationale as underlay the PR effectiveness forum we developed, and launched, a PR evaluation system (PRESS) to measure the impact of PR effort in the press as a first step towards assessing effectiveness. The PRESS system has been specifically designed to meet the needs of government departments.

A similar problem of assessing effectiveness exists where individual items of publicity are of very low cost. Here the problem is to find a method of assessing effectiveness whose cost is not disproportionate with the cost of the publicity itself. Our research unit has developed, and will soon be launching, a practical method for evaluating the effectiveness of publicity leaflets.

Operational Highlights

Building on the success of our Informativity Unit, which provides guidance on communicating with people with visual or hearing impairment, learning disabilities or literacy problems, and the Internet Forum, which encourages the sharing of best

practice in the use of the Internet across government, we have set up the Ethnic Communities Information Forum to carry out similar functions with regard to communicating government's messages to members of ethnic minority communities in this country.

In addition to its role in organising the Government Internet Forum, COI continues to expand its expertise in new media. It has developed over 100 Internet sites for 35 clients.

As an additional service to client departments wishing to contract strategic PR from the private sector, we have set up call-off contracts with leading PR consultancies. This enables departments to obtain speedy access to appropriate skills while maintaining suitable standards of propriety.

Perhaps the most remarkable operational event of last year was the increase in volumes of work placed with COI. But it was not only the volume of work that was remarkable. The large number of new types of campaign with their own creative and presentational issues to resolve was also unusual. I know that we would not have been able to deliver the results that we have, nor would we have been able to maintain such high levels of customer satisfaction, without the flexibility, commitment and professionalism of COI staff. I, and my Management Team, acknowledge and thank them for their contribution to COI's success.

Looking Ahead

We will continue to seek better value for money for the taxpayers' publicity pound, both by means of efficiency gains and by means of enhanced effectiveness, while continuing to explore and exploit innovative ways of communicating with members of the public. I will be exploring further opportunities for government-wide initiatives and the benefits which might be available from a more strategic approach to communication.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Carol Fisher'.

CAROL FISHER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

ROLE, OBJECTIVES AND ORGANISATION

Purpose and Role

As the Government's executive agency for publicity procurement, COI's purpose is to help departments and agencies secure their policy objectives, while achieving:

- maximum effectiveness; and
- best value for money.

Its role is to offer central government consultancy, procurement and project management in a range of marketing and publicity services, also providing it with a direct representation service to the regional news media.

In essence, COI acts as an agent between central government and private sector suppliers. It does not seek to carry out activities for which a sustainable and effective private sector market exists. It regularly reviews and redefines its business in the light of marketplace developments.

Aim

The aim of the agency is to enable central government to secure its policy objectives through achieving maximum communication effectiveness and best value for money.

Objectives

COI's objectives are to improve the effectiveness of, and add value to, its clients' publicity programmes through its consultancy, procurement and project management services across all communication channels and through its direct representation service to the news media in the regions.

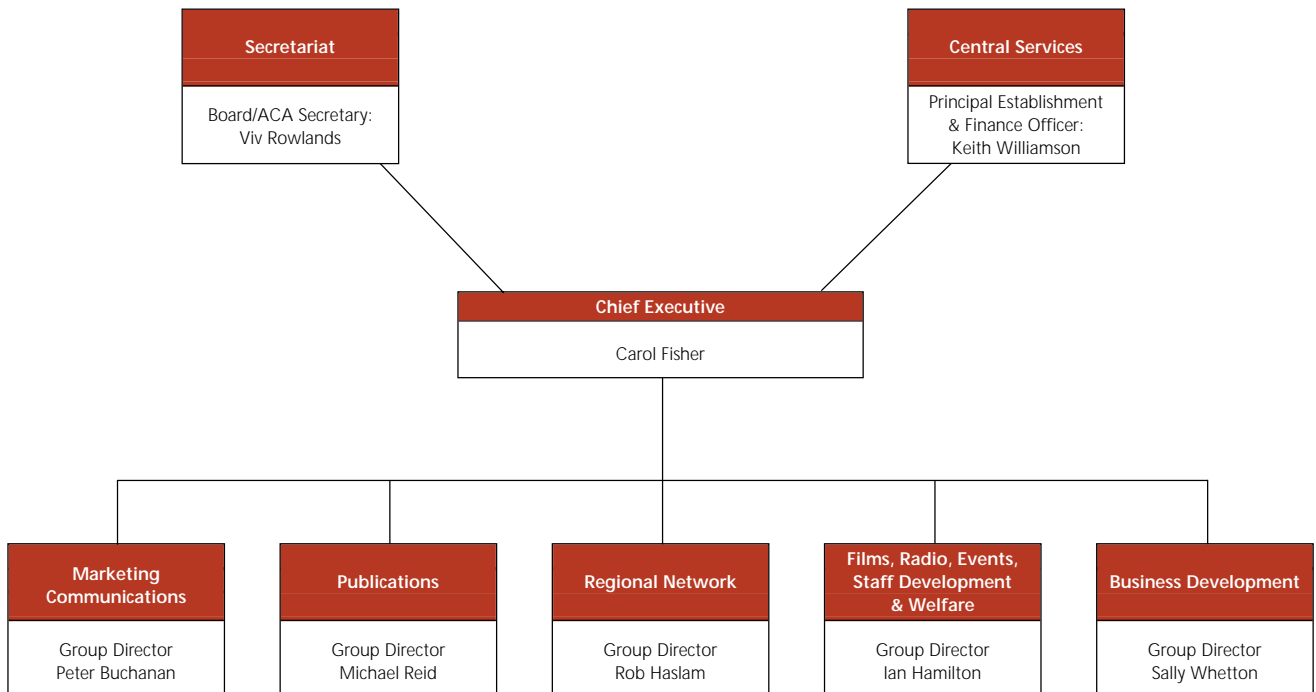
In line with the principles of Service First, COI is committed to providing a measurable quality of service to its customers, with specific targets for improvements in its customer satisfaction levels, as well as meeting financial and efficiency targets set by its Minister.

COI's Core Services

These are:

- providing strategic advice to departments and agencies on achieving their communications objectives;
- providing purchasing and project management services for implementing those strategies; and
- supplying directly those services which, for propriety or other reasons, can only be provided by a government organisation (such as those provided by the COI Regional Network).

COI STRUCTURE AND SERVICES



STRATEGY AND TRADING TRENDS

Strategy

COI can best add value for its clients where it has the greatest community of interest with them – i.e. where COI and the client seek to maximise value for money for the taxpayer.

COI's strategy, therefore, is to strengthen its relationship with its government sector clients. COI aims to achieve this better relationship by:

- demonstrating improving efficiency in the provision of its goods and services;
- continually improving the level of service it offers;
- continually improving its unit cost of output;
- seeking to enhance the effectiveness of all its services; and
- inviting direct client input on service quality.

COI is constantly aware of the need for flexibility in responding to the uncertainty which surrounds the estimation of future levels of demand and the mix of services required by clients.

Efficiency

COI already places around 90 per cent of its business with outside suppliers. Its core business is routinely market tested by its clients and support activities are subject to an untied internal market. In responding to these efficiency drivers COI managers adopt a variety of techniques to achieve continuing efficiency improvements and their achievement is monitored monthly by Management Team.

Adding Value to Clients' Activities

COI supplements and complements its clients' publicity resources. It adds value to clients' activities in the following ways:

- achieving keen prices through aggregating buying power;
- using its expertise to make the best choices of private sector suppliers;
- bringing specialist publicity and financial expertise to the management of complex contracts;

Table 1 INCOME ANALYSIS (at cash prices)

| (£000) | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| DTI | 4,401 | 4,514 | 5,687 | 4,874 | 20,477 |
| Education and Employment | 10,982 | 12,711 | 12,610 | 16,308 | 25,737 |
| Environment, Transport and the Regions | 12,100 | 13,159 | 10,909 | 10,185 | 10,725 |
| FCO | 9,318 | 8,956 | 6,259 | 2,985 | 746 |
| Health | 7,448 | 6,015 | 5,191 | 4,249 | 12,301 |
| Home Office | 12,257 | 8,961 | 6,357 | 3,816 | 4,014 |
| Inland Revenue | 328 | 6,739 | 3,678 | 4,907 | 9,057 |
| MOD | 12,131 | 21,195 | 25,001 | 27,805 | 35,592 |
| Qualifications and Curriculum Authority | 8,311 | 9,688 | 9,677 | 8,347 | 6,231 |
| Social Security | 9,509 | 11,342 | 10,444 | 5,417 | 8,969 |
| Welsh Office | 1,527 | 1,420 | 1,179 | 1,187 | 2,037 |
| Other | 24,125 | 21,085 | 28,928 | 20,600 | 37,516* |
| Total | 112,437 | 125,785 | 125,920 | 110,680 | 173,402 |

* Income in 1998-99 includes £1,169,000 (£1,227,000) from non-government bodies as an essential and required part of the inter-departmental service provided by COI.

