Writing and Keeping Informed: A wealth of tools for UN staff - Part 1 of 3

Posted: Thursday, 10 March 2011, New York | Author: iSeek/David Mimran

Many staff members spend a good amount of time writing, drafting and translating, even though they may not officially be writers or translators. One fundamental mandate of the UN is to offer services and counsel to the world, in addition to providing reports on the work of the Organization to Member States. iSeek has taken a screen shot of reference tools produced by the UN, and available to UN staff - and put them together in an easy to follow guide.

Since there are so many resources, we will break up this review into three instalments: Part 1 Tools for writing, Part 2 UN Documents, Part 3 News from the UN and from the World.

Part 1 - Tools for writing

Editing

We all know there are three ways of drafting a text: the right way, the wrong way and the UN way. That’s what the United Nations Editorial Manual is about, which is available also in French. You will learn for example that “the name of our organization “United Nations” should not be abbreviated in English,” although “the form 'ONU' is acceptable in French” and that “the most common units of weight and measure, such as cm2, kg and km, need not be written out”.

The Editorial section also provides the UN Correspondence Manual in English and in French. This little red book “worth its weight in gold”, which at one time existed in print only, is now available free of charge in a pdf version. Its full title is “A guide to the drafting, processing and dispatch of official United Nations communications”.

For specific guidance about the English language, the Chicago Manual of Style is available as a service of the UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

Translating from Other Languages and Translating UN terms

If you have never done so before, take at least 10 extremely rewarding minutes to browse through the Electronic Resources that are made available through the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.
**Dictionaries** - From within the UN complex you can access the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, from the Library’s Electronic resources page. The link is tied to your UN IP address and will not work from the outside.

Oxford Reference Online, the same resource that gives you the Concise Oxford English dictionary also provides access to the *Oxford English Dictionary* - 600,000 words, 3 million quotations (available at UNHQ, ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, UNOG, UNOV) and to a number of thematic and language dictionaries in *English*, *Chinese*, *French*, *German*, *Italian*, *Russian*, *Spanish*, and thematic reference dictionaries (available at UNHQ, ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UNOV).

Through cooperation with DGACM, the Library’s Electronic Resources page also gives you access to the French dictionary *Petit Robert* (available at UNHQ, ECA, ESCAP), and the *Trésor de la langue française*.

**UNTERM** - To help weave your way through the world of UN acronyms and UN titles, refer to **UNTERM**, the UN Multilingual Terminology Database, available in 6 Official Languages and updated daily. For example, you know that *UN-Women* was just launched. You want to know what is the official acronym, or the long name, and you want it in Russian.
Try searching for the term UN-Women. UNTERM will give you the long name, the short name, the acronym if there is one - for now there is no acronym for UN-Women and if you click on the Card on the left side, you will get more information on the entity and when it was created, in all six languages. You can narrow your search results by unclicking the languages you don’t use.

You can also use the database to check facts about Member States. If you search for example for Belize, clicking on the little Card on the left side will give you information about the national flag, the date of entry into the UN (25 September 1981), the capital city (Belmopan), the official languages (English, Spanish), the official designation for the population etc.

UNTERM is accessible to UN staff and to the public from anywhere in the world, on the Internet.

Try out the links, bookmark what you like. And stay tuned next week for Part 2 UN Documents and the week after for Part 3 News from the UN and from the World.
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Part 2 - UN Documents

Active search for Official Documents


Let’s imagine you are looking for the text of a recent resolution adopted by the Security Council on Libya. Type in "security council libya" in the search field on the ODS page. The resolution appears third in the results. For better results click on "sort by date"; resolution S/RES/1970 (2011) on Libya comes on top of the research.

For a more targeted search, you may want to use the [previous version of the ODS](http://ods.un.org).

DGACM is about to launch a 'short URL' for UN document which will make it easy to share a link online.

ODS is accessible to the public from anywhere in the world, and there is a quick link on the front page of iSeek. Note that besides the six official languages, DGACM provides access to some documents in [German](http://ods.un.org).

If you are not sure of how to decipher UN documentation, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library regularly holds training sessions on using and finding UN documentation or try
one of the Library’s online tutorials.

Of course the Library Reference Team is always available as well by phone 212-963-7412 or email: unreference@un.org.

Quick Link URL - If you already know the symbol of the document you are looking for, you can create a link to it and access the document directly, building on the URL ‘http://undocs.org’ (http:// is actually optional).

To re-create the symbol for a GA document, use the unique symbol ‘A’ and add the session number plus the number of the document. If we want a link to document number 537 published by the GA during its 65th Session, it will look like this: http://undocs.org/A/65/537.

If you type it in a web browser, you will get immediate access to a menu offering you a choice of a pdf in one of the six official languages.


eSubscriptions

Instead of looking for documents, you can choose to let them come to you, especially as they are published.

There are many options to choose from on the e-Subscription page (see E-Subscriptions: Let UN documents come to you on iSeek)

RSS feeds for your browser or mobile device - RSS feeds are available for many documents. You can subscribe to a feed of the UN Journal and all new documents from the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, the Economic and Social Council, Others or combinations of these.

