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A Guideline on Using cc:Mail

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INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: All Staff at NYHQ
                HQ and Regional MIS Networks

From: Nick Narishkin
                Chief ISS/IRM Office

Subject: **A Guideline on Using cc:Mail**

E-mail has high strategic value for UNICEF. It empowers staff, through more rapid communication, to convey the right information to the right place at the right time whilst bypassing traditional hierarchical structures. This new technology can be, and sometimes is, seriously misused or misunderstood. At present our tendency in UNICEF is to send messages to many more correspondents than necessary; this clogs up in-boxes and the e-mail system in general. The practice seriously undermines the benefits of e-mail as a communication tool. The purpose of this circular therefore, is to provide some insights and guidance on the use of e-mail and in particular cc:Mail.

E-mail is a *delivery* system (like the US Post Office) which delivers electronic packages from point A to point B; it does not question the content of the envelope. As with any new tool we need to practice before we fully understand its operation. This technology requires a new set of rules or etiquette which have to be learned.

1.   Who gets cc:Mail and cc:Mobile?

1.1   cc:Mail is the standard UNICEF electronic-mail system. It is available on all PCs connected to the LANs in UNICEF House and 633 Third Avenue and is itself connected to mail services on the Internet and elsewhere. cc:Mail and cc:Mobile are available Monday-Thursday from 1 a.m. to 10 p.m, Friday from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. and all day (and night) on Saturdays and Sundays. On weekends the system is un-attended thus more susceptible to problems.

1.2   All staff in UNICEF House and 633 Third Avenue with a connection to the LAN have access to cc:Mail from their office for inter-office communications and Internet mail. Short and long-term non-regular staff may have access to cc:Mail as business needs require and with the sponsorship of the organizational unit for which they are working.

1.3   cc:Mobile is a subset of cc:Mail designed to run on a laptop. Messages can be prepared using cc:Mail-like commands and then sent via a modem connection to cc:Mail itself. At the time of connection cc:Mail will also automatically transmit any newly received messages to cc:Mobile in the laptop before terminating the modem connection. These new messages can then be studied off-line and replies prepared prior to the next modem connection with cc:Mail. By enabling the "Message Summary" feature of cc:Mobile, messages can be downloaded selectively which can save time and money.

1.4   Staff who use UNICEF laptops may request IRM Office to load and configure cc:Mobile on them and then use them from home or whilst travelling. Staff wishing to have cc:Mobile installed on *private* laptops or PCs must ask their directors to authorize this before IRM Office will install the software (Information Circular CF/IC/NYH/1996-004 has been distributed with all the details).

2.   What to send via cc:Mail and what not to send

2.1   cc:Mail is primarily a *messaging* system with tight controls and specific functionality within its "home" environment, the UNICEF LANs. cc:Mail has more fragile controls and limited functionality with other messaging environments, such as Internet mail, because a "lowest common denominator" strategy is needed if different systems are to connect with each other successfully.

2.2   What should be sent and what should not be sent via cc:Mail depends partly therefore on whether the message remains internal (within the UNICEF LAN) or is destined to travel via the Internet or other "information highway". It also depends on who the message is being sent to. Long complex messages with sophisticated attachments should obviously *never* be sent to a mailing list such as "all NYHQ staff", whilst they may well be sent back and forth by a small group of people working tightly together on a specific project.

2.3   We must remember that recipients of our messages may be at home or travelling and receiving their mail via cc:Mobile. It is very time consuming (and expensive) if long messages with multiple attachments have to be down loaded. It is also extremely frustrating for the cc:Mobile user.

2.4   As a rule, it is advisable to keep messages short and to the point (maximum one screen). Attachments should be used sparingly and should be avoided if the message is destined for an Internet address or cc:Mobile user. A cc:Mail message should not be prepared in WordPerfect and then sent as an attachment unless it is longer than one page. See also item 9 below.

