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Communications study of East Midlands Arts

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COMMUNICATIONS STUDY
OF
EAST MIDLANDS ARTS

by

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A Master's Dissertation, submitted
in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the
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1. ABSTRACT

This is the report of a study made of outgoing communication items produced by the Regional Arts Association, East Midlands Arts. The criteria by which the material was judged came from the Association's objectives, as stated in its constitution. The techniques used to gather data were: examination of printed communication; semi-structured interviews; and observation of the organisation in action.

The report opens with a review of communication theory, with particular reference to the methodology used for "communication audits", or investigations. This is followed by background information on arts administration in England, to place East Midlands Arts in context.

Preparatory research for the study itself takes the form of an analysis of the implications of the Association's objectives for communication. Groups for which information should be provided are identified and research methods selected. Communication items are then examined in the light of the objectives, with comments reinforced by arts officers' remarks and personal observation. Issues arising are discussed separately, such as factors influencing communication and, an issue of great interest to the Association, corporate identity.

It is concluded that the communication items fulfil the Association's objectives, but standardised presentation of material, notably format and labelling, is recommended to promote the image of East Midlands Arts.

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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3. INTRODUCTION

Communication is the transfer of information from one point to another. It involves not only content, but also presentation and distribution, to ensure that the information is received, read and understood by its intended audience. The dissemination of information is of great importance to all organisations, particularly information centres. As early as 1965, Barbara Kyle commented that "librarianship no longer deals with packaged information" <1>. In order to be useful, information has to be communicated to the people who need it. The receipt of information by clients also benefits the organisation which sends it by improving its image, provided that the communication is relevant and well presented.

The organisation which has been chosen as the example in this communications study is the East Midlands Arts Association, referred to in this report as either East Midlands Arts or the Association, which is the Regional Arts Association for Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire (excluding the High Peak District) <2>. Regional Arts Associations are independent autonomous bodies which are funded by and work in partnership with both the Arts Council and local authorities <3>. Further discussion of their structure follows in the next chapter (4.2.2) and so at this point it is sufficient to state that as well as funding local artists, they provide a service of information, planning and guidance. The Council of Regional Arts Associations states that the associations can be "reasonably required" to produce "accurate regional information services" <4>. It is this

outgoing communication which is the subject of this study.

Presentation of external communication is an issue of particular concern to East Midlands Arts at present: with the move towards business sponsorship for funding the arts, it is necessary for the Association to present a good image. A recent internal report on the subject of corporate communication stated:

" It is important to realise that it is not just "communication", but the "image" that a company ultimately projects as a result of its Corporate Communication, good or bad, that is all important." <5>

The report concludes that "not to communicate is to communicate negatively" <6>. The aim of this document was to get the staff of the Association to think about the communications items which they were producing in the context of the organisation as a whole. It is in the aftermath of the report that this communications study was carried out.

3.1 ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

An "organisation" is defined by Robinson and Courtis as "a group of people arranged in a structure with an identifiable objective" <7>. Both the structure and the objectives are therefore key factors in understanding an organisation and are examined in the next two chapters respectively. The nature of the structure and the aims also affect both how communications should operate in theory and how they work in practice.

In its widest sense, the study of organisational communication "takes into account perceptions of

communication patterns, information needs, and the use of various communication channels, including electronic" <8>. According to Leyton, in *The art of communication*, theories of information and communication are mainly "physical and mathematical in origin. They are concerned chiefly with the rate, range and form in which information can be given" <9>. Communications studies can measure a number of different aspects of communication in various ways. The informal communication networks are just as important as the formal ones. Cronin argues that informal networks serve two purposes: they ensure that people are kept up to date; and they reinforce the group's sense of identity and purpose <10>. To simplify the examination of communication flows, the Open University text *The dissemination of information: communication and education* includes the recommendation that "a communication system can be viewed as analogous to a transportation system, and it is helpful in studying the dissemination of information to look at "traffic" patterns" <11>.

When considering external communication, it is necessary to find out how accessible copies of printed information are to their intended audience. People will use a source which is readily available. In his study of the flow of technical information, Thomas Allen found that engineers ranked accessibility of a source above its quality <12>. This accords with Zipf's Principle of Least Effort: Zipf states that "each individual will adopt a course of action that will involve the expenditure of the probably least average of his work (by definition, least effort)" <13>. In the case of information about arts events, it is particularly important to remember that people will not go out of their way to find out about them.

3.2 THE COMMUNICATION AUDIT

Surveys of organisational communication are often referred to as "communication audits".

3.2.1 Definition

The term "audit" is taken from an analogy with financial examinations <14> and is presumably intended to underline the quantitative element in communication audits. Cortez and Bunge define it as "a fact-finding analysis, interpretation, and reporting process that studies the communication philosophy, structure, flow and practice of an organisation" <15>. Booth's initial definition of a communication audit as "an activity which involves the measurement and analysis of communications within an organisation" <16> agrees with this. He then goes on to redefine the communication audit, however, to incorporate the purpose of the study into his definition:

" The process whereby the communications within an organisation are analysed by an internal or external consultant, with a view to increasing organisational efficiency." <17>

The inclusion of the comment on increasing efficiency accords with the theory held by Reeves and Harper that "the ultimate purpose of organisational surveys is to produce changes in an organisation" <18>. It is unrealistic to propose that a report should aim to change an organisation, since a thorough survey will produce comments on strengths as much as weaknesses <19>.

Reeves and Harper go on to state that an organisational survey should contribute towards making the organisation "more effective in achieving its objectives" <20>. It is the objectives of East Midlands Arts which are examined in

relation to its communication in this report.

3.2.2 History

The term "communication audit" has been in use since the 1950s <21>. As Booth has pointed out, however, assessments of communication took place before then, albeit by other names <22>. Much of the development of the techniques used took place during the 1970s <23> and during the 1980s they have become increasingly widely used by both commercial and non-profit making organisations <24>.

3.2.3 Techniques

A wide variety of techniques are used to audit communication. Booth lists the techniques which are most frequently used in Britain, in descending frequency of usage:

- " Structured interviews
- Unstructured interviews
- Questionnaires
- Group discussions
- Network analysis or socio-grams
- Communications diaries
- Telephone call logging/monitoring
- In tray/out tray analysis " <25>

Most of these techniques are self-explanatory. A brief description of network analysis may be necessary, however. Network analysis is a process used to examine internal communications by asking the staff of an organisation to assess the number of times that they communicate with other employees on both a formal and an informal level. On the basis of this information, a network of links between communicating members can be drawn <26>. This can be used as a means of discovering how ideas evolve as well as

charting the flow of information <27>. Although it was decided not to use network analysis as a tool in this study, the concept of networks of information flow within an organisation is a helpful one. These internal communications effect the content of the outgoing material and also the corporate image of the organisation. This is recognised in the East Midlands Arts report, *Corporate communication*:

" The relationship between external and internal communications is where the weak link in communication often begins...It is imperative that internal communication is stable and has a sound base before restructuring and increasing external communication of the organisation." <28>

Due to the relationship between internal and external communication, the comments made on outgoing material in this report are informed by comments made by staff and observation of the Association in operation. Further details of the techniques used for this study follow in Chapter 5 of this report.

Outgoing communication and the standards by which it is judged are influenced by many factors both inside and outside the immediate organisation. In order to place East Midlands Arts in context, Chapter 4 gives the background to arts administration in this country. The Association's objectives are examined in 5.3.1 in terms of their implications for communication. These then form the criteria by which to judge how well the material produced by East Midlands Arts meets its objectives.

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4. BACKGROUND

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to study the communication of a Regional Arts Association in context, it is necessary to see it within the context of arts administration in the country as a whole. A certain amount of historical detail is needed to explain this structure and the issues which are currently affecting arts administration. In the light of this, the organisational structure of East Midlands Arts itself can be examined.

4.2 ARTS ADMINISTRATION

Arts administration is essentially a practical business concerned with the managing of people, buildings and financial resources <1>. Hence arts officers have to be good organisers and, since they are dealing with a range of clients outside their immediate organisations, good communicators <2>. The term "client" is used in this context to refer to societies and individuals receiving either advice or funding from the Regional Arts Association or directly from the Arts Council.

