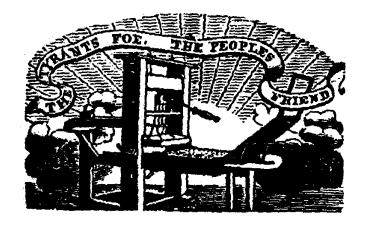# Low-cost
# Small-Scale

# Publishing

Return with us now
to the days of
Benjamin Franklin
and Fleury Mesplet...

## Preface

Is IT POSSIBLE FOR A SMALL PROGRAM with a low budget and a small clientele to produce a broad range of attractive, readable printed material?

The Voluntary Action Program has been doing just that for several years now. Make no mistake: our product is not 'high-end'; it is, however, good enough for the information we are communicating, and for the clientele we serve.

'Good enough' is a radical concept in Government, where traditionally every communication has to be of archival quality, and we faced opposition in producing material that met our philosophy. 'Good enough' does not mean shabby: it means good enough to get the message across. For us, a limited printing budget and a policy of not charging for publications mean that the initial production costs must be kept low; but we also manufacture our books in a form that allows clients to photocopy them without significant loss of legibility after a couple of generations of copies. (We state our policy on copying on the copyright page of all our books.) That encourages wider distribution of our material at no cost to the Program.

A rational small-scale publishing program will take advantage of improvements in information management technology as they occur. This is not without risks; sometimes the technology is buggy, and valuable time can be expended sorting out the pieces after a failed experiment. But informed decision-making and careful purchasing can serve to minimize problems.

Since the invention of printing, the publishers able to perform the largest number of tasks in-house have been the ones who prosper. The history of electronic publishing is a tale of technological advances allowing the people who produce the message to gain more and more control over the medium. And isn't that where the control ideally belongs?

☞

## Word Processing Programs

FOR TEXT-INTENSIVE PUBLICATIONS, WE HAVE BEEN very satisfied with results obtained from using a word-processing program. This allows editing and typesetting to be done in one pass, if desired. The quality of typesetting has been as good as that from a page layout program. Newer versions of these programs allow the use of any major type format (including TrueType, Postscript Type 1, and Speedo).

Word-processing programs allow great control over text formatting. We still use WordPerfect 5.1, a text-screen DOS program which shows embedded codes and allows for easy editing and proofreading, but many people prefer a graphic screen. All three major word-processing programs *(Ami Pro, Word for Windows, and WordPerfect)* are excellent performers. Each has a few features that the others don't have, but for the most part, they are very similar. As with page-layout and graphics programs, a *large-screen monitor is* recommended for easier viewing.

## Page Layout Programs

FOR PUBLICATIONS WITH A LOT OF illustrations or complicated text layout, a page layout program such as Aldus *PageMaker, QuarkExpress,* or Corel *Ventura Publisher is* easier to use than a word-processing program.

 Draw programs, type manipulation programs, and photo-retouching programs can work wonderful results in giving a publication a professionally finished appearance, but every new program you acquire has costs. These can include:
* the program itself
* training
* add-ons (accessories, utilities, upgrades to hardware) increased complexity of computer system, greater frequency of crashes, usually just before production deadlines
* increased expectations of management

  The value of new software must always be weighed against its very nontheoretical overhead costs.

## Training

Two types of training are needed for a successful small-scale publishing operation.

Training on *software and equipment* can be obtained through commercial schools and community colleges.

Training in *editing and design skills is* harder to come by. Ideally, small-scale publishers should have a bent in those directions to start with. Training on the job seems to be the norm, but university continuing education programs and community colleges often offer courses. The Banff Centre offers residential summer courses every year in editing, design, and the business of publishing.

It  is possible to hire a ready trained desktop publisher, but you should look for someone who already possesses editing skills, ideally in both official languages.

One of the keys to a successful low-cost small-scale publishing operation is the ability to keep as many operations as possible in-house. Exceptions to this principle are printing and translation, which should be handled by trained professionals, except for very short pieces.

## Type

A vast range of type is now available from digital foundries big and small. Discriminating purchases of type collections enable publishers with even minuscule budgets to produce a variety of attractive publications with a distinctive house style at very little cost.

## Graphics

Very high-quality royalty-free graphics can be acquired from a number of sources. Clip-art services provide graphics, including stock colour photos, on virtually any subject. Some graphics programs come with a large library, usually on CD-ROM disks. A *CD reader is* an excellent investment for clip-art, typeface libraries, and some of the larger programs that are now available on CD.

If you prefer to take your own pictures, KODAK dealers will digitize your colour or black-and-white pictures on a CD at very low cost.

*A flatbed scanner is* invaluable for importing your own graphics. With a sheet feeder attachment and optical character recognition software (even CorelDraw! now has a medium powered version), typed manuscripts can be transcribed to disk.

# Everyman on the
# Information Highway

SOME CLIENTS ARE ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE of distant data transmission. For those who are able and willing to participate, dramatic cost savings can be realized on distribution.

## Bulletin Boards

Documents may be uploaded in various file formats to bulletin boards or networks, including internal LANS, which will allow regional staff to download copies of resource materials as needed. The quality of the downloaded text and graphics may, however, leave something to be desired.

## Cross-platform document readers

Two new programs (Adobe's *Acrobat* and No Hands Software's *Common Ground)* allow issuers of documents to transform their data files into a format that can be read and printed by a distant user, whether or not his system has the typefaces or even the program used in the preparation of the original document. Each document contains a small executable file called a 'reader' or 'viewer' that is embedded in the text file and interprets the text data to display on screen or print to the reader's own printer. Some of these programs allow for editing of the document. Others do not.

## Cost savings

Even sending such documents on disk by traditional 'snail mail' represents a major cost saving on printing, packaging, and postage. But where readers have access to a modem or a bulletin board, the time and cost of distribution to those clients can be brought down to almost nil.

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*So who is this Fleury Mesplet anyway, and what does he have to do smith small-scale printing?*

When Benjamin Franklin, a printer by trade, invaded Montreal in the fall of 1778 on behalf of the American Revolutionary Government, he brought with him a complete portable print shop and a French printer. The plan was to conquer Canada and publish a daily bilingual official gazette of the occupying authority. The invasion didn't work out and Ben went home the next spring. The printer, Fleury Mesplet, decided to stay on. Perhaps his equipment wasn't as portable as expected. However, unlike Ben, the *Montreal Gazette* was a success.