2.5   We need to train ourselves to *think* before we send a message (e.g. not replying "thanks" to a message that was sent to all staff and copying that reply to all staff)

3.   Using "cc" and "bcc"

3.1   cc:Mail gives us great flexibility to contact virtually anyone in the organization regardless of location or rank. Whereas bypassing established hierarchies is generally a good thing, the ability to reach hundreds of people at the press of a button will, if abused, clog everyone's in tray and eventually the efficiency of the system. We must resist the urge to "cc" our messages to too many people just to "be seen" or simply because it's so quick and easy to do so.

3.2   Under normal circumstances, using "bcc" is impolite and should be avoided. However, if a message is sent to a large distribution list, every recipient is listed whenever the message is printed. The list could be two or three pages long. To overcome this, send the message to all the recipients using "bcc".

3.3   Generally, we should address a message to a single recipient as we do in memo format. The use of "cc" should be limited to those who really *need* to be kept informed.

4.   Confidentiality

4.1   We should be aware of the pitfalls when using e-mail for communicating confidential information. Even though there is a high level of security within the UNICEF LANs, mistakes can easily occur. Messages can inadvertently be forwarded to others by the recipient. Messages can inadvertently be sent to a network printer elsewhere in the building, or simply viewed by persons with authorized read access to a colleague's mail box (many secretaries have such access). We must remember that the Internet is inherently more insecure than the internal UNICEF LAN. Also, "bcc" messages are not tagged as such by the Internet. These are all innocent mistakes that subsequently can cause considerable embarrassment.

4.2   From another perspective we must remember that security on a network depends largely on all of us keeping our passwords to ourselves, not choosing banal passwords that can easily be "hacked" and changing our default "startup" password immediately. This unfortunately is often not the case and inquisitive people will always exist, so we should keep confidential information out of the e-mail systems whenever possible.

5.   Work-related versus private messages

5.1   The UNICEF LANs and cc:Mail should be used for official work-related messages only. An exception to this is what we might call "semi-private" messages such as inviting a colleague to lunch or announcing an event. Conducting private business, perpetuating chain-letters and playing games over the UNICEF networks is not permissible.

5.2   A cc:Mail message is considered equivalent to a formal memorandum for internal UNICEF business purposes. Electronic signatures however have not yet been legally recognised and contractual or other commitments to third parties must continue to be made under manual signature.

6.   Filing and archiving of cc-Mail messages

6.1   cc:Mail provides four basic folders for each user. These are called *In-box, Drafts, Message-Log* and *Trash* and their use is self-evident. Additional subject matter folders can be created for storing incoming and outgoing cc:Mail messages by subject. Currently cc:Mail does not allow for nested folders (folders within folders) but this is expected to change fairly soon. When it does, it will be possible to duplicate our office filing scheme in cc:Mail.

6.2   The advantage of creating folders and systematically moving correspondence to them is that the *In-box* remains empty except for newly received messages. It is much easier to deal with one's mail this way.

6.3   Once mail has been read and answered a decision must be made as to whether this piece of correspondence should be permanently kept or not. Official correspondence should be electronically filed

in the same way as paper records are physically filed. Periodically the folders on the LAN should be archived to the hard disk on the PC and be included in the normal backup cycle defined for that PC.

6.4   We should all remember that electronic mail takes up a lot of disk space and any unofficial mail should be deleted as soon as possible. Currently in UNICEF House 700,000 stored messages are occupying about 2 Gigabytes of disk space. For reference purposes:

1 Kilobyte	1,000 Bytes	Half a typewritten page
1 Megabyte	1,000,000 Bytes	A small novel
1 Gigabyte	1,000,000,000 Bytes	30ft of shelved books
1 Terabyte	1,000,000,000,000 Bytes	A small academic research library

7.   Mailing lists (Private and Public)

7.1   The central cc:Mail directory contains the names and electronic addresses of everyone connected to the UNICEF network. There are occasions when it is necessary to send mail to a specific group of people as for example to "all ISS staff". If this becomes a regular occurrence it is far more convenient to create a mailing list to which a message can be addressed rather than repeatedly having to remember, search for and select individual names. Mailing lists however do have to be maintained and updated.

7.2   There are two kinds of mailing lists in cc:Mail; public lists and private lists. Public lists are created by IRM Office and maintained centrally within divisions, whilst private lists can be created and maintained by anyone with access to cc:Mail. Unfortunately Internet addresses cannot be included in a cc:Mail mailing list at this time.