4.2.1 The Arts Council

The Arts Council of Great Britain was established in 1945, taking over from the Council for the Encouragement of the Arts <3>. It is the body which is responsible for

administering government funding of the arts in England, there being separate councils in Scotland and Wales: the Scottish Arts Council and the Welsh Arts Council <4>. The role of the Arts Council is summarised in the 1967 charter:

" to develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts; to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public throughout Great Britain; and to advise and cooperate with Government Departments, local authorities and other bodies on any matters concerned whether directly or indirectly with the foregoing objects." <5>

On a regional level, these objectives are adapted to meet local needs and are put into action by the Regional Arts Associations, which remain independent of the Arts Council, but act as a channel for much of their funding.

4.2.2 Regional Arts Associations

The 12 Regional Arts Associations are independent autonomous bodies which are funded by and work in partnership with the Arts Council and local authorities <6>. They were created by the people in the regions rather than by any central administration <7>. Most of their funding comes from the Arts Council (80% in most cases), but some of the associations, including East Midlands Arts, also receive funding from the British Film Institute and the Crafts Council <8>.

The regions are organisationally sensible groupings of local authorities which may or may not have a sense of cultural identity <9>. The associations develop their own policies which are designed to complement the national objectives of

the Arts Council and to meet the needs of their particular regions <10>. Being based in the area which they serve, they are better placed for making decisions on a local level than any London-based organisation could be <11>. As a result, the Regional Arts Associations were ideally placed when the Arts Council introduced the policy of devolution discussed below. In his report to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Redcliffe-Maud commented that "if Regional Arts Associations did not exist in all parts of England and Wales, we would have to invent them" <12>.

4.3 ISSUES FACING ARTS ADMINISTRATION

In order to understand the way in which arts administration is developing, it is necessary to look at the issues which are being raised at present and which have been raised in the recent past. The most major shift during the 1980's was the devolution of authority from the Arts Council to the Regional Arts Associations. In preparing for the 1990's, the pressure is to increase the level of business sponsorship of the arts. These factors have influenced the recent development of arts administration and are continuing to affect the future.

4.3.1 Devolution

The devolution of authority to the Regional Arts Associations was announced by the Arts Council in *The glory of the garden* <13>. The power which was decentralised after the publication of this report consisted of "responsibility for the funding and assessment of those clients whose role and character make them appropriate candidates for assessment at a regional level" <14>. As a direct result of this, East Midlands Arts took responsibility for the Derby Playhouse, the Northampton Repertory Players and the Perspectives Theatre Cooperative <15>. The long-term

implications of devolution are more far-reaching, however, since it increases the authority of the Regional Arts Associations within their own areas. Precautionary measures have been taken by the Arts Council to ensure that the funds given to the associations on the behalf of former direct grant theatres and societies are correctly channelled <16>, so power has not been completely decentralised.

The principle of decentralised administration has been embodied in the Arts Council since its foundation. Maynard Keynes, the first Chairman of the Arts Council, gave a talk on the radio in July 1945 in which he expressed great concern for the regional distribution of the arts:

" We of the Arts Council are greatly concerned to decentralise and disperse the dramatic and musical and artistic life of this country, to build up provincial centres and to promote corporate life in these matters in every town and county. It is not our intention to act on our own where we can avoid it." <17>

This is quoted by Sir William Rees-Mogg in his preface to *The glory of the garden* and expanded into the ideal of devolution as "we are not people who believe that London always knows best" <18>.

The immediate response of East Midlands Arts is incorporated into the report *Working together* <19>. The Association welcomed the Arts Council's commitment to decentralisation and accepted responsibility for the Derby Playhouse, the Northampton Royal Theatre and the Perspectives Theatre Company, but only if sufficient funding was provided <20>. It is this practical side of arts administration which was emphasised in the Arts Council report, taking its title, *The*

glory of the garden, from the poem of the same name by
Rudyard Kipling:

"Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing: "Oh, how beautiful!" and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working
lives
At grubbing weeds from gravel-paths with broken dinner-
knives." <21>

4.3.2 Sponsorship

Patronage of the arts has taken place for hundreds of years. Nicholas Pearson commented in his study *The State and the visual arts* that State patronage of the arts has been used to promote "authority and power" for "as long as the history of governments and States" <22>. According to the Central Office of Information, a sponsor is distinguished from a patron as he "gives money with an expectation of a return" <23>.

Whatever the ethical implications of business sponsorship, decreasing resources make it necessary. This has implications for communication, since in order to attract sponsors "a well prepared attractive case" <24> has to be presented to potential sponsors. Regional Arts Associations have to respond to the challenge of attracting business sponsorship in two ways: by advising their clients on how to attract sponsorship; and by trying to do the same for themselves.

4.4 EAST MIDLANDS ARTS

Having outlined the relationship of the Regional Arts Associations to the Arts Council and the issues facing the associations, the way has been prepared for a closer examination of East Midlands Arts itself.

4.4.1 Development

East Midlands Arts is the Regional Arts Association covering Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire (excluding the High Peak District) as well as funding the Buckinghamshire Arts Association <25>. It was formed in 1970 when the former Midlands Arts Association, which covered nine counties, was divided into two parts <26>. Since 1970, the staff has grown from 2 members to 27 and the Association's income has increased from £31,000 to £31,818,194 <27>.

4.4.2 Location

The Association is based in Loughborough at Mountfields House, off Forest Road. It is thus approximately half-way between two of the cities which it serves: Leicester and Nottingham. It is also a few minutes drive away from junction 23 of the M1, which makes directions straight forward, although it is on the opposite side of Loughborough from the railway station. Further discussion of Mountfields House itself, and the impact of the layout of the building upon communication, follows in Chapter 7 of this report.

4.4.3 Organisational structure

In addition to the staff of East Midlands Arts, various bodies, such as councils and educational establishments, are represented on a number of committees. It is through these committees that the main administrative and policy decisions

are made. the details of the organisational structure of the Association are taken from the constitution <28> unless otherwise stated.

a) Meetings of the Association

The Annual General Meeting, to which all Members of the Association are invited, takes place as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year, which is usually late September. To be quorate, 30 Members need to be present. The Chairman of the Executive Committee presides over the meeting, which considers and, if approved, adopts the annual report and accounts as well as appointing auditors and discussing any other business.

In addition to the Annual General Meeting, special meetings of the Association may be called at any time by the Chairman or fifteen Members.

b) Executive Committee

Responsibility for ensuring that the Association achieves its objectives, general management and overall financial control lie with the Executive Committee. The composition of this committee may be seen in Table 1 (see following page). Since 1987, members of the public have been welcome to attend the meetings of the Executive Committee <30>, which meets at least four times a year. The quorum for the committee is 15.

The Executive Committee appoints the Policy and Finance Committee, the Advisory Panels and any working parties which are required for special projects.

Table 1: Composition of the Executive Committee <29>

<u>Institutions</u>	<u>No. reps</u>
County Councils	16
City Councils	9
Districts	12
Universities and Colleges	6
Confederation of British Industry	1
Department of Education and Science	1
East Midlands Area Museum Service	1
Eastern Orchestral Board	1
Trades Union Congress	1
Annual General Meeting nominees (art form specialists)	15
Arts Council of Great Britain	4
British Film Institute	1
Crafts Council	1

c) *Policy and Finance Committee*

The Policy and Finance Committee is responsible for the day to day management of East Midlands Arts. It has power to approve financial recommendations made by the Advisory Panels and to determine financial expenditure and administration. Meetings take place at least six times a year with a quorum of eight people.

d) *Advisory Panels*

These are not specified in the constitution, so as to leave the Executive Committee free to instigate such panels as are necessary. In most cases, the panels cover a particular art form. There are eight panels at present: Art, Craft and Photography; Combined Arts; Dance and Mime; Drama; Film, Video and Television; Literature; Music; and Marketing and Communications <31>. These panels report to the Policy and Finance Committee and the Executive Committee on any issues which they are asked to consider.