- concentrating procurement expertise and impartial advice across a range of marketing and publicity services, thereby facilitating informed choices;
- applying its specialist knowledge of public procurement rules and requirements;
- understanding clients' particular needs and the environment in which they operate by fostering long-term relationships with them; and
- exploiting developments in relevant markets and pursuing an innovative approach to all its work.

Agency Review

COI's last agency review took place during 1996-97, as a result of which COI staff numbers fell to 305 and COI withdrew from providing Despatch, Reference and Overseas Radio services. The cost of implementing these changes was partly funded by a voted subsidy and current surpluses, with the remainder to be recovered from trading surpluses over the three years to March 2000.

COI's new framework document was approved by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in March 1998 and is valid until March 2002.

Trading Trends

As in previous years, forecasting levels of demand for COI's services remained difficult because of changes in demand, both from clients and for products.

Levels of income in 1998-99 were significantly higher than planned, rising from £110.7 million in 1997-98 to £173.4 million. There have been increases across the full range of media although the main increases have arisen in Advertising (£46 million) and Direct Marketing and Promotions (£12 million).

Table 1 analyses income by client over the last five years, in cash terms. There have been increases in business from virtually all of COI's major clients with only the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority reducing the amount of business compared with 1997-98.

COSTS, PROCUREMENT AND PRICES

Table 2 INCOME BY MEDIUM (at cash prices)

| £000 | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Advertising | 55,196 | 63,663 | 69,396 | 59,039 | 105,464 |
| Direct Marketing and Promotions | 9,083 | 10,043 | 11,790 | 9,571 | 21,241 |
| Events | 4,411 | 5,909 | 1,646 | 3,573 | 5,323 |
| Films and Television | 2,745 | 3,190 | 3,207 | 3,549 | 2,584 |
| Publications | 21,375 | 23,084 | 21,944 | 21,366 | 21,976 |
| Radio | 655 | 404 | 313 | 303 | 159 |
| Regional Network | 5,020 | 4,939 | 5,254 | 6,037 | 7,397 |
| Research | 2,868 | 2,962 | 2,975 | 3,572 | 4,899 |
| Other | 3,121 | 2,306 | 3,214 | 3,153 | 4,359 |
| Discontinued services | 7,963 | 9,285 | 6,181 | 517 | - |
| Total | 112,437 | 125,785 | 125,920 | 110,680 | 173,402 |

Table 2 analyses the last five years' income by medium and illustrates the variability of demand for COI's products.

Sales income shows the volatility of demand between clients and media but is a poor indicator of year-on-year trends, not least because the lower prices arising from efficiency gains tend to make it appear that activity is declining. Table 3a has therefore been included showing levels of activity in volume terms for each of COI's media divisions, taking 1994-95 as the base year. This gives a more useful indication of trends in COI's services. Table 3b shows the overall trend of COI's continuing services.

Costs

Running costs rose by 5.2 per cent in comparison with 1997-98 and in real terms, after adjusting for inflation, they increased by 2.2 per cent.

Table 4 shows total running costs for the past five years, analysed by staff, accommodation and other costs, at 1998-99 prices. The number of permanent staff in post at 31 March 1999 was 345 against 314 at 1 April 1998 and 606 at 1 April 1994.

Procurement

COI aims to provide the specialist services that complement and supplement those of its client departments; it offers optimum quality and prompt service with good value for money.

The aim of COI's procurement policy is to secure savings in the costs of publicity which can then be passed on to clients in the form of lower prices and greater effectiveness. This means that COI staff need to combine their existing media skills with an ever-increasing degree of procurement expertise. Accordingly COI is adding to its procurement skills by increasing the number of staff throughout the department who hold the Certificate of Competence in Purchasing and Supply.

During 1998-99 COI's clients benefited from average unit cost savings of 5.6 per cent of their business with COI. Table 5 shows how the savings were delivered by medium. The calculation of savings is dependent upon the base against which they are measured. Table 5 gives savings based upon prior year COI prices but, in the case of advertising, savings can also be measured against standard industry

Table 3a ACTIVITY BY MEDIUM (in volume terms)

| £000 | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Advertising | 100.0 | 102.5 | 105.2 | 84.7 | 149.9 |
| Direct Marketing and Promotions | 100.0 | 123.0 | 150.5 | 148.1 | 403.9 |
| Events | 100.0 | 141.0 | 47.3 | 122.9 | 213.7 |
| Films and Television | 100.0 | 130.7 | 150.0 | 163.8 | 105.3 |
| Publications | 100.0 | 110.9 | 109.7 | 108.7 | 115.2 |
| Radio | 100.0 | 52.3 | 40.6 | 39.4 | 28.5 |
| Regional Network | 100.0 | 99.5 | 107.3 | 122.7 | 160.8 |
| Research | 100.0 | 92.9 | 81.6 | 107.3 | 146.8 |
| Other | 100.0 | 71.0 | 96.6 | 100.8 | 132.8 |
| Discontinued services | 100.0 | 124.0 | 87.7 | 7.4 | - |
| Total | 100.0 | 107.4 | 105.8 | 95.0 | 152.1 |
| Analysed as: Advertising | 100.0 | 102.5 | 105.2 | 84.7 | 149.9 |
| Non-Advertising | 100.0 | 114.3 | 109.4 | 108.3 | 153.5 |

Table 3b OVERALL ACTIVITY (in volume terms) excluding Discontinued services

| £000 | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Total | 100.0 | 107.1 | 108.3 | 99.7 | 160.3 |
| Analysed as: Advertising | 100.0 | 102.5 | 105.2 | 84.7 | 149.9 |
| Non-Advertising | 100.0 | 112.9 | 113.2 | 123.9 | 177.4 |

Table 4 COI RUNNING COSTS (at 1998-99 prices)

| £000 | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Staff | 16,184 | 14,768 | 21,242 | 10,136 | 11,053 |
| Accommodation | 4,086 | 3,864 | 4,137 | 3,426 | 2,783 |
| Other overheads | 1,982 | 2,065 | 2,028 | 2,054 | 2,128 |
| COI Total | 22,252 | 20,697 | 27,407[†] | 15,616 | 15,964 |

[†] Includes £9.0 million of costs resulting from the implementation of the COI review

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGETS

Table 5 EFFICIENCY GAINS (LOSSES) BY MEDIUM

| | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Advertising | 8.7 | 0.2 | 4.2 | 2.2 | 3.3 |
| Direct Marketing and Promotions | 5.8 | 10.4 | 6.6 | 17.5 | 18.6 |
| Events | (36.6) | 7.7 | 19.3 | 18.9 | 18.4 |
| Films and Television | 2.7 | 13.0 | 15.0 | 2.9 | (8.2) |
| News Distribution | 6.7 | 6.2 | 3.7 | 10.6 | (0.9) |
| Publications | 4.1 | 5.8 | 5.0 | 5.9 | 5.3 |
| Radio | 18.5 | (16.2) | 2.7 | 2.7 | 30.7 |
| Regional Network | 3.1 | 5.7 | 4.0 | 5.7 | 11.8 |
| Research | 6.8 | (6.4) | (9.5) | 10.9 | (0.2) |
| Discontinued services | 6.9 | 7.0 | 7.5 | 2.7 | - |
| COI | 6.1 | 3.4 | 5.3 | 5.6 | 5.6 |

Table 6 ADVERTISING SAVINGS: INDUSTRY BENCHMARK

| (£000) | Media Value Obtained | Actual Spend | Saving | Saving % |
|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
| Television | 57,759 | 43,897 | 13,862 | 24.0 |
| Press | 49,849 | 30,408 | 19,441 | 39.0 |
| Posters | 3,950 | 3,121 | 829 | 21.0 |
| Radio | 15,813 | 10,437 | 5,376 | 34.0 |
| Cinema | 3,935 | 2,204 | 1,731 | 44.0 |
| Total | 131,306 | 90,067 | 41,239 | 31.4 |

Table 7 KEY MINISTERIAL TARGETS

| Key Ministerial Targets | Targets, Outturns and Achievements | | | | | Targets for 1999-2000 |
|---|------------------------------------|---------|---------|--------------|---------|--------------------------|
| | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 | |
| Efficiency | | | | | | |
| Unit cost reduction in real terms | | | | | | |
| Target | 2.0% | 3.0% | 3.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Outturn | 6.1% | 3.4% | 5.3% | 5.6% | 5.6% | |
| Quality | | | | | | |
| Customer Satisfaction Index Score (out of 10) | | | | | | |
| Target | 7.70 | 7.90 | 8.20 | 8.25 | 8.25 | 8.25 |
| Outturn | 7.90 | 7.96 | 8.21 | 8.29 | 8.21 | |
| % work delivered on time | | | | | | |
| Target | 95.87% | 96.74% | 99.06% | Discontinued | | |
| Outturn | 96.74% | 99.06% | 99.15% | | | |
| % work delivered in accordance with specification | | | | | | |
| Target | 98.73% | 98.83% | 99.64% | Discontinued | | |
| Outturn | 98.83% | 99.64% | 99.76% | | | |
| Financial performance | | | | | | |
| To achieve surplus | | | | | | |
| Target | £0 | £0 | £0 | £1m | £1m | £0.1m |
| Outturn | £0.085m | £0 | £0.657m | £1.151m | £2.363m | |

benchmarks. Table 6 gives COI's performance against these benchmarks.