Email Subscription - You may opt instead to have these sent directly to your email – beware not to flood your mailbox though. Documents keep coming at as fast pace.

eDocuments for eReaders - For the Procès Verbaux (PVs - in fact full translations) of meetings of the General Assembly, you can opt for the ePub format instead of pdf, which is specific to eReaders, from the Digital Magazine Downloads page offered by the Meetings and Publishing Division of DGACM.

UN Pulse - The UN Pulse blog alerts you to just-released information, major reports,
publications and documents. It is a service maintained by a team of reference librarians at the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library in New York and is available to the public on the internet from any location. You can subscribe to the twitter feed and an rss feed.

Electronic Reference, Documentation & Publications

Many reference books and reports published by the UN are available electronically for Kindle and eReaders, the iphone and ipad, android and other mobile devices on the UN Publications page. This includes iphone apps, or electronic book on the iBookstore from Apple or the Kindle store from Amazon (see on iSeek UN publications go mobile)

To name but a few: the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the "Blue book" of Permanent Missions to the UN, the United Nations Today, the MDG Report 2010.

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Try out the links, bookmark what you like. Read Part 1 Tools for Writing if you have not
seen it yet and stay tuned this week for Part 3 News from the UN and from the World. Your comments and feedback are welcome!
Writing and Keeping Informed: A wealth of tools for UN staff - Part 3 of 3

Posted: Tuesday 22 March 2011, New York | Author: iSeek/David Mimran

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The whole series will be available on a completely revamped "News & Media, Tools" quicklink on the left side of the iSeek home page.

Part 3 - News from the UN and from the World

News

Aside from writing, keeping abreast of international events is an activity that most UN staff engage in daily.

UN Produced News

The primary source of official news from the UN is the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, whose daily briefing is available on line, as well as the full text of the Secretary-General’s statements and press conferences. Coverage of the meetings of the Security Council, General Assembly and other main bodies is also provided, in English and French. It is possible to subscribe to an rss feed to all meetings and press releases.

Another important source of information about the United Nations system is the UN News Centre, a multimedia internet hub where you can find breaking news and information on developments taking place across the system. You can read stories on the site or add them to your mix of news by subscribing to an RSS feed or following the News Centre on facebook or twitter, in either English or French. The News Centre offers focus pages where you can access key UN documents and information on issues of topical interest. In addition, feature stories and interviews add context and dimension to news coverage, which is provided in English and French as well as in Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish.

UN Radio podcasts and news agency style snippets can be subscribed to by RSS or you can keep yourself informed by referring to UN Radio's facebook page, twitter feed or itunes podcasts. UN Radio broadcasts in six languages plus Portuguese and Kiswahili.

The Webcast unit broadcasts live press conferences, the daily briefing and official meetings. It can be followed on youtube, facebook, twitter or rss. The Photo unit can be followed on flickr, twitter, facebook or rss.
UN Information Centres around the world report on their outreach activities on their own local rss feeds and there is also a central twitter and rss feed.

Media/Press coverage of International News

The News Monitoring Unit’s News Bulletins offer summaries of breaking news stories reported by major international news agencies. They either focus on activities conducted by the UN, events affecting the UN or issues that are of interest to the UN (see Hungry for news? The News Monitoring Unit can satisfy your craving!)

The Daily Clippings consist of selected news stories, editorials, op-eds, analyses, interviews and commentaries from leading international print and electronic media, focusing on global media coverage about the UN, its officials and international developments / events that are of concern and interest to the Organization, as well as UNIC-prepared reviews from local press.

Finally, the Cyberguide offers an impressive list of dozens of links to a wide range of international media, from the Afghan News Network to The Zimbabwe Independent.

NMU products are strictly for use by staff and they are therefore located exclusively on iSeek, the intranet.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Library also provides access to major newspapers from around the world through its subscription-based electronic resources. These can only be accessed through iSeek.

Third-Party News and Intelligence Reports and Encyclopedias available through the UN Libraries

The Dag Hammarskjöld Library offers access to a wealth of databases, intelligence reports and encyclopedias online.

Samples of reference material among hundred others available include the Economist Intelligence Reports (available at UNHQ, ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UNOG and UNOV), Facts on File (available at UNHQ, UNOG and UNOV); Europa World; the Statesman’s Yearbook; and Stratfor reports (available at UNHQ, UNOG and UNOV + Limited number of peacekeeping missions are given password access).
For general reference, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is available at UNHQ, ECA, ESCWA, UNOG and UNOV) with versions in French, Chinese, Spanish, Japanese and Korean.

For legal information resources see the *Dag Hammarskjöld Library’s Legal Branch* page on iSeek, including access to the *Westlaw e-Library* with Black's Law Dictionary and other key legal reference works (available at UNHQ).

And of course the *Reference Team* of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library can also be consulted on information issues:

- telephone: + 1 212-963-7412
- email: unreference@un.org

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Try out the links, bookmark what you like. Read or review *Part 1 Tools for Writing* and *Part 2 UN Documents*.

This series will be accessible for reference on a new quicklink on iSeek entitled News and Information, which will replace the "News and Media" page.