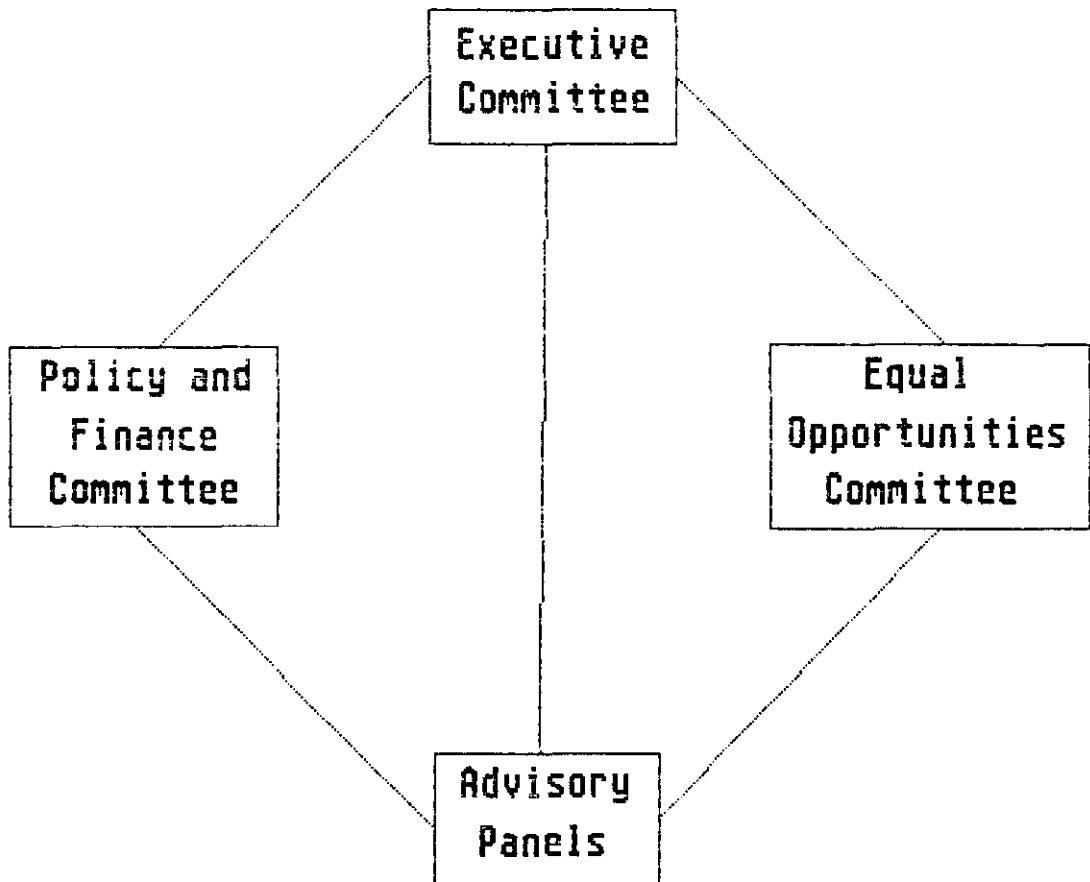
e) *Equal Opportunities Committee*

This committee advises the Association on the implementation of its Equal Opportunities policy. Representatives from each of the Advisory Panels serve on the committee. It is chaired by the Chairman of East Midlands Arts on an *ex officio* basis, reflecting the importance which the Association attaches to Equal Opportunities <32>.

When the different committees are listed in this fashion, it may appear that they are all separate. In reality, however, representatives from one committee will sit on another. This has important implications for the transfer of information within the organisation. The links between the committees are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Relationship between the Association's Committees

Lines between boxes indicate direct relationships due to representatives sitting on other committees <33>.



The description of the structure of arts administration in this country and East Midlands Arts in particular forms the backdrop to this communications study. In order to examine the outgoing information from an organisation it is necessary to see it in the light of the system as a whole and the immediate organisational structure, since these factors inevitably influence communication.

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- 33) Figure based on details from the Association's constitution and information pack.

5. PREPARATORY RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As has already been stated, the aim of this investigation was to study the outgoing communication of East Midlands Arts. In this section the preparatory research and the choice of methods used are discussed. This includes an examination of the objectives of the Association to reveal their implications for communication.

5.2 CHOICE OF SUBJECT

It was decided that it was more appropriate to study external than internal communication as it involved less staff time and was probably of more interest to the Association. A list of proposals for specific areas of study was presented to the Deputy Director, Mike Hussey (see Appendix 2). The proposals were discussed by the arts officers at their weekly meeting on June 19th 1989. On the basis of this the specific area of study was chosen:

Study of external communication in
comparison with the stated objectives
of East Midlands Arts (as taken from
the constitution).

5.3 METHODOLOGY

In order to evaluate the communications of East Midlands Arts in the light of its stated objectives, the aims of the Association itself had to be examined in terms of their implications for communication. Once this theoretical stage had been completed, the practical analysis could begin: an evaluation of communication items; and discussion of the subject with arts officers.

5.3.1 Examination of the objectives of the Association

The objectives of East Midlands Arts are stated in its constitution and can be found in full in Appendix 1. Keeping to stated objectives is ranked very highly by the Regional Arts Authorities and the Arts Council when they are evaluating potential clients for funding <1>. Hence it is important that East Midlands Arts should be seen to keep to its own criteria by keeping to the necessary levels of communication implied by the constitution. The last of the listed objectives is "to do all such things as are necessary to the attainment of the foregoing objects" <2>. In other words, the Association has committed itself to undertaking any communication which is necessary for it to fulfil its role.

The summary preceding the listed objectives states that "the objects of the Association shall be to foster and promote the maintenance, improvement and development of artistic taste and knowledge, understanding and appreciation amongst the inhabitants of the East Midlands" <3>. This phrasing can be broken down further and examined in terms of its implications for communication. The primary practical element involved in fostering the arts is funding, in which case the grants which are available should be widely advertised; there is also the advice element, which should

be given readily. Promoting the arts entails not only advertising, but also support through personal contacts and publications. The phrase "the maintenance, improvement and development of artistic taste" is more difficult to pinpoint in terms of how it should be facilitated by communication. Artistic taste is a personal quality and can only be acted on by an organisation through a current awareness service. This ensures that people are aware of the range of artistic ventures in the region. Increasing knowledge and understanding of the arts is a matter of education, or communicating information to the general public, either through printed information, training or encouraging participation. Clients also need to be advised as to how to educate their audiences. Finally, enjoyment and appreciation of the arts can be increased by ensuring that the quality of productions, facilities and information is high.

East Midlands Arts list six objectives in addition to the catch-all clause about doing all such things as are necessary to fulfil its objectives. These objectives are listed below with further comments:

"a) to increase the accessibility of the arts" <4>

For the arts to be accessible they need to be known about, or advertised, and also to have adequate venues, which can be reached easily and provide facilities for the disabled. The Equal Opportunities policy of East Midlands Arts used to be incorporated into the list of objectives, but was expanded as a separate clause at the Annual General Meeting in 1987 <5>. Nonetheless, it seems appropriate to mention it here. Equal Opportunities in relation to the arts does not just apply to the employment of officers by the Association, but also to the services provided and supported by it. In terms of communication, information has to be available to as wide an audience as possible by being well distributed

and, if practicable, available in non-print format - such as tapes - and languages other than English.

"b) to improve standards of execution and appreciation of the arts" <6>

To improve execution, East Midlands Arts has to fulfil an advisory role as well as funding and providing facilities. This involves personal contact with the clients. As stated above, it is difficult to improve individuals' appreciation of the arts except through ensuring that they are aware of what is going on and by providing high quality information.

"c) to encourage and assist in promoting and advancing the practice, presentation and study of the arts" <7>

The wording "to encourage and assist" suggests an active role and seems to imply that the Association should have a recognised public image so as to be well known and remembered by the people whom it could help. The advancing of "the practice, presentation and study of the arts" again suggests that East Midlands Arts should be advising, informing and training people.

"d) to co-operate with or give assistance to any association, society or organisation, corporate or unincorporate, established for charitable purposes only and have objects wholly or partially similar to those of the Association" <8>

Contact with other organisations is a wider liaison role which involves personal contact on both a formal and an informal level, as is covered under the next objective.

"e) to bring together and co-ordinate the efforts of local authorities, organisations, societies and individuals concerned or interested in the attainment of all or any of the objects of the Association" <9>

East Midlands Arts provides a meeting point or communication

channel which involves acting as a gatekeeper for arts in the region by negotiating meetings and distributing information. This all-embracing object is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is important to note that it is a changing aspect of the Association's work due to the increasing emphasis upon business sponsorship for funding. In order to create a good impression, attractive presentation and perceived effectiveness are vital.

"f) to take any steps to secure the provision and development of suitable buildings, including arts centres, where the arts may be practiced, presented and studied, and the provision and development in any such buildings or facilities for such purposes elsewhere, and to seek to ensure that such buildings or facilities provide proper access for people with disabilities"

<10>

Again, the provision and development of facilities involves negotiations with councils, local authorities and other relevant bodies. Access for the disabled brings up the issue of Equal Opportunities once more. The provision of such a service boosts the image of East Midlands Arts, but in order to make the most of this as public relations material it would have to be well advertised - which would further increase accessibility through increased awareness.