Supplier Payment Performance

COI's policy is to pay all suppliers within 30 days of receipt of goods or services or a correctly documented invoice (whichever is received later) or according to contract where a different payment period is agreed. COI observes the principles of the Better Payment Practice Code.

Using the Civil Service standard measure, during 1998-99 COI paid 97.0 per cent of supplier bills within 30 days (97.4 per cent in 1997-98) and the average time taken to pay a bill was 15.7 days (15.5 days in 1997-98).

Performance against Targets

COI has three key performance indicators (five prior to 1997-98). Table 7 summarises overall performance.

Financial Target

COI's financial target is to break even in current cost terms after covering all costs, including interest on borrowing. In 1997-98 this target was increased to a surplus of £1 million as a means of recovering the cost of achieving the efficiency gains implemented following the COI review. The £1 million surplus target was expected to be set each year until 1999-2000. During the current year a surplus of £2.4 million was earned. The surplus will be retained by the trading fund and offset against the cost of implementing the 1995 review. COI has consistently met its financial target since it became a repayment department in 1984, with a small (less than 1 per cent of income) surplus each year.

Efficiency Target

COI's efficiency target is to achieve a 2 per cent reduction in unit cost of output in real terms while maintaining suitable levels of quality. In 1998-99 COI achieved a reduction of 5.6 per cent.

An efficiency target was first set formally when COI became an executive agency in April 1990 although it had been used as an internal measure before then. COI has exceeded its efficiency target every year. Table 5 analyses COI's efficiency performance by medium.

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGETS

Table 8 SERVICE PERFORMANCE BY MEDIUM

| | Delivery % | | | | Specification % | | | | Customer Satisfaction Index | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 | 1997-99 | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 | 1997-99 | 1994-95 | 1995-96 | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
| Advertising | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | Discontinued | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | Discontinued | 7.85 | 7.44 | 7.86 | 7.78 | 7.40 |
| Direct Marketing and Promotions | 98.46 | 99.21 | 100.00 | | 98.70 | 100.00 | 100.00 | | 7.62 | 7.39 | 7.77 | 8.33 | 7.85 |
| Events | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | | 98.00 | 97.82 | 100.00 | | 7.73 | 7.91 | 8.49 | 8.36 | 8.53 |
| Films and Television | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | | 7.84 | 8.06 | 8.26 | 8.16 | 8.29 |
| News Distribution | 99.48 | 97.85 | 99.93 | | 99.85 | 99.94 | 99.92 | | 8.09 | 8.33 | 7.99 | 8.20 | 7.80 |
| Publications | 86.05 | 95.13 | 95.60 | | 95.41 | 98.41 | 98.75 | | 7.79 | 8.01 | 8.18 | 8.31 | 8.32 |
| Radio | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | | 7.80 | 8.46 | 8.13 | 8.22 | 8.07 |
| Regional Network | 99.45 | 99.94 | 99.98 | | 99.99 | 100.00 | 100.00 | | 8.31 | 8.37 | 8.46 | 9.17 | 8.45 |
| Research | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | | 7.93 | 8.09 | 8.66 | 8.68 | 8.01 |
| Discontinued services | 97.28 | 96.98 | 98.74 | | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | | 7.94 | 7.81 | 8.01 | N/A | N/A |
| COI | 96.74 | 99.06 | 99.15 | | 98.83 | 99.64 | 99.76 | | 7.90 | 7.96 | 8.21 | 8.29 | 8.21 |

Quality Targets

While quality measures exist and are used for COI's larger projects, it is very much more difficult to develop objective measures for the smaller projects undertaken by COI and which would be capable of aggregation across the department. As a first step towards achieving wider and more objective measures of quality than are currently available, COI introduced two key service measures. These are the extent to which work is delivered first time to clients in accordance with their specification and the extent to which delivery dates are met. The target for each of these measures is to meet or better the previous year's achievement.

Table 8 shows by medium the extent to which these targets have been met using price-weighted averages.

Because the delivery and specification measures have approached perfection and are in any case relatively mechanistic in their approach, it was decided to abolish them as key targets from 1997-98 onwards. Prior years' performance data is included for historical accuracy.

Because a vital measure of quality is customer satisfaction, COI introduced its Customer Satisfaction Index in 1993-94.

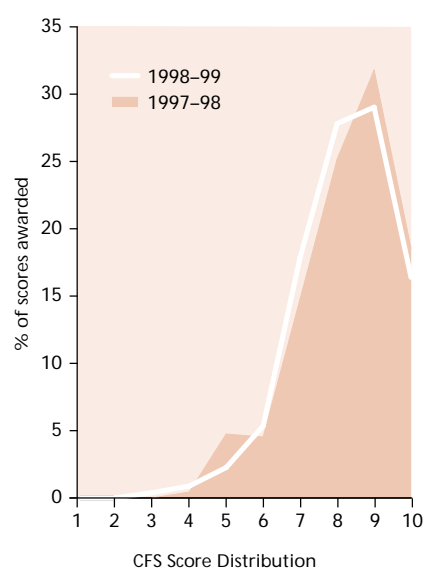
This index is compiled from customers' responses to questionnaires which they are asked to complete upon receipt of COI

services. Marks are awarded on a scale of 1 (not satisfied at all) to 10 (extremely satisfied). The target average mark for 1998-99 was 8.25 and was narrowly missed with a score of 8.21 (8.29 in 1997-98). Results are analysed by medium in Table 8.

Table 9 compares the distribution of marks awarded in 1997-98 and 1998-99. It is disappointing to have missed a target,

however narrowly, and in this case the reason is probably connected with the 60 per cent increase in the volume of work handled during the year. This has led to a small reduction in the number of very/extremely satisfied customers who award scores of 9 or 10 but, as Table 9 shows, COI also managed to deal with the greatly increased throughput and reduce the proportion of dissatisfied customers at the same time.

Table 9 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX



The Environment

COI is fully committed to playing its part both in the preservation of natural resources and in the prevention of environmental pollution.

The principal elements of this policy are:

- improving the efficiency of energy usage;
- reducing waste in the use of goods and products;
- increasing the recycling of waste materials; and
- reducing the use and release of polluting substances.

Staff Development and Training

COI's staff development takes place at two levels. Central training and development is provided for infrastructure projects and areas of departmental concern, whereas group directors are responsible for providing media-related development.

COI has now obtained Investors in People recognition.

During the year, COI's training expenditure amounted to 2.3 per cent of salary costs. Coaching and staff development training was provided for all line managers and specialised procurement training was provided for key staff.

During 1999–2000, our central training and development effort will concentrate on taking forward the Investors in People and Procurement programmes. Group training and development will continue to address improvements in craft skills and knowledge.

Year 2000 Compliance

As is well known, many computer and digital storage systems express dates using only the last two digits of the year and will thus require modification or replacement to accommodate the year 2000 and beyond in order to avoid malfunctions and resulting widespread commercial disruption. This is a complex and pervasive issue. The operation of our business depends not only on our own computer systems, but also to some degree on those of our suppliers and customers. This could expose us to further risk in the event that there is a failure by other parties to remedy their own Year 2000 issues.

A department-wide programme, designed to address the impact of the Year 2000 on our business has been carried out. Given the complexity of the problem, it is not possible for any organisation to guarantee that no Year 2000 problems will remain because at least some level of failure may still occur. However, the COI believes that it has achieved an acceptable state of readiness and has also provided resources to deal promptly with significant subsequent failures or issues that might arise.

The cost of implementation has been treated as part of the recurring activities of the department.