7.3   As with other facilities offered by cc:Mail, mailing lists can be, and frequently are, misused. We should all make an effort to evaluate the true usefulness of sending certain messages to a large mailing list such as, for example, "All NYHQ Staff". We should be particularly mindful when including staff in field offices on a mailing list; it is time consuming, costly and extremely frustrating for field office staff to be submerged in mail intended for NYHQ. Once again, over-enthusiastic use of mailing lists and "cc's" not only congests our in-trays but diminishes the usefulness of e-mail as a common communications tool.

7.4   **Officer-in-Charge** messages. These are received every day, and sometimes several times a day, by everyone on the network. Is this information really useful to *all* staff?. *What matters is simply that the acting person acts.* In a well managed office, when an officer is away, the "officer-in-charge" automatically takes over and work continues normally. If we think about it, only a small handful of people really need to know that X will be OIC whilst Y is away. The information per se is not even appropriate for a bulletin board entry (see also item 8 below).

7.5   There are mechanisms in cc:Mail whereby authorization can be given to a third party to read and process ones incoming mail. Sometimes an officer will use cc:Mobile to answer his/her incoming cc:Mail messages from a remote location whilst having programmed the phone to automatically forward all incoming calls to the officer-in-charge. Incoming faxes, letters and memos are routinely given to the officer-in-charge by the secretaries.

7.6   **Junk Mail?** What is a truly important message for some, is "junk mail" for others. Thus it is difficult to categorize any given message as being junk or not junk. There are surprisingly few messages however that really do interest *all* staff and we should carefully consider this when we are tempted to communicate so broadly.

7.7   Before sending a message to all staff, we should consider whether we would want to have it broadcast over the public address system should cc:Mail be unavailable. If the answer to that question is *yes*, then we can send away. If the answer is *no*, then the message should probably be sent to a more restricted mail list or posted on a bulletin board.

8.   Bulletin Boards

8.1   Electronic bulletin boards on cc:Mail are created by IRM Office upon request. Each bulletin board can be made public or can be restricted to a specified cc:Mail post office. In the near future it will be possible to further restrict a bulletin board to a predefined group of people. A person from the requesting office is designated as the bulletin board administrator. It is this person's responsibility to maintain the bulletin board and delete items when appropriate.

8.2   **What to post to a bulletin board**. Typically the cc:Mail bulletin boards are designed for posting items such as Vacancy Notices, Exchange Rates, and other general information that could be useful to the community at large. Although not its primary "raison d'être", in some cases a bulletin board can be used by a small group of people as a forum for exchanging ideas and information. This is really a simulated electronic conference. For large groups, a bulletin board may be used for *posting* ideas as opposed to *exchanging* ideas.

8.3   **What *not* to post to a bulletin board**. Information with a very short life-span, such as the announcing of a snow day at 1 p.m. or a short closure of the medical service should not be posted to a bulletin board (a general broadcast message to all staff should be sent in this case). Officer-in-charge messages do not belong on a bulletin board although a bulletin board announcing who is traveling, where to and when could be useful. cc:Mail bulletin boards should of course not be used for private postings or advertising of any kind.

9.   Attachments

9.1   The theory behind sending attachments is frequently misunderstood. cc:Mail *messages* can be sent to virtually any e-mail system in the world to be easily viewed by the recipients. *Attachments* however, are documents, spreadsheets or graphics prepared completely outside of cc:Mail and then simply *attached* to the actual cc:Mail message. cc:Mail is in fact assuming that the recipient of the message and its attachments possesses the right software, and degree of skill required, to decipher and display the attachments. These could be, amongst other things, WordPerfect documents, Harvard Graphics charts or Quattro Pro spreadsheets. In most cases, attachments sent to colleagues connected to the UNICEF network are decipherable because we all use standard software, but the same attachment sent via the Internet to someone using a different e-mail package may be completely unreadable. Ideally, we should identify in the body of the message what software is needed to read the attachment.

9.2   Some e-mail packages have "viewers" which can interpret many different internal file formats and thus automatically display attachments. We must remember that no viewer, however sophisticated it may be, can display every type of file that could be attached to a cc:Mail message.