It has been necessary to look at the objectives of East Midlands Arts in some detail in order to establish what its aims are in terms of communication. On the basis of the objectives it can be seen that there are five main groups which need to be contacted: clients, including potential clients; local societies and organisations; local authorities; national funding bodies; and the general public. In most of these instances the requisite roles are those of negotiator and informer. It is the position of the Association as an informer which will be considered in more detail through an examination of its printed outgoing

communication. Although potential business sponsors are not specifically mentioned in the objectives, it seems appropriate in the present climate that they should also be considered as recipients of information.

5.3.2 Research methods

It was decided that to compare the ideal situation outlined in the objectives with the reality, printed outgoing communication items should be evaluated. The term "communication item" in this context covers not only publications, such as magazines, newsletters and directories, but also forms. As there is no complete list of the Association's productions, it was necessary to approach each department individually. This meant that contact was made with the individual arts officers.

Prior to seeing the arts officers, a handout was issued (Appendix 3). This notified them of the nature of the study and also of the anticipated duration of the interview and the types of information required. This was intended to give the arts officers time to prepare for the meetings, by collating material, and also to avoid the need for structured interviews. As the different departments all work in very different ways, no one interview structure would have been universally appropriate.

In conclusion, the data for this report was gathered using semi-structured interviews, observation of the organisation in action and evaluation of printed communication items.

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- 6) EAST MIDLANDS ARTS ASSOCIATION. *Constitution adopted at a special meeting of the Association held on 22 March, 1974, incorporating amendments approved up to and including 25 September, 1987*, [unpublished], 1. (See Appendix 1)
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6. EXAMINATION OF PRINTED COMMUNICATION ITEMS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter forms an examination of the printed outgoing "communication items" produced by East Midlands Arts. Within the scope of this report it is impossible to comment on all the materials considered during this study. A selection of materials have been chosen to give some indication of the range of communication items produced. Each of these items is described and then compared with the objectives of the Association. In conclusion, there is a general summary of the communication items produced to fulfil the Association's objectives.

6.2 ANNUAL REPORT

The *Annual report* produced by East Midlands Arts has a wide readership and is one of the few documents which represents all of the Association's departments together, rather than unilaterally. Its importance is perceived in the report *Corporate communication* :

" The most important and useful corporate communication tool is the Annual Report. It gives the Association the chance to present itself coherently. The Annual Report should take into account the Association's past, present and future. The past is important for placing the Association in context, which in the Annual Report

happens in the accounts, the present and future goals and expectations, should be summed up (hopefully succinctly and clearly) in the Chairman and Director's statements." <1>

In order to place itself in context, the Association has to see itself within the sphere of contemporary arts administration as well as its own history. This wider identity, beyond the immediate organisation, was brought up by the Association in its response to *The glory of the garden, Working together*. The main theme of *Working together* is "partnership" <2> and so the comments on corporate image include awareness of the development of the Arts Council:

"...East Midlands Arts must be aware both of its own identity (corporate image) and that being developed by the Arts Council, so that it may develop favourably and cohesively." <3>

In view of these comments, it is rewarding to consider the annual report produced by East Midlands Arts in the light of that published by the Arts Council. The format and presentation of the reports are given particular prominence since it is hoped to use the East Midlands Arts report as a tool to attract business sponsorship <4>. This being the case, the first impression of the document is very important.

6.2.1 Arts Council annual report

The Arts Council *Annual report, 1987/88* <5> is in a larger format than that for the preceding year. Whereas the 1986/87 report <6> is 7.75" square, the most recent report has returned to the more standard A4 format. The report has also been recombined with the accounts, contrary to the

practice of recent years.

The 1987/88 report opens with a summary of the Arts Council's objectives on the inside of the front cover. A reader's first impression is therefore of the weighting given to these objectives by the Council. The contents of the report are then listed, with reports on particular art forms compiled on a departmental basis. Interestingly, the departmental reports were preceded by a section on general highlights in 1986/87, which has since been dropped. The concept of general highlights has been taken up by East Midlands Arts to the exclusion of departmental reports, as is discussed below.

One of the items listed in the index is a report summary for the partially sighted, in line with the Art Council's policy on Equal Opportunities. The summary is printed clearly in black on white, with a prompt to remind readers that the report is also available on tape. It is unclear, however, how the partially sighted reader is expected to locate a page in the centre of the volume from the small print notification on the index page.

6.2.2 East Midlands Arts annual report

Like the Arts Council, East Midlands Arts have made radical alterations to the presentation of their annual report for 1987/88 <7>. East Midlands Arts' *Report and accounts, 1987/88*, as its title suggests, includes the Association's accounts with the annual report. Whereas the format of the Arts Council's report has been increased for 1987/88, East Midlands Arts have reduced their report from A4 down to 8.25" square.

Martyn Green, the P.R. and Communications Officer for East Midlands Arts, has changed the image of the annual report to

make it a more attractive document to distribute to clients and, in particular, potential business sponsors <8>. Departmental sections listing details of awards have been replaced by "general highlights" and separate lists of awards. The aim has been to separate articles from statistical information to make the report more readable; it also gives the Association a more corporate, as opposed to departmental, identity.

6.2.3 Comparison with the Association's objectives

Although the annual report may not contribute directly to the attainment of objectives, it should report on the progress made by the Association in such a way that interested parties are assured that its activities are in line with its objectives. For example, improvements in the accessibility of the arts should be reported, along with comments on coordination of funding bodies initiated by East Midlands Arts. Improvements in the standards of arts production could be summarised and underlined by the quality of the report itself. The idea of including a summary for the partially sighted is a good one, along with notification of the existence of the taped version of the report, but it could perhaps be incorporated more successfully than in the Arts Council report.

6.3 ART, CRAFTS AND PHOTOGRAPHY INDEX

The *Art, crafts and photography index* <9> is an example of the directories produced by East Midlands Arts. In addition to the complete index, sections are produced for the different art forms under separate covers: *Art index*, *Crafts index* and *Photography index*. It is produced by the Art, Crafts and Photography Department and, like the rest of

the publications produced by that department, appears in an A5 format with photocopied sheets between card covers fastened with a spiral binding. Until now, the data for the index has been held on an Amstrad within the department, but it is currently being transferred to the Association's computer network.

The index provides a list of the addresses of visual artists within the region, listed by art form. It is not only an address book, but refers to a collection of slides of the artists' work held within the department. Such slide libraries are held by the Regional Arts Associations, the Arts Council and the Crafts Council. These are listed in *The artists' directory* <10> under the heading "slide registeries". The department relies largely on *The artists' directory* to advertise this service, even though the information given is minimal: "Artists register of work by artists, craftsmen and photographers. About 250 on list" <11>. The number of entries is bound to be out of date, since the most recent edition of *The artists' directory* was published in 1985, and it does not mention the fact that it is a free service available to all artists in the region. Artists requesting information on the services provided by the department receive a copy of *Artfacts* <12>, which includes details of the index <13>. Forms for registration in the slide library and related index are available from the department on request. Each form is accompanied by a sheet entitled *The ubiquitous colour slide - an artist's guide* <14> which gives advice on taking, sending and labelling slides. The slides are very important in dealing with the Art, Crafts and Photography Department since they not only provide a record of the artist's work for the benefit of interested persons, but also the means by which the departmental panel judges work with a view to possible grant aid.

One of the major problems involved in compiling a directory

is the updating of entries. This is a problem both in terms of production and content, since frequent revisions of the text are necessary and the department has to rely upon artists to notify them of changes of address. As a result of the problems in ensuring that any given copy of the index is up-to-date, it is not issued to public bodies such as libraries, but is free to individuals on request. There are plans, however, to establish and maintain a copy of the index in the new City Gallery in Leicester (a joint enterprise between Leicester City Council and East Midlands Arts), possibly with copies of the artists' slides.

6.3.1 Comparison with the Association's objectives

Most of the services provided by the Art, Crafts and Photography Department are directed towards individual artists. Unlike artforms such as dance and drama, visual arts involve contact with individuals rather than companies. Whereas it is fair to assume that the director of a drama company should have heard of Regional Arts Associations <16>, many of the clients of the Art, Crafts and Photography Department, particularly those on starter grants, are artists setting up their own businesses who know very little about arts administration. In 1985, Sarah Cull issued questionnaires to artists who had received starter grants in the previous year <17>. She found that most artists felt somewhat isolated and relied upon contact with colleagues to find out about schemes <18>.

In the light of the situation of the department's clients, the *Art, crafts and photography index* has to respond to these needs as well as forwarding the objectives of the Association.