Service First

Although COI does not provide services directly to the public, it applies Service First principles by publishing performance targets and results and by its commitment to continuous improvements in the quality of its services. In its fifth year of operation the overall Customer Satisfaction Index fell slightly below target with a score of 8.21 out of 10.

In furtherance of Service First principles, COI continues its exploration of innovative means of communicating government messages to the public. There has been continued growth in the use of the Internet for government publicity purposes. COI has been able to advise departments on the efficient use of this increasingly important medium in their communications strategies and has developed a subscription service providing client departments with up-to-date information on new media applications.

Nearly 60 departments now use COI's press release site to extend the readership of their press notices and users currently make over 530,000 'hits' on the site a week.

The Informability Unit offers advice, consultation and procurement services to the public sector in all areas of information provision for people with sensory impairment and those who have difficulties with literacy. The Unit produced *The Informability Manual*, published through The Stationery Office Ltd. The manual explains the problems encountered by certain sectors of the population in accessing information and provides guidance on the techniques and media which can be used to make information more accessible. COI also produces *Public Scene*, a unique video magazine for deaf and hard of hearing audiences, and *Sound Advice*, an audio magazine for people who prefer information on tape, including those with sight impairment, or learning or literacy difficulties.

The Informability database, a list of around 5,000 organisations which have expressed

an interest in public sector information in accessible formats, allows COI to help client departments to target public sector information at audiences with special needs.

Following on from the success of the Informability initiative and recognising the need to communicate effectively with all citizens, COI has established the Ethnic Communities Information Forum. This forum is attended by information specialists from across Whitehall and aims to provide guidance and to share best practice in relation to the communication of government's messages to members of ethnic minority communities in this country.

Selling into Wider Markets

COI does not have significant asset holdings nor does it have intellectual property rights capable of large-scale commercial exploitation. However, COI is able to generate additional income from other markets in support of government information effort for itself and its clients through a number of different initiatives.

Contracts have been placed with the private sector by means of which COI's film rights are proactively exploited through sales of footage to third parties and through sales and hire of copies.

During the year, COI's Sponsorship service was able to secure over £1.5 million of added value from the private sector on behalf of client departments. Safety campaigns dealing with chip pans, smoke alarms, speeding, gardens and DIY were the main beneficiaries of this additional support.

COI's Merchandising & Licensing service helped the Army exploit and build awareness of its image by developing a range of Army branded merchandise which is sold to the public via the Internet. This initiative has the double advantages of generating income for promotional purposes while simultaneously increasing awareness among young people of the Army as a career.

FOREWORD TO THE ACCOUNTS

History

COI was established in 1946 after the demise of the wartime Ministry of Information when responsibility for information policy was resumed by departmental Ministers. COI became a common service agency, concentrating expertise to avoid a wasteful duplication of specialists throughout Whitehall and taking advantage of centralised purchasing. In April 1981 the then Prime Minister approved the move to a repayment service which was introduced on 1 April 1984.

On 5 April 1990 COI became a Vote-funded executive agency and on 1 April 1991 COI became a trading fund under the Central Office of Information Trading Fund Order 1991. In December 1995 COI's first agency review concluded that COI should continue as an executive agency subject to its improving efficiency and becoming more focused. In consequence, COI repositioned its activities during 1996–97.

Statutory Background

On 22 June 1992 Ministerial responsibility for the COI was transferred to the Minister for the Cabinet Office from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Since that date COI has been one of the Minister for the Cabinet Office's departments and he is accountable to Parliament and its Select Committees for all COI's activities. Taking into account the advice of the Chief Executive, the Minister determines the overall policy and financial framework within which COI operates but does not normally become involved in day-to-day management.

The Chief Executive of COI is also the Accounting Officer and is formally responsible to the Minister for the Cabinet Office for the operations of the agency within the overall framework set out in COI's framework document.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with a direction given by the Treasury in pursuance of section 4(6) of the Government Trading Funds Act 1973. The direction is reproduced as an appendix.

COI continues to receive, outside of the trading fund, a small voted provision for allied service work and payments to the Royal Household for the procurement of communications and information services. These services are accounted for separately through COI's appropriation account (Class XVII Vote 3) which is reproduced on page 23.

Results and Appropriations

A surplus of £2,363,000 was made for the year. The whole of this amount will be retained by the Trading Fund to make good the deficit incurred in implementing COI's repositioning.

Review of Activities

COI's principal activities continued to be the procurement and provision of publicity services for government departments. Its main aims are to ensure that the services it provides to clients are cost-effective and of an appropriate quality; and to achieve progressive improvements in the standard of service provided. There have been no changes in these aims.

Targets

COI made a surplus of £2,363,000. More detail on performance and targets is contained in the preceding pages of this document.

Fixed Assets

There have been no significant changes in fixed assets during the accounting period.

Recruitment

COI recruits staff on the basis of fair and open competition and selection on merit, in accordance with the recruitment code laid down by the Civil Service Commissioners. Systems are subject to internal and external check.

Sixty-three staff were recruited during 1998–99.

| | Male | Female |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Unified grades | – | 1 |
| Information staff | 35 | 20 |
| Administration staff | 1 | 6 |
| Support grades | – | – |
| Total | 36 | 27 |

One person from an ethnic minority group was recruited and no disabled persons were recruited.

8.6 per cent of COI's staff are from ethnic minority groups. 1.7 per cent of staff are disabled as defined under the Disability and Discrimination Act 1995.

The permitted exceptions to the principles of fair and open competition and selection on merit were not used on any occasion for appointments over 12 months.

Employee Involvement

COI encourages the involvement of its staff in the daily running of its affairs through normal line management contacts. Information is disseminated through office circulars, e-mail, Intranet, a staff newspaper and distribution of the Annual Report and Accounts. Regular workplace meetings are also used to pass on information to staff and to answer questions.

COI has formal contact with its several trade unions through the Departmental Whitley Council and more frequent and less formal discussions through several sub-committees.

Disabled Persons

In relation to disabled employees, COI complies with the Equal Opportunities legislation and provides special facilities where necessary.

Management Team Members

Throughout the year COI's Management Team consisted of:

A J Douglas (until 16.10.98)

Director General and Chief Executive

C Fisher (from 18.1.99)

Director General and Chief Executive

P M Buchanan

Group Director – Marketing Communications

T Dunmore (until 10.5.98)

Acting Group Director – Publications

I R Hamilton

Group Director – Films, Radio and Events

R P Haslam

Group Director – Network

M Reid (from 11.5.98)

Group Director – Publications

R S Smith (until 30.6.98)

Director – Review Implementation and Staff Development and Welfare

S E Whetton

Group Director – Business Development

K E Williamson

Principal Establishment and Finance Officer (Acting Chief Executive from 17.10.98 until 17.1.99)

CAROL FISHER

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

7 July 1999

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 1999

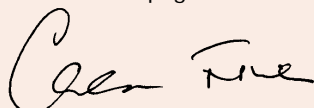
| 1998 £000 | | Notes | £000 | £000 | £000 |
|------------------|--|-------|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| 108,375 | Turnover | 1(f) | | 169,389 | |
| 65 | Change in stocks of finished goods and work in progress | 6 | | (988) | |
| <u>2,305</u> | Other Operating income | 7 | | <u>4,013</u> | |
| 110,745 | | | | | 172,414 |
| (937) | Raw materials and consumables | | (796) | | |
| <u>(98,490)</u> | Other external charges | 12 | <u>(157,936)</u> | | |
| (99,427) | | | | (158,732) | |
| | Staff costs: | | | | |
| (7,927) | (a) Wages and salaries | 15 | (8,820) | | |
| (620) | (b) Social security costs | | (689) | | |
| <u>(1,256)</u> | (c) Other pension costs | 16 | <u>(1,533)</u> | | |
| (9,803) | | | | (11,042) | |
| <u>(637)</u> | Depreciation and other amounts written off tangible assets | 8 | <u>(598)</u> | | |
| (637) | | | | (598) | |
| <u>(109,867)</u> | | | | | <u>(170,372)</u> |
| 878 | | | | | 2,042 |
| (149) | Loss on disposal of fixed assets | | | | (22) |
| 613 | Interest received | 5 | | 720 | |
| <u>(191)</u> | Short-term interest payable | 5 | | <u>(377)</u> | |
| <u>422</u> | | | | | <u>343</u> |
| <u>1,151</u> | Retained surplus for the period | 14 | | | <u>2,363</u> |

