

OFFICE PRACTICE (DES 1103)

LECTURE: 10

TOPIC : Information processing skills

AIM : To be able to source information and present information in the most appropriate way.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

After completing this chapter you should be able to understand:

1. Types of sources of information
2. Types of presentation and technological support

TOPIC OUTLINE:

- 10.1 Indicate sources of information which practising secretaries may call upon in the course of their work
- 10.2 Suggest suitable reference books to which a secretary might refer
- 10.3 Identify the different ways of presenting and displaying information
- 10.4 Technological support
- 10.5 Identify appropriate resources for given circumstances

NOTES:

10.1 INDICATE SOURCES OF INFORMATION WHICH PRACTISING SECRETARIES MAY CALL UPON IN THE COURSE OF THEIR WORK

Secretaries must be aware of the sort of information which is used and usable within organisations they work for and then learn how to find, process, apply and protect it.

Sources of information are categorised in three sections:

Those available within an organisation – Internal Resources

Personal systems Office files Reports Reference books Office database	Minutes Central records Other specialist department, e.g. data processing Staff – the human resource
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Fig.10.1

Those available from outside – General Resources

- Newspaper, journals and periodicals
- Radio and television
- Public libraries
- Travel agents
- Citizens' advice bureau
- Tax offices
- Post offices
- Chamber of Commerce
- Videotext e.g. Prestel

Those from specialist agencies – Specialist Resources

- Specialist libraries
- Embassies and Trade Delegations
- Government Departments
- The European Economic Commission
- Registrar of Companies
- Professional and Trade Associations
- Training boards
- Specialist Agencies e.g. accommodation, advertising, conference organizers, debt collecting
- Security systems
- Employment bureau
- British Institute of Management Foundation
- British Standards Institution
- Daily Telegraph Information Bureau
- Industrial Society
- Stock Exchange
- Data Banks
- Private View data

10.2 SUGGEST SUITABLE REFERENCE BOOKS TO WHICH A SECRETARY MIGHT REFER

- A Good English Dictionary for example the Oxford English Dictionary
- Shorthand Dictionary, which provides both meanings and shorthand outlines
- Dictionary of Typewriting - Pitman's Typewriting Dictionary, which provides the full range of terms and procedures.
- Telephone Directories, together with the corresponding Yellow Pages and the appropriate dialing codes.

- Telex Directory
 - Provides names, addresses and telex numbers of all subscribers together with answer-back codes, charges and services
 - Information about telex subscribers on other countries is available from their own official directory
 - This is purchased from local telephone area office.

- Malaysian Guide Book
 - Providing useful details of all major towns and cities in Malaysia

- AA or AAM Handbook
 - Information on garage facilities and other details of use to any motor travellers

- Malaysian Postal Book
 - Provide details of postcodes of districts, and information on the other services provided by the Malaysian Post. Provide details of different weights for various types of parcels and letters to be sent to places within the country and overseas.

- Travel Guide Book
 - Published three months once
 - Provide details of travelling schedules to various destinations within the country and overseas

- Periodicals and Magazines
 - Selected accordingly by the secretary e.g. Business Times, Times, and Newsweek.

- Newspaper
 - Provides up-to-date news
 - Assists in building an overview of social, political, economic and cultural life of a country as well as detailing important foreign news.
 - Essential for business executives and their secretaries on the prevailing conditions, which exist and affect the business.

Methods of Selection of Newspaper for Secretaries

- Study several papers over a period
- Follow a particular subject from day to day
- Compare and contrast the treatment given
- Analyse the style
- Check the appropriateness of the paper for your line of business

The Reasons for reading a Newspaper

- To keep yourself informed
- To keep track of your organisation's interests and those of its competitors
- To develop political awareness
- To increase your general knowledge
- To help you formulate your own opinions
- To develop some understanding of financial matters
- To find out about social, cultural and sporting events
- To generally develop your personality
- To enable you to converse intelligently and comfortably on current affairs and items of general interest

Recognise the value of a good library usage

Libraries form a vital resource for information and it is in your best interests to cultivate their use.