The existence of the slide library increases the accessibility of the arts through holding a record which can

be viewed at one location, avoiding travelling to a series of venues. It also promotes the artists concerned by ensuring that their work can be seen. The index of addresses promotes contact between artists and, since it is arranged by art form, may result in commissioning or purchasing of work.

6.4 FOREWORD

Foreword is a bi-monthly magazine produced by the Literature Department. It is produced in an A4 format with the covers of each issue in a different colour. It is billed as being a literature newsletter and contains notification of: competitions and events, both locally and nationally; book reviews; articles; news; and lists of training courses and writers' clubs.

The newsletter is edited by the Film and Literature Secretary, Lisa Pickard, and the time taken to produce each issue is approximately seven days <19>. The current newsletter was established when Debbie Hicks took over the post of Literature Officer in January 1989. The first two issues of *Foreword* were typeset using facilities within East Midlands Arts, but it was found to be too time consuming to arrange to slot work in with other departments and then send it out to be printed. Hence the third issue was word-processed.

6.4.1 Comparison with the Association's objectives

Foreword is produced as a service to writers and people who are interested in writing. It increases the accessibility of aids to writers by making them more aware of the existence of competitions, training and writers' clubs. As such, it is

also a tool to assist in liaison between interested bodies and promotes the improvement of writing, through the department's own training courses and advertising national events and competitions. Like visual artists, writers can feel isolated and a newsletter may help to overcome this problem.

6.5 OPENINGS...

The role of East Midlands Arts in liaising with interested parties covers facilities as well as funding. *Openings...* combines information on available exhibitions and exhibition spaces in one publication. The idea for such a publication was suggested in the Padwick report on contemporary art exhibitions in the East Midlands:

"...a regular newsheet, *Openings...*, to act as a communication channel between venues, to contain information relevant to exhibition work, and to list the availability of touring." <20>

This description was interpreted by Paul Swales, formerly Exhibitions Coordinator for East Midlands Arts, as being literally a newsheet. He cut and pasted articles onto A3 sheets and then photocopied them. Under the current post holder, Janet Currie, *Openings...* has become more akin to a directory.

The Exhibitions Coordinator is attached to the Art, Crafts and Photography Department and so *Openings...* conforms to the A5 format adopted by that department. Whereas there is no indication of the date or issue number on any of the other visual arts publications, *Openings...* is numbered by blotting out the picture on the front cover except for the outline of the number of the issue.

Openings... is divided into four sections:

- 1) East Midlands exhibitions.
- 2) Regional suppliers.
- 3) Non-regional suppliers and nationally available exhibitions.
- 4) Information exchange.

A variety of sources are used for these sections.

Exhibitions in the East Midlands are arranged by Janet Currie and so she compiles this section <21>. Information on the regional suppliers is based on personal contacts. Some of the material on non-regional suppliers and nationally available exhibitions is sent directly to Janet Currie, such as that from the IKON touring exhibitions; the rest is taken from bulletins, such as the *Scottish Arts Council exhibition bulletin*. The final section, "information exchange", consists of miscellaneous items sent to the Exhibitions Coordinator.

Copies of the updated issue of *Openings...* are all circulated as the new edition comes out. It is distributed free to venues and individual artists. In 1988 about 400 copies were issued.

6.5.1 Comparison with the Association's objectives

Openings... is clearly perceived by clients as fulfilling a worthwhile role since there were complaints during the interregnum between Paul Swales and Janet Currie that the publication had not appeared <22>. Where feedback is not actively sought it is only through such back-handed means that positive comments emerge. *Openings...* has been selected for comment as it is a communications channel as much as a publication. Information is received and then redistributed so as to bring together exhibitors and venues.

By ensuring that exhibition spaces are found for works, the accessibility of the arts is increased and presentations are promoted. Being a communication channel, *Openings...* is a tool in coordinating facilities with individuals.

6.6 MAILOUT

Mailout is unique amongst the publications produced by East Midlands Arts in that it has become a national publication with a specialised audience, rather than being produced for a wider range of interests on a regional basis. The magazine started life as literally a mail out of material from the in-tray of the Combined Arts Officer, Huw Champion <23>, posted out with a cover letter dated 6th April 1981. The first typeset issue of the now bi-monthly magazine was the October/November 1988 issue. Since the aim is to make *Mailout* fully independent by October 1990, the East Midlands Arts logo is not used and the magazine's regional basis is indicated only by the statement that copies are available in the East Midlands region and on subscription elsewhere. West Midlands Arts, Eastern Arts and South Eastern Arts all pay subscriptions for *Mailout* and issue copies to residents within their regions.

In an attempt to increase circulation, 30 sample copies were sent out at a cost of £1 each. This resulted in only one subscription at £4 per annum. By contrast the sample copies of the Arts bulletin were very well received <24>. This is partially due to the fact that the Arts bulletin is free and also because the motivation behind the selection of recipients of sample copies of *Mailout* was to show the forerunners of community arts that the movement is still going strong.

The optimum circulation for *Mailout* is estimated at 5,000

copies nationally: this is large enough to make the publication financially viable, but not so wide as to lose the specialist interest. The danger with such a specialist publication is that it can appear to be produced for the benefit of the writers rather than the market:

" Conversation often appears to be better designed to relieve the speaker than to profit the hearer; and much the same is true, though no doubt in less degree, of the written word also." <25>

In order to avoid the dangers of one dominant voice, articles are commissioned for Mailout since money is available following the involvement of other Regional Arts Associations. Contributions are also invited from readers, along with comments on the magazine itself.

6.6.1 Comparison with the Association's objectives

In many respects, the production of Mailout is an end in itself, filling a gap in the arts media. In this sense, its own objectives as a community arts magazine override those of the Association. It does not really increase the accessibility of the arts, since it is produced for the benefit of those who are already involved in community arts. Nonetheless, it does bring together ideas from interested parties and so encourages the flow of ideas, which is one of the objectives of the Combined Arts Department <26>.

6.7 SUMMARY OF COMMUNICATION ITEMS PRODUCED TO FULFIL OBJECTIVES

It is impossible to comment in detail on all the outgoing

communication items produced by East Midlands Arts within the scope of this report. This being the case, it is necessary to consider the objectives and examine which of the communication items implement them.

In section 5.3.1 the objectives were considered in turn in terms of their implications for communication. As a result of this, the groups which needed to be contacted were identified: individual clients; societies; local authorities; national funding bodies; and the general public. In addition, it was considered appropriate to regard potential business sponsors as recipients of information. Finally, the Association's Equal Opportunities policy should be reflected in information services as well as facilities.

6.7.1 Individual clients

Since the clients are the means through which the Association supports the arts, all the publications on a departmental level could be said to be produced for their benefit. It seems logical, therefore, to take a particular department as an example and summarise the material it produces for clients.

The Literature Department deals largely with individual clients rather than societies. To inform its clients it produces the newsletter *Foreword*, which was discussed in 6.4, and the *Writers' information pack* - a "jackdaw", or file of loose sheets, giving a range of information from courses and grants to advice on approaching the media. A *Directory of writers* is also produced, which Debbie Hicks hopes to update annually. Grant forms and guidelines on filling them in are also provided as a service to clients and to assist the department in compiling consistent records.

6.7.2 Societies

Societies are as much clients as individuals, but their needs are somewhat different. Although newsletters can be helpful, such as the National Federation of Music Societies' *Key note*, they are not as much of a prop to societies as they are to individual artists. Listings of other companies and promoters are more relevant. These are provided by the Dance and Drama Department in the form of a *Directory of promoters* and a *Regional artists and companies list*.

6.7.3 Local authorities and national funding bodies

East Midlands Arts works in partnership with both local authorities and national funding bodies and they receive the same types of information. Negotiation of specific projects involves direct contact with particular arts officers, rather than departmental publications. Hence most of the published communications items which East Midlands Arts distributes are produced by the Marketing and Communication departments which endeavour to represent the organisation as a whole.

The *Annual report*, which was described in 6.2, is distributed to representative members of the local authorities and national funding bodies, as well as interested parties, prior to the Annual General Meeting. Thus any issues arising from the report may be brought up at the meeting. A more frequent publication representing the whole of the Association is the quarterly *Arts bulletin*, which is also produced by the P.R. and Communications Officer. The *Arts bulletin* was designed to act as the mouthpiece of East Midlands Arts and is issued free to, amongst others, local authorities and national funding bodies: for example, six copies are sent to the Arts Council

<27>. It is a topical news magazine, with both local and national features, and includes details of courses and training available. Through these, the Association demonstrates to its funders and partners just how active it is.