9.3   Our recommendation is that we prepare messages using cc:Mail and limit the use of attachments as much as possible. Files should not be larger than 200K. This is especially true if any of the recipients are using cc:Mobile or are on a different e-mail network altogether.

10.   E-Mail Etiquette (Extracts from CF/IC/NYH/1994-011 dated 31 March 1994)

10.1   Provide a clear and comprehensible subject line. Keep it as short as possible and try not to use too many acronyms and abbreviations.

10.2   Address your correspondents by name in the body of the message. Sign your messages. If your message is short, sign it at the end. If the message is long, use the "From: To:" approach. An e-mail message is never anonymous, as the sender's identification is always included in the header. This ID can sometimes be confusing however, especially when a message has been forwarded from another e-mail system or through the Internet.

10.3   Keep messages short and to the point. Address only one subject per message. This makes it much easier for people to respond quickly, to maintain focus and greatly facilitates future electronic filing and retrieval.

10.4   Limit the number of "cc's" you send. Be especially careful when using distribution lists, as these sometimes include people in field offices and on other e-mail systems outside the organization.

10.5   Append the original incoming message to your response if the latter is not completely self explanatory. This is especially important if you also cc: your response to others.

10.6   Inform recipients of any attachments that you have included with your message. Depending on the recipient's local e-mail system, attachments could otherwise go entirely unnoticed.

10.7   Be careful when using special or accented characters in your message even if your e-mail system allows for them. These could well be lost when your message is received by a different e-mail system.

10.8   Avoid sending emotionally charged messages. E-mail messages are easily forwarded (sometimes inadvertently) and such comments or feelings can quickly lead to misunderstandings and embarrassment.

10.9   Make an effort to communicate mood accurately. Short, quick replies can sometimes be misinterpreted as being aggressive when in fact they were not at all intended that way. Sarcasm and humour can also lead to misunderstandings. Insert a ☺ into your text or even a ☹ if applicable. In e-mail these are represented by :-) and :-(respectively. (Hint: incline your head to the left to view these.) You can also communicate mood by inserting an appropriate word, such as <smile>, into your message text.

10.10   Avoid using capital letters. A message written entirely in upper case letters is not only difficult to read but also gives the reader the impression that he/she is being SHOUTED at. To highlight a word,

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enclose it in *asterisks* rather than use capital letters.

10.11   Do not systematically bypass the normal chain of command just because the e-mail system allows you to send messages directly to the "top". Use the facility, but use it judiciously. Remember to cc: any colleagues you refer to by name in your messages.

10.12   Respect copyright and licensing agreements. Distributing publications and software via electronic mail is no different from distributing the same materials as hard copies or on diskettes.

10.13   Do not respond to chain-letters, unsolicited offers, advertising or any other such "junk mail" that periodically may find its way into your electronic mailbox. Please report repeated abuses of this kind to IRM Office.

10.14   Respond to incoming messages promptly (within 24 hours), even if only to acknowledge receipt. Your correspondent should know that his/her message has been successfully delivered and has not been "lost" somewhere in the system. This also saves on "backup" telephone calls, faxes and telexes.

10.15   Keep your electronic "in-tray" clear. As soon as you have read and/or replied to your incoming mail, file important messages to appropriate electronic subject folders and delete the rest. An in-tray containing hundreds of messages is completely unmanageable. You may wish to consider setting up a series of electronic folders that mirror your paper-based folders.

10.16   Purge your "trash" folder and review your outgoing "log" folder at least once a month.

10.17   Review your electronic subject folders every three months and archive older files that you wish to keep.

10.18   Set up a·series of "rules" to help you file and manage your electronic mail. It can be very useful to have the computer automatically file all incoming messages from your director into your "Correspondence with the Director" file, or have all incoming messages from a certain person automatically and immediately forwarded to a colleague.

10.19   Log on to your e-mail system/s frequently (at least once a day) to check your electronic in-tray. Once your name appears in the e-mail directory, people will start sending you messages and will naturally expect you to read and answer these.

Should you have questions, comments or suggestions concerning this circular, please send them to me via cc:Mail.

Thank you.

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