Although many people consider libraries are unwelcoming and even hostile environments, it is understandable that walking into many imposing library buildings and finding one's way around the shelves can be a foreboding prospect, and students are often hesitant at approaching library staff for assistance.

There are experts to assist you, in fact one of the attractions of their job is to be presented with a challenge in the form of a problem to solve, and the problem/query might well be yours.

Using a library is not knowledge we are born with but knowledge we acquire, and we should never be afraid to seek guidance.

Libraries will vary greatly in terms of the books they carry and the services they provide. Your local library will obviously differ from that in your school or college, which will in turn differ again from a polytechnic or university library or one of the huge reference libraries to be found in the major cities.

10.4 IDENTIFY THE DIFFERENT WAYS OF PRESENTING AND DISPLAYING INFORMATION

Information comes in all forms e.g. words, figures and pictures and presented in different ways including:

- Written reports
- Statistical tables
- Symbolic presentations
- Graphs
- Charts
- Diagrams
- Maps
- Models
- Overhead projector transparencies
- Slides
- Films

Advantages of displaying information using graphical presentations:

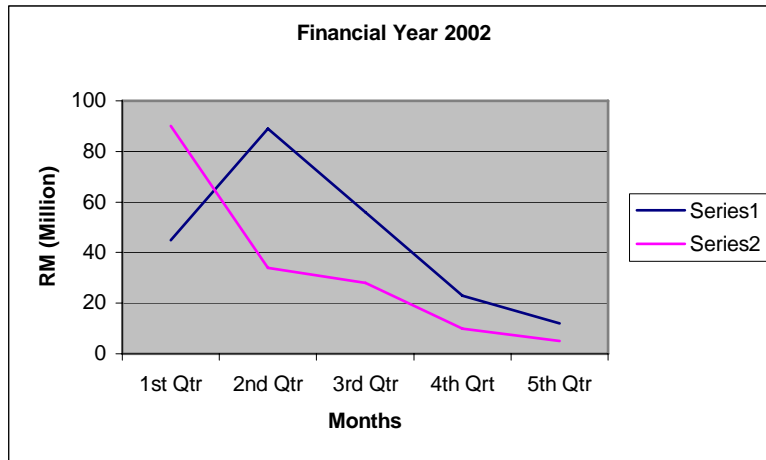
- Effective only when the most appropriate method to suit particular circumstances, audience and objectives
- People grasp more easily complex facts and figures and absorb statistical information through visual presentation accompanied by spoken words
- Attractive to look at but must be up-to-date
- They increase the speed with which people can assimilate (absorb) information and deal with enquiries
- They enable comparisons to be made more easily
- They simplify the performance for certain routine tasks
- They assist in the decision making process by making clear, up-to-date, accurate data available at a glance.

Presenting Statistics

- Statistics can be presented in a variety of ways and the manner selected will depend on the audience, the purposes and the degree of accuracy required
- Sufficient to provide an impression in figures, some form of diagrammatical presentation will often be adequate.
- Example of statistical presentation includes company accounts.