6.7.4 General public

Although the general public forms the audience which arts events need for support, there is very little direct departmental contact with the public. East Midlands Arts will train clients to educate their audiences and advertise events <28>, but cannot spend time doing everything for them. Some leaflets are distributed on the behalf of clients by East Midlands Arts, but this is generally restricted to events in which the Association has been directly involved, such as the Arts Alive *Sculpture in the park* in King's Park, Retford. This was partly funded by East Midlands Arts, but it was felt not to be appropriate to use the Association's logo, since Arts Alive needed to take the credit; instead, the words "financially assisted by East Midlands Arts" appear at the foot of the advertising pamphlet <29>. A distribution service for posters and leaflets is provided to all clients for a fee.

Direct contact between the departments and the public usually takes the form of telephoned requests for specific pieces of information, such as details of events <30>. In terms of printed material, the only promotional publication produced by East Midlands Arts is *Steppin' out*. As this magazine is currently under review, it has not been included in the items selected for detailed comments. *Steppin' out* incorporates a diary of forthcoming events and various feature articles. It is hoped in the future to make it more of a "lifestyle" magazine than an arts publication <31>. The existence of such a magazine, readily available

to the public, promotes the arts in the region and increases their accessibility.

6.7.5 Potential business sponsors

Although business sponsorship is not specified in the objectives, it is an increasingly important aspect of arts administration. In addition to the *Annual report* and *Arts bulletin*, East Midlands Arts have produced a document which is specifically aimed at potential sponsors: *Arts sponsorship: make it your business* <32>. This glossy publication was designed, printed and finished by sponsors. Not only does this assist the Association in reducing the cost of the publication, it also illustrates the very sponsorship which it aims to promote.

6.7.6 Equal Opportunities

Equal Opportunities in terms of the accessibility of the arts should refer to information on the arts as well as the facilities provided at arts venues. Facilities for disabled people in arts venues in the East Midlands are described in the booklet *Help yourself to the arts* <33>. This is distributed to societies and individuals and is advertised through the *Arts bulletin*. The publication appears to be available only in a printed format: if it is on tape, there is no indication of the fact on the booklet. This is despite the fact that provisions for the blind and partially sighted are listed. Although the large print summary and notification of the report on tape were badly positioned in the Arts Council's report, that is better than nothing.

In addition to the problems faced by disabled people, the issue of Equal Opportunities for access to information

brings up the question of language, particularly in a region which includes the multi-racial city of Leicester. In terms of cost, it is impracticable to attempt to translate all documents into all of the languages spoken in the region. Summaries, or selections from the text, could be translated, however.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The range of material produced by 27 people working with limited resources is very impressive. All the groups which, in terms of the Association's objectives, need to be contacted receive information which is, in general, well presented. In the course of this study, various issues arose concerning communication which are discussed in the next section. Nonetheless, the material produced by East Midlands Arts is in line with the objectives stated in its constitution.

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7. ISSUES ARISING

When examining organisational communication, it is important to consider not only how well objectives are being met, but also why the communication structure is as it stands. In the course of this study, various factors influencing the printed outgoing communication items came to light and are examined in this chapter.

7.1 PRESENTATION OF MATERIAL

Opinions on the importance of the presentation of material varied amongst the Association's staff. It was pointed out that a funding body should give as much of its budget as possible to the clients it finances <1>. This raises questions as to the priorities for services provided by East Midlands Arts. The funds provided by the Association to support artists are very important, but its role is also that of an informer and so it is possible to justify spending time and money on presentation. Materials which may reach potential sponsors are particularly important in this respect, since they need to make a good impression.

7.1.1 Typesetting

East Midlands Arts has inhouse typesetting facilities for its own use and that of its clients, for whom it provides subsidised rates. Typeset materials look far more impressive than photocopies of typed or word-processed

sheets. It is not without its drawbacks, however, as it is time consuming to have a document typeset and then sent out to be printed. In addition, with so many different publications being produced, departments often have to arrange to slot in their work with others. In the case of the literature newsletter, *Foreword*, it was decided that speed of production was more important than presentation, so only the first two issues were typeset <2>.

If a central list was produced by the Association to determine which publications most needed to be typeset, it would be possible to prioritize documents for production and so set up a schedule, remembering to allow time for the production of clients' work.

7.1.2 Format

The publications produced by the Art, Crafts and Photography Department are all spiral-bound A5 volumes. These have the virtue of being distinctive, since size is the first thing which anyone notices on picking up a document. By contrast, the communication items produced by other departments tend to be in the larger A4 format and stapled rather than spiral-bound. This is a less distinctive size than A5, but it has become the standard amongst the majority of the Association's departments. Further comments on the format of documents follow in section 7.5 on corporate image.

7.1.3 Departmental labelling

The degree to which individual departments mention themselves on their documents varies considerably. At one end of the spectrum, the Dance and Drama Department's *Directory of promoters* gives no indication of which department issues it. What is more, the title page does not

indicate what type of promoters are listed in the directory. Although clients to whom the documentation is sent directly are likely to have contact with just the one department, it is not clear to the casual observer which department it is from or its purpose. At the opposite extreme, materials produced by the Art, Crafts and Photography Department boldly announce themselves as being "published by Art, Crafts and Photography Department", followed by a small scale East Midlands Arts logo. This may focus too much attention on the department and detract from the Association as a whole, but at least it is clear for correspondence purposes to which department queries should be addressed.

Like format, labelling of material relates to the issue of corporate identity. The differences in presentation are a reflection of internal communication.

7.2 FACTORS INFLUENCING INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Internal communication is perceived as being of great importance in how the organisation as a whole communicates in the East Midlands Arts report, *Corporate communication*:

" The relationship between external and internal communication is where the weak link in communication very often begins... It is imperative that internal communication is stable and has a sound base before restructuring and increasing external communication of the organisation." <3>

Although this investigation was primarily concerned with external communication, study of the printed outgoing material and observation of the organisation in action revealed a great deal about the factors influencing internal communication and the way in which this affects outgoing

material.

7.2.1 Physical layout of building

The influence of physical layout on communications within an organisation is a well charted phenomenon. In his study of the dissemination of technological information within Research and Development organisations, Thomas Allen reports on the influence of distance on communication:

" One would expect probability of communication to decrease with distance. One might even expect it to decay at a more than linear rate. It is the actual rate of decay that is surprising. Probability of weekly communication reaches a low asymptotic level within the first twenty-five or thirty meters." <4>

Where the communication takes place between people on different floors, the probability of contact decreases still further and is influenced by such complicating factors as "the location of stairs or elevators, their accessibility (whether the stairs are protected by a fire door, for example), and the amount of visual contact that they allow" <5>.

Mountfields House, the home of East Midlands Arts, is a large, rambling house which has been converted into offices. The former hallway now acts as the reception area, with offices leading off it directly; a wide staircase leads up to the first floor, which now houses further offices; and the narrow stairway leading up to the attic is blocked off from the first floor by two fire doors. The Association has grown a great deal in recent years, rising from 16 staff in 1976 to 27 in 1989 <6>. The P.R. and Communications Officer commented that the organisation has now outgrown the building <7>. One of the results of this is that some

departments, such as Combined Arts and Music, share offices. This has the beneficial effect of increasing communication on a small scale.

The distribution of departments by floor is indicated in table 2; shared offices are shown on the same line.

Table 2: Distribution of departments by floor

<u>Floor</u>	<u>Departments</u>
2nd	Art, Crafts & Photography
1st	Combined Arts/Music Dance & Drama Director's Office
Ground	Reception Administration & Finance Planning & Resources Literature/Film & Video Meeting Room Distribution dock Marketing/Communications

The most striking feature of this arrangement is the isolation of the Art, Crafts and Photography Department on the second floor. It is further cut off by the former servants' stairs and two firedoors. David Manley joked that this location is at least quiet <8>. It is perhaps too quiet, since the second floor is cut off from the main communication channels. It is noticeable that on the ground floor the doors leading into the reception area are usually open (with the exception of the firedoor leading into Administration and Finance, which is weighted) and that there is a great deal of movement of people from one room to another. There is less of this casual flow of information up the narrow staircase to the second floor. The remoteness of the Art, Crafts and Photography Department may be one of the factors in the identity of its publications. It is interesting to note that Sarah Cull was able to write a dissertation on the department without reference to the rest of East Midlands Arts <9>.