The notes on pages 14 to 18 form part of these accounts

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 1999

| 1998 £000 | Notes | £000 | £000 |
|--|--|-----------------|----------------|
| ASSETS | | | |
| Fixed Assets | | | |
| 1,510 | Tangible Assets | 1,295 | |
| <u>1,510</u> | | | 1,295 |
| CURRENT ASSETS | | | |
| | Stocks | | |
| 48 | Raw materials and consumables | 29 | |
| 2,387 | Work in progress | 1,399 | |
| | Debtors | | |
| 13,456 | Trade debtors | 15,979 | |
| 9 | Other debtors | 8 | |
| 2,895 | Prepayments and accrued income | 3,021 | |
| 26,411 | Cash in hand and at bank | 23,557 | |
| | | <u>43,993</u> | |
| 45,206 | | | |
| CREDITORS | | | |
| | Amounts falling due within one year | | |
| 13,562 | Trade creditors | 3,590 | |
| | Other creditors including taxation and social security | | |
| 2,365 | | 3,712 | |
| 28,501 | Accruals and deferred income | 33,764 | |
| | | <u>(41,066)</u> | |
| (44,428) | | | |
| <u>778</u> | | | <u>2,927</u> |
| NET CURRENT ASSETS | | | |
| 2,288 | | | 4,222 |
| (2,581) | Provisions for liabilities and charges | | <u>(2,076)</u> |
| (293) | | | 2,146 |
| TOTAL ASSETS LESS TOTAL LIABILITIES | | | |
| FINANCED BY CAPITAL AND RESERVES | | | |
| Capital | | | |
| 265 | Public Dividend Capital | 265 | |
| <u>265</u> | | | 265 |
| Reserves | | | |
| 1,419 | Revaluation reserve | 1,495 | |
| (1,977) | Income and expenditure account | 386 | |
| | | <u>1,881</u> | |
| (558) | | | 1,881 |
| <u>(293)</u> | | | <u>2,146</u> |

The notes on pages 14 to 18 form part of these accounts



Carol Fisher,
Chief Executive

7 July 1999

CASH FLOW STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 1999

| 1998 £000 | | Notes | £000 | £000 |
|--------------|--|-------|--------------|--------------|
| 17,843 | Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities | 9 | | (2,868) |
| | Returns on investments and servicing of finance | | | |
| 613 | Interest received | | 720 | |
| <u>(191)</u> | Interest paid | | <u>(377)</u> | |
| 422 | Net cash inflow from returns on investments and servicing of finance | 5 | | 343 |
| | Capital Expenditure | | | |
| (891) | Payments to acquire tangible fixed assets | 8 | (352) | |
| <u>39</u> | Receipts from sale of tangible fixed assets | | <u>23</u> | |
| <u>(852)</u> | Net cash outflow from capital expenditure | | | <u>(329)</u> |
| 17,413 | Increase/(Decrease) in cash | 4(b) | | (2,854) |

STATEMENT OF TOTAL RECOGNISED GAINS AND LOSSES

| 1998 £000 | | £000 |
|--------------|---|-----------|
| 1,151 | Retained surplus/(deficit) | 2,363 |
| <u>110</u> | Unrealised surplus on revaluation of fixed assets | <u>76</u> |
| 1,261 | Total recognised gains and losses | 2,439 |

The notes on pages 14 to 18 form part of these accounts

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1 (a) ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention modified by the inclusion of fixed assets at their value to the business by reference to current costs. Without limiting the information given, the accounts meet the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 1985 and accounting standards issued or adopted by the Accounting Standards Board so far as those requirements are appropriate. Significant departures from accounting standards are disclosed and explained in the Notes and the financial effects quantified where practicable.

(b) NOTIONAL INSURANCE

In accordance with FRS12 and Treasury instructions, with effect from the 1998–99 accounts, notional insurance premiums are no longer charged to the trading account. As a consequence, and in line with FRS3, the figures for 1997–98 have been restated and the Insurance Reserve balance of £249,000 at 31 March 1998 has been transferred to the Income and Expenditure Account.

(c) FIXED ASSETS

- (i) Items of equipment are valued at cost uprated, using an appropriate index, for the effect of inflation, less depreciation. Depreciation is charged on the straight line method at a rate chosen to recover the cost of the asset over its anticipated useful life, as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| New technology equipment | over 1 to 11 years |
| Equipment, fixtures and fittings | over 1 to 25 years |

- (ii) On items of new technology equipment the costs of hardware and operating systems software are capitalised and depreciated over the anticipated useful life. Applications software is depreciated over 12 months.

- (iii) Items of equipment costing less than £100 are written off in the year of acquisition.
- (iv) Fully written down assets' lives are extended where appropriate to reflect the full remaining useful life. The resulting revaluation (written back depreciation) is credited to revaluation reserve.

(d) STOCK

Stock of consumables is counted annually and valued at the lower of cost or net realisable value.

(e) WORK IN PROGRESS

Work in progress is defined as work which is incomplete, undelivered, or for which the full costs are not yet known. It is valued at cost to date, including an allowance for overheads, plus an amount to reflect outstanding charges on work which has been delivered and billed to clients less any sales invoices issued to clients and anticipated losses where significant.

(f) TURNOVER

Turnover represents the invoiced amount of goods sold and services provided (net of value added tax) from the ordinary activities of the business.

(g) EARLY RETIREMENT COSTS

Full provision is made in the Accounts for all future liabilities in respect of payments to employees who have retired early. Payments are due from the COI from the date of early retirement until age 60, when the liability is assumed by the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

2 TRADE CREDITORS

| | | |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|
| This figure is made up of two distinct groups: | | |
| | £000 | £000 |
| | 31.3.98 | 31.3.99 |
| Customers with sums on deposit | 12,546 | 1,345 |
| Supplier bills and customer credits outstanding | 1,016 | 2,245 |
| Trade creditors | <u>13,562</u> | <u>3,590</u> |

3 TRADE DEBTORS

| | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| This figure comprises: | | |
| | £000 | £000 |
| | 31.3.98 | 31.3.99 |
| Deposits lodged with suppliers | 96 | 77 |
| Customers' bills and supplier credits outstanding | 13,360 | 15,902 |
| Trade debtors | <u>13,456</u> | <u>15,979</u> |

4 CASH IN HAND AND AT BANK

| | | |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) The balance of cash in hand and at bank is made up as follows: | | |
| | £000 | £000 |
| | 31.3.98 | 31.3.99 |
| Cash at Paymaster General | 26,406 | 23,553 |
| Girobank | 5 | 4 |
| Cash in hand and at bank | <u>26,411</u> | <u>23,557</u> |
| (b) Analysis of changes in cash during the period: | | |
| | £000 | £000 |
| | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
| Balance at 1 April | 8,998 | 26,411 |
| Balance at 31 March | 26,411 | 23,557 |
| Increase/(Decrease) in cash | <u>17,413</u> | <u>(2,854)</u> |

5 INTEREST

| | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| | £000 | £000 |
| | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
| Interest received from the National Loans Fund | 159 | 186 |
| Interest received from the Paymaster General | 454 | 534 |
| | <u>613</u> | <u>720</u> |
| Interest paid on short-term borrowing | 191 | 377 |
| | <u>(191)</u> | <u>(377)</u> |
| Net cash inflow from returns on investments and servicing of finance | 422 | 343 |

6 CHANGE IN STOCKS OF FINISHED GOODS AND WORK IN PROGRESS

| | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| | £000 | £000 |
| | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
| (a) Closing work in progress – jobs: | | |
| Total expense on jobs | 112,365 | 179,099 |
| Less total income on jobs | 110,018 | 177,731 |
| | <u>2,347</u> | <u>1,368</u> |
| Plus transferred profit (loss) on jobs | 40 | 31 |
| Closing work in progress | 2,387 | 1,399 |
| Cross-divisional charges | – | – |
| Work in progress at 31 March | <u>2,387</u> | <u>1,399</u> |
| (b) Opening work in progress – jobs: | | |
| Total expense on jobs | 116,755 | 112,365 |
| Less total income on jobs | 114,453 | 110,018 |
| | <u>2,302</u> | <u>2,347</u> |
| Plus transferred profit (loss) on jobs | (52) | 40 |
| Closing work in progress | 2,250 | 2,387 |
| Cross-divisional charges | 72 | – |
| Work in progress at 1 April | <u>2,322</u> | <u>2,387</u> |
| (c) Change in stock of finished goods and work in progress | 65 | (988) |

7 OTHER OPERATING INCOME

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | £000 | £000 |
| | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
| Advertising discounts | 1,938 | 2,601 |
| Discounts received (prompt payment) | 109 | 13 |
| Rent received | 258 | 1,399 |
| Other operating income | <u>2,305</u> | <u>4,013</u> |