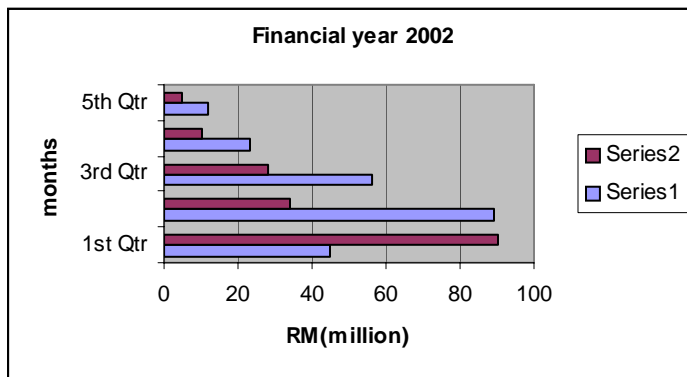
Charts and Graphs

Line Graphs



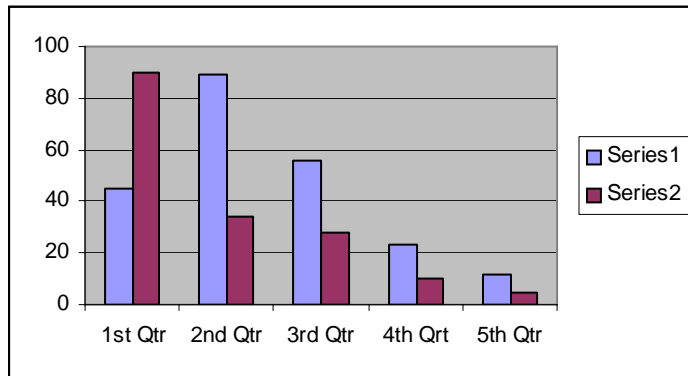
- May be single or multi-line
- Aim to show comparisons or indicate a trend
- The graph should have a title
- Each axis should be clearly labelled
- The scale selected should be appropriate and adequate for the purpose
- Where more than one line is used the coding should be explained in key
- Graphs can be in colour or in black and white
- Example of a multi-line graph (shown above) indicating monthly sales figures over a few years.

Bar Charts



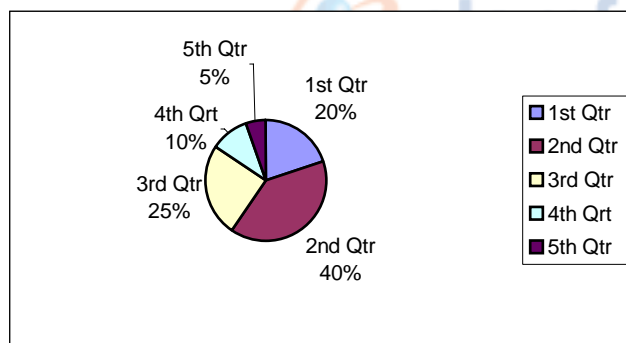
- They are displayed vertically.
- Can be compiled of single bars or multi-bars
- Effective in indicating comparative information
- Example of a bar chart – a clear bar could represent total turnover and the shaded part of the same bar indicating exports

Histograms



- Specialized bar charts where the vertical bars are presented to touch one another in graphic representations of frequency distribution
- Often used for example, wages are split into grouping for statistical purpose
- Where height of the bars gives misleading information concerning frequency
- When preparing charts frequency, the area of a bar or by its height may be represented, e.g. using hypothetical data and unequal age intervals for house owners in a region.
- Overall area of each rectangle which supplies the information

Pie Charts



- Used to show a part in relation to the whole - use a pie chart
- Circle is divided into proportional segments expressed usually in percentage terms
- Circle can be shaded to represent different areas
- Can be most effective and easily interpreted

Pictograms

- A pictorial or symbolic method of presenting statistics
- Suitable symbol is selected to represent a certain total number. For example, tomato sauce bottle for tomato sauce exports.

Flow Charts

- Used as a means of illustrating the progress by which a procedure or system is followed through from start to finish. Example – working procedures/activities with a view to rationalisation or suggesting improvements
- Also used in designing computer programmes. Procedure is first plotted out diagrammatically and then translated into programme steps for feeding into a computer.

Diagrams

- Useful visual aid
- Example of this, the layout of an office plan
- Important to state the appropriateness of the scale selected and the clarity of the labelling

Maps

- They must be drawn to scale and contain up-to-date information
- For example like the A-Z maps.