The Marketing Department and Meeting Room also suffer from their location. They are situated down a ramp from the reception area in the vicinity of the distribution dock. This means that guests and prospective sponsors are confronted by piles of cardboard boxes which are stored in that area. It is also unfortunate that the weekly officers' meeting and the dispatching of materials should both take place on a Monday morning, as the noise of trolley-loads of boxes being moved disturbs the meetings <10>. Since documents have to be distributed on a Monday morning, the easiest solution would be to change either the time or the location of the officers' meeting.

7.2.2 Art forms

Some art forms by their very nature have clear definitions, but most remain vague and overlap with related forms. One

advantage of these grey areas is that they promote contact between arts officers in different departments. One of the best examples of this is literature since the written and spoken word is used in a wide variety of art forms. Through the spoken word, the Literature Officer has contact with Drama and Combined Arts. Debbie Hicks has also been involved in a joint training course for film script writing with the Film, Video and T.V. Officer - a contact which is advanced by the fact that they share the same office <11>. The Heinemann Award has furnished her with contact with the Art, Crafts and Photography Department, for the trophy itself, and Martyn Green, mounting the exhibition attached to the ceremony. The Artists At Your Service scheme, whereby artists are booked to demonstrate their work, is run by the Music Department, which means that all departments are in touch with them.

The overlap between the visual arts and other art forms is limited, which may be another factor in the isolation of the Art, Crafts and Photography Department.

7.3 DISTRIBUTION

However well produced communication items are, they cannot be effective unless they are received by their intended audience. Most departments send out communication items by direct mail, posting copies singly. It is difficult to judge the effectiveness of such a system, particularly when some departments do not keep records of the number of items issued <12>. When contacting clients, there are specific addresses to which material should be sent, but contacting the general public is more difficult.

Midlands Arts Marketing Distribution was set up in October 1988, under the Distribution Manager, Alison Carter. It is

a joint venture with West Midlands Arts and replaces the old Arts Dispatch service. Being a joint scheme, charges are made to arts officers for the use of the service. As yet, the service has not been used a great deal by arts officers <13>. This may be due to the unfamiliarity of cost centres and paying for inhouse services; or it may be that the previous distribution service had acquired a bad reputation.

By the end of July 1989, Alison Carter had received only two batches of leaflets to distribute for officers at East Midlands Arts: 6,000 copies of a media skills leaflet; and 700 copies of a leaflet advertising writing retreats, "Write Away". For the first of these, Alison was given free reign to target where copies should be sent; details of how to distribute "Write Away" were given, however, with numbers for each county and instructions to issue copies to public libraries. In the light of this, it was interesting to note an article in the *Leicester Mercury* of 18th August:

" Where have all the talented Leicestershire writers gone? That is the question being asked by East Midlands Arts who received a flood of applications from Nottinghamshire to their newly-launched writers' retreats programme, but not one from Leicestershire." <14>

Since Leicestershire County Council Library Services are reputedly slow in getting material to branch libraries, the problem is probably one of the distribution of material rather than distribution of writers. This illustrates the problems in relying upon traditional locations for printed material to reach the general public. It also shows that 700 copies to cover a region of four counties is probably insufficient. In order to overcome this the Marketing Department is looking into new venues for material <15>.

7.3 FEEDBACK

If material is not useful to its intended audience, even if it is in line with the Association's objectives, then there is little point in producing and distributing it. In order to find out whether communication items meet the needs of their readers, feedback is necessary. Due to the lack of resources, there is little by the way of formal monitoring of feedback at East Midlands Arts. Instead, arts officers tend to rely upon informal contacts and comments made by Advisory Panel members. The Music Officer, Jan Ford, pointed out that you can tell a great deal from the way in which forms are completed <16>. These reveal whether the guidelines for filling in the form are adequate and also indicate the clients' attitudes towards East Midlands Arts. The Dance and Drama Department produces reports on its major clients every three to five years and the discussion involved in these provides useful feedback <17>.

The exception in actively seeking feedback on a printed communication is the Marketing Department, which is currently researching the distribution of *Steppin' Out*. As the magazine is intended to reach the general public, it is more difficult to issue than material which is sent straight to clients or people who have requested information. In the July/August 1989 issue of *Steppin' Out* a competition form was printed, which is a thinly disguised questionnaire. The prize is a £75 entertainment voucher, which is likely to be of interest to people who pick up copies of the magazine and also boosts attendance figures for the Association's clients. The form is positioned just behind the diary of events, so as to be spotted easily by readers. A little more explanation of the purpose of the questions would have been helpful. There is simply a general statement of purpose at the beginning "to help us improve *Steppin' Out* and its

service to the public we would like you to answer the following questions" <18>. It is not immediately clear to the casual reader why, therefore, the Association should want to know when they last went to a DIY centre or an airport, even though it may seem obvious to market researchers that these are potential distribution points. The form is designed to fold into an envelope for posting. The layout in general is good, but it suffers from the fact that in asking when people last visited certain institutions the names of the types of place are bolder than the question, so the eye does not pull back automatically to the question. It is easy to criticise a questionnaire, however, and the basic idea, as well as the perception of the need for feedback, is good.

7.5 CORPORATE IMAGE

Although many of the comments in this section have been made elsewhere, it seems appropriate to reiterate them in the light of the Association's interest in corporate image. The idea of a corporate identity suggests a degree of uniformity which is currently lacking in such a diverse range of publications. The communications items produced by the Art, Crafts and Photography Department have a strong identity, but it is unilateral rather than universal. The format was apparently devised last year in the belief that it would promote corporate identity <19>, but a department cannot instigate the image of the whole organisation. In this sense, the last line of the report *Corporate Communication* is misleading:

" Making it work is up to you!" <20>

It is not up to individuals, but the Association as a whole

to come to a decision on the issue and to implement the standard. The devising of such a format may help to overcome some of the problems of internal communication as a result of the layout of the building.

The profile of East Midlands Arts is important at a time when the Association is seeking business sponsorship. Promotion of a Regional Arts Association is difficult since audiences and potential sponsors tend to be aware of the performers or presenters, rather than the funders. There may be times when it is felt to focus too much attention on the Association rather than the client, as in the case of the Arts Alive event described in 6.7.4, but in general a standard wording, logo and format should be used.

Some of the factors influencing communication, such as Mountfields House itself, would be difficult to change, but there are various practical improvements which can be changed and are discussed in the recommendations and conclusion to this report.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1) Information from Helen Flach, Senior Arts Officer (Dance and Drama), 6th July 1989.
- 2) Information from Debbie Hicks, Literature Officer, 20th July 1989.
- 3) EAST MIDLANDS ARTS ASSOCIATION. *Corporate communication*, [n.d.], 1.

- 4) ALLEN, T.J. *Managing the flow of technology: technology transfer and the dissemination of technological information within the R&D organization*, 1977, 236-7.
- 5) *Ibid*, 243-4.
- 6) EAST MIDLANDS ARTS ASSOCIATION. *Information*, 1989, [no pagination: "jackdaw"].
- 7) Information from Martyn Green, P.R. and Communications Officer, 11th July 1989.
- 8) Information from David Manley, Senior Arts Officer (Art, Crafts and Photography).
- 9) CULL, S.E. *Support for young artists*, [1985].
- 10) Information from Alison Carter, Distribution Manager, 26th July 1989.
- 11) Information from Debbie Hicks, Literature Officer, 20th July 1989.
- 12) Information from Hilary Carty, Dance and Mime Officer, 4th July 1989.
- 13) Information from Alison Carter, Distribution Manager, 26th July 1989.
- 14) LEICESTER MERCURY, 1989 (18th August), 9.
- 15) Information from Liz Johnson, Marketing Services Manager, 12th July 1989.
- 16) Information from Jan Ford, Music Officer, 4th July 1989.
- 17) Information from Helen Flach, Senior Arts Officer, 6th July 1989.
- 18) EAST MIDLANDS ARTS ASSOCIATION. *Steppin' Out*, 1989 (41), 15.
- 19) Information from Janet Currie, Exhibitions Coordinator, 14th July 1989.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study of the outgoing communication items produced by East Midlands Arts has shown that in general the objectives stated in the constitution have been met. The groups which need to be contacted were identified as a result of examination of the objectives: individual clients; local societies and organisations; local authorities; national funding bodies; and the general public. In addition, it was regarded as appropriate to consider business sponsors, as recipients of information. Each of these groups receives material from the Association.