The discounts shown above are those which are receivable only after certain conditions have been met by COI (mainly higher volume). The major proportion of discounts negotiated by COI is trade discounts and they are received in the form of lower invoice cost. These are not therefore separately identified in the accounts. Similarly, prompt payment discounts are also received in the form of lower invoiced cost.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

8 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

The movement between the opening and closing balances is accounted for as follows (£000):

(a) Using the current cost accounting convention (in accordance with COI accounting policy note 1(c)):

| | New technology equipment | Equipment fixtures and fittings | TOTAL |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Gross Replacement Cost or Valuation | | | |
| Opening balance at 1.4.98 (as stated in 1997–98) | 1,738 | 1,212 | 2,950 |
| Adjustment (see note) | 559 | 55 | 614 |
| Revised Opening balance at 1.4.98 | 2,297 | 1,267 | 3,564 |
| Acquisitions during year | 248 | 104 | 352 |
| Add surplus on revaluation | (19) | (16) | (35) |
| Deduct disposals during year | (365) | (192) | (557) |
| Closing balance at 31.3.99 | 2,161 | 1,163 | 3,324 |
| Depreciation Provision | | | |
| Opening balance at 1.4.98 (as stated in 1997–98) | 629 | 811 | 1,440 |
| Adjustment (see note) | 651 | (37) | 614 |
| Revised Opening balance at 1.4.98 | 1,280 | 774 | 2,054 |
| Provided during the year | 461 | 137 | 598 |
| Surplus on revaluation | (71) | (40) | (111) |
| On disposals | (347) | (165) | (512) |
| At 31.3.99 | 1,323 | 706 | 2,029 |
| Net Book Value | | | |
| Opening balance at 1.4.98 (as stated in 1997–98) | 1,109 | 401 | 1,510 |
| Adjustment (see note) | (92) | 92 | – |
| Revised Opening balance at 1.4.98 | 1,017 | 493 | 1,510 |
| Closing balance at 31.3.99 | 838 | 457 | 1,295 |

(b) Using the historical cost accounting convention:

| | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| Original Cost or Valuation | | | |
| Opening balance at 1.4.98 (as stated in 1997–98) | 1,788 | 1,075 | 2,863 |
| Adjustment (see note) | 61 | 8 | 69 |
| Revised Opening balance at 1.4.98 | 1,849 | 1,083 | 2,932 |
| Acquisitions during year | 248 | 104 | 352 |
| Deduct disposals during year | (346) | (177) | (523) |
| Closing balance at 31.3.99 | 1,751 | 1,010 | 2,761 |
| Depreciation Provision | | | |
| Opening balance at 1.4.98 (as stated in 1997–98) | 404 | 1,005 | 1,409 |
| Adjustment (see note) | 378 | (407) | (29) |
| Revised Opening balance at 1.4.98 | 782 | 598 | 1,380 |
| Provided during the year | 412 | 134 | 546 |
| On disposals | (243) | (147) | (390) |
| At 31.3.99 | 951 | 585 | 1,536 |
| Present Historic Value | | | |
| Opening balance at 1.4.98 (as stated in 1997–98) | 1,384 | 70 | 1,454 |
| Adjustment (see note) | (317) | 415 | 98 |
| Revised Opening balance at 1.4.98 | 1,067 | 485 | 1,552 |
| Closing balance at 31.3.99 | 800 | 425 | 1,225 |

Note: In producing the closing balance sheet at 31 March 1998, a computer problem led to the misallocation of sums in the analysis of fixed assets, although the overall net figure was unaffected. This adjustment corrects the misallocation in the opening balances. These errors also carried through into the memorandum historical cost figures and these, too, have been amended.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

9 NET CASH INFLOW/(OUTFLOW) FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

| Reconciliation of surplus to net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities: | £000 1997-98 | £000 1998-99 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Retained surplus | 1,151 | 2,363 |
| Less net interest received | (422) | (343) |
| Depreciation | 637 | 598 |
| Loss on disposal of fixed assets | 149 | 22 |
| (Increase)/decrease in stock and work in progress | (67) | 1,007 |
| (Increase)/decrease in debtors | 11,220 | (2,648) |
| Increase/(decrease) in creditors | 5,552 | (3,362) |
| Early retirement costs | (376) | (505) |
| Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities | 17,843 | (2,868) |

10 CAPITAL

- (a) The COI Trading Fund was established on 1 April 1991 under the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 with an originating debt of £1,792,279.50. The debt comprised:
- Public Dividend Capital of £265,000 and
 - a deemed loan from the National Loans Fund of £1,527,279.50 bearing interest at 10.5 per cent and repayable, in equal instalments of capital, over six years. Repayment of the loan was completed during 1996-97.
- (b) Other long-term finance is provided by retained surpluses on the Income and Expenditure Account (note 11) and by the Revaluation Reserve (note 11) which represents changes made to the value to the business of fixed assets to reflect current costs.

11 RECONCILIATION OF MOVEMENT IN GOVERNMENT FUNDS

| | Public Dividend Capital £000 | Revaluation Reserve £000 | Income and Expenditure Account £000 | Total £000 |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---------------|
| At 1 April 1997 | 265 | 1,309 | (3,128) | (1,554) |
| Retained surplus for the year | | | 1,151 | 1,151 |
| Other recognised gains and losses: revaluation surplus | | 110 | | 110 |
| At 1 April 1998 | 265 | 1,419 | (1,977) | (293) |
| Retained surplus for the year | | | 2,363 | 2,363 |
| Other recognised gains and losses: revaluation surplus | | 76 | | 76 |
| At 31 March 1999 | 265 | 1,495 | 386 | 2,146 |

The revaluation reserve comprises the increase in gross replacement cost less prior year backlog depreciation on fixed assets. Income and Expenditure Account figures have been adjusted to reflect the change in accounting policy regarding notional insurance (see Note 1(b)). As a result, the balance at 1 April 1997 has been increased by £206,000 and the retained surplus for 1997-98 has been increased by £43,000, increasing the balance at 1 April 1998 by £249,000. The total of government funds at 1 April 1998 has not been affected.

12 OTHER EXTERNAL CHARGES

| Other external charges includes: | £000 1997-98 | £000 1998-99 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| Auditor's remuneration | 40 | 41 |
| Operating leases in respect of hire of plant and machinery | 140 | 117 |
| Operating leases in respect of office accommodation | 1,750 | 1,750 |

13 CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

At 31 March 1999 orders had been placed for capital expenditure to the value of £19,169 (£16,375).

14 FINANCIAL TARGET

COI was set a financial target of a surplus of £1,000,000. It achieved a surplus of £2,363,000 (£1,151,000 surplus in 1997-98).

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

15 STAFF

| (a) The average number of employees during the year was made up as follows: | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Permanent* | | |
| Class | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
| Unified Grades | 44.6 | 42.6 |
| Information | 153.4 | 184.0 |
| Administration | 94.3 | 94.8 |
| Support | 6.7 | 5.9 |
| Librarian | 1.0 | 2.3 |
| Secretarial | 6.3 | 6.0 |
| Totals | 306.3 | 335.6 |
| Casual | | |
| Class | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
| Unified Grades | - | - |
| Information | 4.8 | 2.4 |
| Administration | 4.1 | 4.2 |
| Support | - | - |
| Librarian | - | - |
| Secretarial | - | - |
| Totals | 8.9 | 6.6 |
| Total | | |
| Class | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
| Unified Grades | 44.6 | 42.6 |
| Information | 158.2 | 186.4 |
| Administration | 98.4 | 99.0 |
| Support | 6.7 | 5.9 |
| Librarian | 1.0 | 2.3 |
| Secretarial | 6.3 | 6.0 |
| Totals | 315.2 | 342.2 |

*Includes staff on fixed-term contracts of over one year

(b) Staff costs include the following Senior Civil Service posts (last year figures in brackets):

| | Pay Range |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2(2) Members of Management Team | £46,336-£73,246 (£44,826-£70,826) |
| 1(3) Members of Management Team | £50,906-£82,176 (£49,246-£79,456) |

(c) The Chief Executive received total actual remuneration including bonus and total benefits of:
 Tony Douglas £42,870 to 16.10.98 (£84,075)
 Keith Williamson £16,948 from 17.10.98 to 17.1.99 (£0)
 Carol Fisher £17,366 from 18.1.99 (£0)

The Chief Executive is an ordinary member of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme.

(d) All members of Management Team are employees of COI.