10.4 TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT

- Using graphics software business applications packages and in computer aided design programmes
- Minimum creativity, little training and produce quick charts
- Capabilities of software more thorough and production of quality charts
- Charts, graphs, illustrations, maps, diagrams, designs can be created using computer
- Graphics and charts are produced efficiently and with quality
- Selection of software packages should be done in relation to business needs

Models

- A diagrammatic presentation of some particular structure
- For example, the model of a building complex, prepared with miniature three dimensional buildings designed to scale
- Added dimension can enhance the impact on an audience
- Improve the effectiveness of the presentation

Overhead Projector ((OHP) Transparencies

- Presentations or lectures are supported by well-prepared and colourful OHP transparencies
- Transparencies are prepared using stencil letters or a typewriter, using large print style
- Printed mock-up prepared, this is where researching and preparing suitable photographs or drawings which are transferable on to transparencies. Should be tested on the overhead prior to usage
- For future use, transparencies should be mounted in cardboard, clearly labelled, indexed and retained in special boxes.
- Facility available for making such transparencies for example, desktop copiers transferring printed material on to transparencies – producing high quality of work.
- Can be prepared in variety of ways, using a variety of standards and on coloured transparencies.
- Emphasis on size and clarity is important.

Slides and Films

- Used to accompany lectures and presentations
- A positive alternative to OHP transparencies
- Films or slides will lose impact when they are used for too long
- Must be appropriate for the purpose, short and to the point
- Speaker used a remote control device; move backwards and forwards through the slide sequence at will.

Audio back up

- Used for personal preferences based on style of presentation
- Essential that the reproduction is excellent and synchronised with any visual effects designed to accompany it
- To keep within a rigid time allowance

Visual Planning Control Boards

- An illustration of activities for the year and featuring a large number of variables
- The flexibility offered with the speed of update which is possible to achieve
- Their ability to enable users to plot future trends, foresee changing circumstances
- Essential that they are kept up-to-date
- Indulging in realistic forward planning will ensure time saving and improved efficiency
- Comes in various forms - from paper charts which can be pinned to a wall or notice board, and either written on or used with adhesive strips and/or symbols to reusable magnetic wall-mounted boards
- Must be at correct height and at a distance which is suited to the eyesight of the user who may, e.g. require to refer to it while speaking on the telephone
- Must be accompanied by a key where necessary to indicate what is meant by the various colours and symbols used.

10.5 IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE RESOURCES FOR GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES

Office Database

Office databases will include information, which has been gathered, prepared and collated in house for access by departments and individuals in the organisation's computer network.

Information might include – stock details

- Price lists
- Sales statistics
- Budgetary information
- Accounting data
- Customer information
- Internal telephone numbers

Advantages of Office Databases

- Information can be obtained at great speed
- Physical paper handling is dramatically reduced
- Accuracy is more likely to be achieved, provided a good system of database management exists whereby data is updated regularly
- The possibility of incorporating data such as tables of figures or graphics into the preparation of report, enhancing the presentation of the document and easing the understanding of the reader.

Disadvantages of Office Databases

- Can be time consuming at initial stage especially when a large volume of data must be keyed in before usage
- Error prone especially during input of data
- May be viewed as a burden – as a supplemental task that must be performed in addition to day-to-day duties, especially when updating information has to be done daily
- There might be security problems especially when keyboard terminals are used

Data banks

Information is held on computers located at various locations throughout the country and specialising in handling particular classes of specialist information.

- Access is available via on-line database system
- User can contact an information provider's computer over telephone lines via his/her own company's terminal/computer
- Used for acquiring company's particular needs e.g. to monitor trends throughout an industry when drawing up a business plan.

REFERENCES:

1. Helen Harding, Secretarial Procedures-Theory and Applications
2. John Harrison, Secretarial Duties (10th Edition)

TUTORIAL QUESTIONS – WEEK 10

1. Name 3 technological supports your boss can use to present information in the most effective way.
2. Name and describe 3 types of graphs that can be used to enhance your boss's presentation.
3. What are databanks and list down their advantages?