In general, the arts officers were found to supply information to clients and local societies, only contacting local authorities and national funding bodies over specific projects. By contrast, the Marketing and Communications Departments, representing the organisations as a whole, produce material primarily for local authorities, national funding bodies, business sponsors and the general public. In view of this split in the arrangements for producing material, the departments have to be very much aware of each other if there is to be any uniformity in publication.

A number of issues arose as a result of the study, which were described in section 7 of this report. These may be divided into problems which may be solved and those which, with current resources, would be difficult or impossible to remedy. The recommendations which follow are made in the light of the problems specified.

8.1.1 Soluble problems

- 1) Lack of uniform presentation (corporate image).
- 2) Lack of priorities for typesetting.
- 3) Inaccessability of publications to partially-sighted and ethnic minorities.
- 4) Lack of feedback on publications.
- 5) Inflexible distribution.
- 6) Time spent on publications.
- 7) Lack of numbering and dating of materials.

8.1.2 Currently insoluble problems

Given more resources than the Association has at present, it would be possible to solve most of the following:

- 1) Size of building.
- 2) Layout of building.
- 3) Lack of overlap between some art forms.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations which follow are based on the problems outlined above and are designed to act as a focus for discussion. The soluble difficulties are mentioned first, followed by suggestions as to how to overcome the insoluble problems until such time as there are resources available to eradicate them.

1) Presentation of material

A standard format should be devised, either by a committee or the Marketing Department, with guidelines on labelling and use of the Association's logo. The name of the department which is issuing material should appear on all of the publications which it produces.

2) Typesetting priorities

A list of the documents which most need to be typeset should be established. On the basis of this, a production schedule could be set up, to avoid queueing.

3) Accessibility of publications to partially-sighted and ethnic minorities

Although it would cost a great deal to produce tapes and translations of all the publications produced by East Midlands Arts, summaries in large print or, for example, Asiatic languages should be provided where applicable.

4) Feedback

Records of feedback should be kept even when it has not been sought actively. This will help in making policy decisions on the documents and may show when they are no longer relevant to their intended audience. The information may help arts officers to cut down on the quantity of material which they produce and concentrate on the quality.

5) Distribution

More freedom should be given to the Distribution Manager to distribute material away from conventional venues. Arts officers would probably do well to make more use of the inhouse service and discuss distribution with members of the Marketing Services Department.

6) Time spent on publications

The amount of time spent on publications could be reduced by decreasing the number of items produced. The mass of material produced by the departments is very impressive, but it is possible to give clients too much material so that they do not read it all.

7) Numbering and dating

Much of the information being sent out by the departments needs to be current to be of use to clients. The month and year are shown on newsletters, but directories should also be dated or numbered to indicate to clients when their issues are out-of-date.

Overcoming currently insoluble problems:

1) Size of building

Although Mountfields House is too small to meet the needs of East Midlands Arts, the Association is at least on one site, which reduces communications problems. Without extending the building, all that can be hoped for is a more positive attitude towards the close proximity in which staff work.

2) Layout of building

The building could be made to appear less rambling by including sign-posts to show visitors the way out of the building as well as the way to any given department: this is particularly necessary for Administration & Finance and

Art, Crafts & Photography. Screens could be used in the distribution dock to obscure the cardboard boxes and provide mountings for examples of materials produced by East Midlands Arts.

3) *Overlap between art forms*

The lack of a natural overlap between art forms could be compensated for through joint projects. The Heinemann Award, for example, has spanned several departmental boundaries.

8.3 CONCLUSION

Publications are produced by East Midlands Arts for all of the groups specified in its objectives. Although the format and labelling of documentation could be improved to benefit the corporate image of the Association, the content of the publications is very good.

The Arts Council report which announced the devolution of authority to the Regional Arts Associations, took its title from one of Kipling's poems, *The glory of the garden* <1>. It seems appropriate, therefore, to close with a stanza from the same poem:

*"And there you'll see the gardeners, the men and
'prentice boys
Told off to do as they are bid and do it without noise;
For, except when seeds are planted and we shout to
scare the birds,
The Glory of the Garden it abideth not in words."
<2>.*

The publications produced by East Midlands Arts are just one aspect of the work which the Association does to nurture the

arts. It is an important part of its work, but each item must have a message to communicate and not be simply an end in itself. That message must be presented appropriately and issued where it is needed, thus forwarding the Association's objectives.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1) ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN. *The glory of the garden: the development of the arts in England. A strategy for a decade, [1984].*
- 2) KIPLING, R. *Twenty poems*, 1918, 21.

9. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Objectives of East Midlands Arts

Source:

EAST MIDLANDS ARTS ASSOCIATION. *Constitution adopted at a special meeting of the Association held on 22 March, 1974, incorporating amendments approved up to and including 25 September, 1987, [unpublished], 1.*

OBJECTS

The objects of the Association shall be to foster and promote the maintenance, improvement and development of artistic taste and knowledge, understanding, enjoyment and appreciation of the arts amongst the inhabitants of the East Midlands, both directly and through local arts associations and in furtherance of the foregoing objectives, but not further or otherwise;

- a) to increase the accessibility of the arts;
- b) to improve standards of execution and appreciation of the arts;
- c) to encourage and assist in promoting and advancing the practice, presentation and study of the arts;
- d) to co-operate with or give assistance to any association, society or organisation, corporate or unincorporate, established for charitable purposes only and have objects wholly or partially similar to those of the Association;
- e) to bring together and co-ordinate the efforts of local authorities, organisations, societies and individuals concerned or interested in the attainment of all or any of the objects of the Association;
- f) to take any steps to secure the provision and development of suitable buildings, including arts centres, where the arts may be practised, presented and studied, and the provision and development in any such buildings or facilities for such purposes elsewhere, and to seek to ensure that such buildings or facilities provide proper access for people with disabilities;
- g) to do all such things as are necessary to the attainment of the foregoing objects.

APPENDIX 2

Proposals for communications study

Delivered to:

Mike Hussey

Deputy Director

COMMUNICATIONS STUDY: East Midlands Arts

Proposals for areas of study:

- 1) Study of printed outgoing information in comparison with the stated objectives of East Midlands Arts (as taken from the constitution).
- 2) Study of all outgoing information and communication in the light of one of the stated objectives, e.g. accessibility of the arts or Equal Opportunities.
- 3) Evaluation of the effectiveness of *Steppin' out* distribution and the accessibility of copies. (This would involve visits to libraries, information offices etc. to test out the time-lag in displaying issues, prominence of display etc.)
- 4) Review of mailing lists: too long? too short? up-to-date? excluding any obvious clients?
- 5) Study of a particular issue of the Arts bulletin to illustrate the range of sources used and excluded.

APPENDIX 3

Project handout to explain requirements before interviewing

Delivered to:

Mike Hussey
Tim Challans

Martyn Green

Liz Johnson

Huw Champion
Helen Flach

Hilary Carty
Debbie Hicks
Jan Ford
David Manley

Carol Maund
Janet Currie

Deputy Director
Assistant Director,
Planning and Resources
P.R. and Communications
Manager
Marketing Services
Manager
Combined Arts Officer
Senior Arts Officer
(Drama & Dance)
Dance & Mime Officer
Literature Officer
Music Officer
Senior Arts Officer
(Art, Crafts & Photo')
Crafts Officer
Exhibitions Coordinator

COMMUNICATIONS STUDY: East Midlands Arts

Study of external communication in comparison with the stated objectives of East Midlands Arts (as taken from the constitution).

Introduction:

As you may already know, I am carrying out a communications study as part of the Masters course in Library and Information Studies at Loughborough University of Technology.

For the purposes of this study, I shall be looking at printed communication items, although individual letters and telephone calls are also forms of external communication. In order to do this, I need to have access to materials of the types listed under no. 1) on the accompanying sheet; and also to discuss the listed subjects with you, which should take 30-45 minutes.

I hope to speak to you within the next fortnight and thank you in advance for your assistance.

COMMUNICATIONS STUDY: East Midlands Arts

Study of external communication in comparison with the stated objectives of East Midlands Arts (as taken from the constitution).

Requests for information:

- 1) List of and access to copies of current communication items produced by the department, including items produced in collaboration, such as:
 - newsheets
 - directories
 - listings
 - notifications of courses, grants etc.
 - forms
 - standardised advice sheets
- 2) Details of the method of compilation of communication items.
- 3) Editorial policies.
- 4) Sources of information used.
- 5) Methods of distribution.
- 6) Intended audience for communication items.
- 7) Details of any procedures for gaining feedback on communication items, either from clients or from the general public.