16 PENSIONS

- (a) The employees of COI are Civil Servants to whom the conditions of the Superannuation Acts 1965 and 1972 and subsequent amendments apply. For 1998-99 contributions of £1,363,594 (£1,096,625) were paid to the Paymaster General at rates determined from time to time by Government Actuary and advised by the Treasury. For non-industrial staff in 1998-99 these rates were 12.0 per cent for staff in Band 1, 13.5 per cent for staff in Band 2, 16.5 per cent for staff in Band 3 and 18.5 per cent for staff in Band 4. (In 1997-98 the rates were 11.0 per cent for staff at AO grade or below, 13.5 per cent for staff at EO and SEO grades, 17.5 per cent for staff at Grades 6 to 7 and 19.5 per cent for members of the Senior Civil Service.) There were no industrial staff in the year. The provision for future early retirement cost liabilities has been reduced by £505,000 (reduced by £376,000 in 1997-98).
- (b) Provisions for liabilities and charges are in respect of early retirement costs (see note 1(g)). The provision is made up as follows:

| | £000 | £000 |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| | 1997-98 | 1998-99 |
| Balance at 1 April | 2,957 | 2,581 |
| Released to Income and Expenditure Account | (733) | (607) |
| Increase in provision charged to Income and Expenditure Account | 357 | 102 |
| Balance at 31 March | 2,581 | 2,076 |
| The liability falls due in the following timescales: | | |
| | £000 | £000 |
| Within one year | 579 | 521 |
| Within two to five years | 1,506 | 1,271 |
| After five years | 496 | 284 |
| | 2,581 | 2,076 |

17 RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

COI has had a significant number of material transactions with other government departments and other central government bodies. The main transactions, by value, are shown in Table 1 on page 5 of the Annual Report.

During the year, none of the senior management or other related parties have undertaken any material transactions with COI.

STATEMENT OF TRADING FUND'S AND ACCOUNTING OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Under Section 4(6) of the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 the Treasury has directed the Central Office of Information Trading Fund to prepare a statement of accounts for each financial year in the form and on the basis set out in the accounts direction at Appendix 2 to these financial statements. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the Trading Fund's state of affairs at the year end and of its income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts the Trading Fund is required to:

- observe the accounts direction issued by the Treasury, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Trading Fund will continue in operation.

The Treasury has appointed the Accounting Officer of the Central Office of Information as the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer for the Central Office of Information Trading Fund. Her relevant responsibilities as Accounting Officer, including her responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which she is answerable and for the keeping of proper records, are set out in the Accounting Officers' Memorandum, issued by the Treasury and published in *Government Accounting*.

STATEMENT ON THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL FINANCIAL CONTROL

As Accounting Officer, I acknowledge my responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by the Central Office of Information (COI).

The system can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected within a timely period.

The system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information, administrative procedures including the segregation of duties, and a system of delegation and accountability. In particular, it includes

- comprehensive budgeting systems with an annual budget which is reviewed and agreed by the Management Team;
- regular reviews by the Management Team of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against the forecasts;
- setting targets to measure financial and other performance;
- clearly defined capital investment control guidelines;
- as appropriate, formal project management disciplines.

The Central Office of Information has an internal audit unit, which operates to standards defined in the Government Internal Audit Manual. The work of the internal audit unit is informed by an analysis of the risk to which COI is exposed and annual internal audit plans are based on this analysis. The analysis of risk and the internal audit plans are endorsed by COI's Management Team and approved by me. At least annually, the Head of Internal Audit (HIA) provides me with a report on internal audit activity in COI. The report includes the HIA's independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of COI's system of internal financial control.

My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the work of the internal auditors, the executive managers within COI who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the financial control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their management letter and other reports.



CAROL FISHER
Chief Executive

7 July 1999

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

I certify that I have audited the financial statements on pages 11 to 18 under the Government Trading Funds Act 1973. These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention as modified by the revaluation of certain fixed assets and the accounting policies set out on page 14.

Respective responsibilities of the Trading Fund, the Accounting Officer and Auditor

As described on page 19, the Trading Fund and the Accounting Officer are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for ensuring the regularity of financial transactions. The Trading Fund and the Accounting Officer are also responsible for the preparation of the other contents of the Annual Report. My responsibilities, as independent auditor, are established by statute and guided by the Auditing Practices Board and the auditing profession's ethical guidance.

I report my opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view and are properly prepared in accordance with the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 and Treasury directions made thereunder, and whether in all material respects the expenditure and income have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them. I also report if, in my opinion, the Foreword is not consistent with the financial statements, if the Trading Fund has not kept proper accounting records, or if I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit.

I read the other information contained in the Annual Report and consider whether it is consistent with the audited financial statements. I consider the implications for my certificate if I become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the financial statements.

I review whether the statement on page 20 reflects the Trading Fund's compliance with Treasury's guidance *Corporate governance: statement on the system of internal financial control*. I report if it does not meet the requirements specified by Treasury, or if the statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information I am aware of from my audit of the financial statements.

Basis of opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with Auditing Standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts, disclosures and regularity of financial transactions included in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the Trading Fund and the Accounting Officer in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Trading Fund's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

I planned and performed my audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which I considered necessary in order to provide me with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material mis-statement, whether caused by error, or by fraud or other irregularity and that, in all material respects, the expenditure and income have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them. In forming my opinion I have also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

Opinion

In my opinion:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Central Office of Information Trading Fund at 31 March 1999 and of the surplus, total recognised gains and losses and cash flows for the year then ended and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 and directions made thereunder by Treasury; and
- in all material respects the expenditure and income have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

JOHN BOURN
Comptroller and Auditor General

9 July 1999

National Audit Office
157–197 Buckingham Palace Road
Victoria
London
SW1W 9SP

APPENDIX

ACCOUNTS DIRECTION

THE CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION TRADING FUND (THE COI)

ACCOUNTS DIRECTION GIVEN BY THE TREASURY

The Treasury, in pursuance of Section 4(6) of the Government Trading Funds Act 1973, hereby gives the following Direction:

1. The statement of accounts which it is the duty of the COI to prepare in respect of the financial year ended 31 March 1992 and in respect of any subsequent financial year shall comprise:

- (a) a Foreword;
- (b) an Income and Expenditure Account;
- (c) a Balance Sheet; and
- (d) a Cash Flow Statement

including in each case such notes as may be necessary for the purposes referred to in the following paragraphs.

2. The COI shall observe all relevant accounting and disclosure requirements given in *Government Accounting* and in the Treasury booklet *Trading Accounts: A Guide for Government Departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies* (the 'Trading Accounts booklet') as amended or augmented from time to time.

3. The statement of accounts referred to above shall give a true and fair view of the income and expenditure, state of affairs and cash flow of the COI. Subject to the foregoing requirement, the statement of accounts shall also, without limiting the information given and as described in Schedule 1 of this Direction, meet:

- (a) the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act;

- (b) best commercial accounting practices including accounting standards issued or adopted by the Accounting Standards Board; and

- (c) any disclosure and accounting requirements which the Treasury may issue from time to time in respect of accounts which are required to give a true and fair view

insofar as these are appropriate to the COI and are in force for the financial period for which the statement of accounts is to be prepared.

4. The opening balance sheet shall be prepared so as to include assets and liabilities appropriated to the fund by the Central Office of Information Trading Fund Order 1991 establishing the fund and the subsequent Central Office of Information Trading Fund (Variation) Order 1992.

5. Additional disclosure requirements are set out in Schedule 2 of this Direction.

6. The Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet shall be prepared under the historical cost convention modified by the inclusion of fixed assets at their value to the business by reference to current costs.

Dated: 10 March 1992

Signed: J S Beastall

Treasury Officer of Accounts

SCHEDULE 1

APPLICATION OF THE COMPANIES ACTS' REQUIREMENTS

1. The disclosure exemptions permitted by the Companies Act in force for the financial period for which the statement of accounts is to be prepared shall not apply to the COI unless specifically approved by the Treasury.
2. The Foreword shall contain the information required by the Companies Act to be disclosed in the Directors' Report, to the extent that such requirements are appropriate to the COI.
3. In preparing its Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet, the COI shall adopt respectively format 2 and format 1 prescribed in Schedule 4 to the Companies Act 1985 to the extent that such requirements are appropriate to the COI. Regard should be had to the examples in Annex C of the Trading Accounts booklet, in particular the need to strike the Balance Sheet totals at 'Total Assets less Current Liabilities'.
4. The Foreword and Balance Sheet shall be signed and dated.

SCHEDULE 2

ADDITIONAL DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

1. The Foreword shall state that the accounts have been prepared in accordance with a direction given by the Treasury in pursuance of Section 4(6) of the Government Trading Funds Act 1973.
2. The Foreword shall include a brief history of the COI and its statutory background. Regard should be had to Annexes B and C of the Trading Accounts booklet.
3. The COI shall have regard to any accounting and disclosure requirements which the Treasury may issue from time to time in respect of accounts which are required to give a true and fair view.

UNAUDITED EXTRACT OF APPROPRIATION ACCOUNT

CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION

1998-99 CLASS XVII, VOTE 3

ACCOUNT of the sum expended, in the year ended 31 March 1999, compared with the sum granted, for expenditure by the Central Office of Information on allied service work and payments to the Royal Household for the procurement of communications and information services.

ACCOUNT

| Service | Grant £000 | Expenditure £000 | Expenditure compared with Grant | |
|--|---------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | | | Less than Granted £000 | More than Granted £000 |
| PUBLICITY | | | | |
| A Publicity and advisory services | 711 | 711 | - | - |
| B Grant-in-aid to the Royal Household for the procurement of communications and information services | 471 | 471 | - | - |
| Total | 1,182 | 1,182 | - | - |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Surplus | 0 |
| Actual surplus to be surrendered | £0 |

The surplus of £105,962.90 shown in the Account for the Vote for Publicity, Central Office of Information, Class XVII, Vote 3, for the year ended 31 March 1998 has been surrendered.

Accounting Officer

1999

COI SERVICES AND CONTACTS

Client Service Group

COI's newly created Client Service Group provides cross-functional input and strategic consultancy for clients. COI develops creative and innovative communication strategies which deliver effective results. The Group offers clients: a dedicated client service team; strategic consultancy; internal communications consultancy; effectiveness measurement; and specialist audiences advisory service.

Group Director – Ian Hamilton

Tel: 0171 261 8495

Fax: 0171 928 6093

E-mail: ihamilto@coi.gov.uk

Marketing Communications Group

Integrated Marketing

COI designs and implements marketing strategies, providing advice on budget setting and inter-media decisions. As a marketing consultancy COI integrates a comprehensive mix of marketing tools to achieve effective results.

Advertising

COI project manages advertising campaigns to ensure client objectives are achieved. From appointing an agency, to carrying out research and analysing the response, COI will initiate a campaign and manage it through to completion. COI's centralised media buying unit also enables clients, whether large or small, to gain maximum value for money.

Direct Marketing

COI's direct marketing services include: telemarketing; response fulfilment; direct mail; household drops; and inserts. Clients are assisted in the planning, procurement, project management and evaluation of all activities. Bulk and complex distributions are also undertaken, as well as database construction and application.

Research

COI uses its research expertise to create effective and measurable communication strategies. With its in-depth knowledge of the research industry, COI devises, plans and manages strategic, developmental and evaluation research for all types of communication.

Sponsorship and Campaign Promotion

COI generates financial and in-kind support for government and public sector initiatives and co-ordinates editorial activity to promote campaigns through the media. Services include: project management; consultancy; strategic and tactical planning; research; editorial services; and merchandising.

Group Director – Peter Buchanan

Tel: 0171 261 8386

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E-mail: pbuchana@coi.gov.uk

Films, Radio and Events Group

Film and video

COI undertakes the procurement and management of TV commercials, public service TV fillers, corporate and specialist videos, video news releases, CD-ROMs and websites involving new video footage. COI also markets TV fillers to BBC, ITV, cable and satellite stations and distributes corporate and specialist videos, selected footage, film and video programmes.

Radio

COI procures and manages the production of radio commercials, audio tapes, live interviews, editorial material, public service fillers and audio material for websites. In addition COI provides broadcast equipment for media events, conferences, and outside broadcasts.

Events Management and Technical Services

COI supplies logistical and technical services for large and small conferences, seminars, press launches and exhibitions, in the UK and overseas. Services include: supplying and procuring equipment for outside broadcasts; duplicating videos; and Houses of Parliament TV and audio links.

Group Director – Sally Whetton

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E-mail: swhetton@coi.gov.uk

Publications Group

Publications

COI produces printed and screen-based publicity and public information material. Formats include: brochures; posters; annual reports; catalogues; electronic publications; newsletters; and bulletins. COI's in-house resource provides a full range of creative

services and specialist expertise from writing, editing and proofreading, to designing layout and procurement of print production.

Translations

COI translates any written material to help clients communicate with an overseas audience, or ethnic minority in the UK. Press releases, brochures, posters, audio or video scripts can be translated into any major overseas or ethnic minority language.

New Media

COI provides expert advice on the latest media advancements. Services include: website design and production; day-to-day management of websites; programming and production of CD-ROMs; kiosks; and other digital media – helping clients to make the most of today's technology.

Group Director – Michael Reid

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Network Group

News Distribution Service (NDS)

COI distributes news releases to national broadcast and print media as well as the main regional groups in the UK. Operating a 24-hour service, news releases are sent by-hand or electronically. News is also distributed on the Internet and CD-ROM.

Regional Network

COI operates a network of 12 regional offices to manage publicity campaigns across the UK. Services include: representing clients to regional news media; adapting press releases and writing features for a local audience; organising VIP visits; media monitoring and analysis; media training; emergency media planning; and crisis management.

Regional Publicity

COI implements regionally focused communications through its countrywide network. Services include: advertising; media buying; brochures/leaflets; television, radio and video services; and exhibitions.

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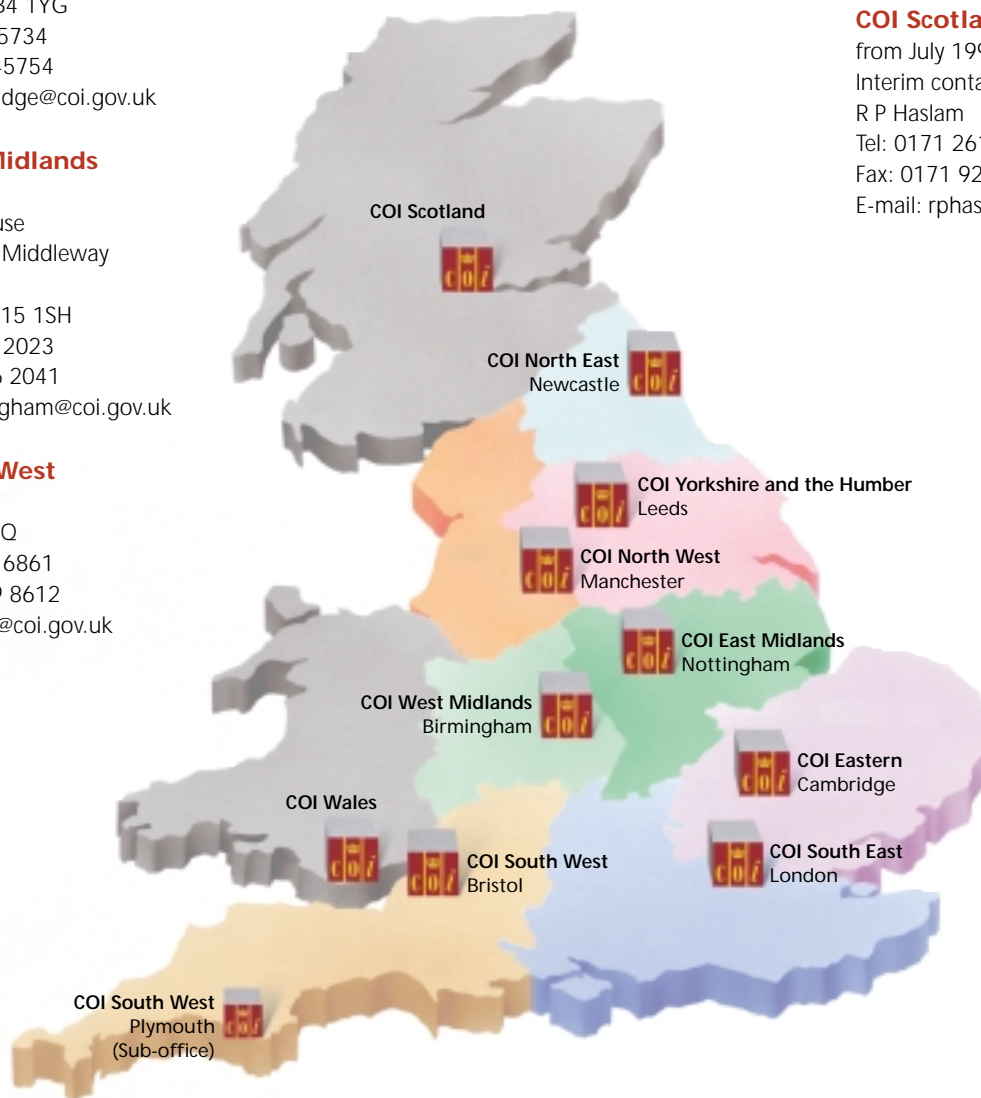
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