

**Cultural Value at the British Council and BBC
World Service: a comparative examination of
Annual Reports, 1952-1978**

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Aims and Methods

This study analyses the Annual Reports and Accounts of the British Council and the BBC World Service at critical moments in the history of British ‘Overseas Information Services’. Focussing on the period from the 1950s to the 1970s, it explores key themes, looking particularly at the role these services played in the generating and communicating cultural value and their value as ‘soft’ power actors.

The key areas of analysis include:

- The relationship of each organisation with government
- The range and significance of each organisation’s various activities
- How these activities were valued and assessed from multiple perspectives
- The relationship between the organisations and their audiences/users – particularly what value the audience/users derived from their work
- How the values of each organisation evolved.

The study used a historical analysis of the Annual Reports of the British Council and the BBC External Services (as the World Service was then known) at critical moments of government scrutiny. For both organisations, Annual Reports were used as a vehicle to justify its value and defend it against government cuts. As such, the reports often contained explicit examples of what the organisation considered its primary purpose. From this perspective, the reports present a clear starting point for assessing the cultural value of each organisation.

There is, of course, an inherent drawback to this method. That is to say, the reports were addressed to an external, often critical, audience, and are, therefore, unlikely to provide an unbiased version of how each organisation truly perceived its value. While earlier reports, produced in a less critical climate, are reasonably frank, later reports tend to gloss over areas of conflict.

Despite this limitation, it can still be argued that the Annual Reports remain a valuable foundation for research, particularly as their continuity provides a coherent background for a comparison of the two organisations.

Key Findings

- Both the British Council and the BBC External Services considered the significance of their work to lie in its innate value to the public. Both organisations operated on two fundamental assumptions: that British culture was a resource worth propagating, and that their output was widely appreciated by its audience. While the British Council's explicit focus was on culture relations, the provision of international news from a British perspective should also be considered as an essential part of its cultural output, allowing global events to be interpreted through the lens of British values.
- Within the period examined, most of the self-reflective assessments carried out by the British Council and the External Services of the BBC were limited to anecdotal reports. The British Council, in particular, used almost no quantitative evidence to support the value of its work, while the BBC limited itself to basic audience figures.
- Both the Drogheda Report and the Hill Review recommended that the organisations seek more political and commercial goals. This was manifested most obviously in the development of English Language teaching programmes, which were also one of the most obvious points of collaboration between the two organisations. Their combined efforts, with the British Council targeting its activities at influential elites while the BBC broadcast for mass consumption, aimed at developing a 'climate of opinion' that favoured British interests.
- During the 1960s and 1970s, greater attention was paid to the commercial context in which the British Council was operating and, to some extent, competing. Rather than seeing this as a substitute for its cultural work, the additional revenue it generated offered opportunities for growth in the spread and scope of its cultural activities. This shift was also experienced at the BBC, where it is demonstrated in the expansion of BBC Enterprise (and later BBC Worldwide) as commercially active branches of the Corporation
- An unfortunate consequence of these frequent government-commissioned reviews was the pressure it put on the BBC External Services and the British Council to justify their activities in instrumental terms. In particular, the repeated emphasis on the political and commercial *quid pro quo* of government Grant-in-Aid funding often marginalised the intrinsic aesthetic and cultural value of their work.

Report of the Independent Committee of Enquiry into the Overseas Information Services (Drogheda Report), 1954

In September 1952, the then Conservative government set up an independent committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Drogheda to:

‘Assess the value, actual and potential, of the overseas information work of the Foreign Office, Commonwealth Relations Office, Colonial Office, Board of Trade and Central Office of Information; the External Services of the BBC; and the work of the British Council; to advise upon the relative importance of different methods and services in different policy areas and circumstances and to make recommendations for future policy (H.M.S.O, April 1954, p3).’

In their Report, the committee acknowledges that it had initially been sceptical about the value of the activities of the government’s overseas information services. Ultimately, however, it was forced to conclude that any modern government should be concerned by public opinion abroad and must have organisations in place to address it.

In assessing the work of the overseas services, the report implicitly recognised their value as being able to provide long-term political and/or commercial benefits. In light of this view, the Report suggested two key changes: a move from cultural to educational work (as the report saw a greater economic rewards for educational work); and a shift in emphasis from developed countries to less developed countries, more specifically, away from Europe toward Asia. Its rationale for the latter recommendation was that most European countries were ‘now firmly committed to a policy of the closest co-operation with this country’ and that ‘as the flow of ordinary visitors between Britain and the Continent has increased, Europe can be to some extent disregarded... investment would be better spent in Asia (H.M.S.O, April 1954, p.4)’.

The British Council

The British Council’s 1953/4 annual reports responded to the findings of the Drogheda Report.

From the Council’s point of view the Committee’s Report is decidedly favourable, and, if some criticisms of the Report are made below, these must not be taken to imply that the Council overlooks this fact or is anything but grateful for it. (British Council, 1953/4, p. 5)

The Council did, however, show their evident irritation that they were, yet again, the subject of inquiry (this was the third enquiry into its operations in the space of seven years (Council, 1954, p. 4)) and describes itself as a plant that is ‘pulled up by the roots every couple of years or so to see how it is growing, or whether it is to be classified as wheat or weeds’. When the Drogheda enquiry was announced, the Council hoped (as indeed it still hopes) that ‘with its conclusion the stage of repeated major investigations would be passed’ (British Council, 1953/4, p. 4).

Regular cuts to the Council from 1948 had done more damage than merely restricting its activities. Both the cuts and the government’s stance had put a question mark over its future, damaging confidence both within the organisation and outside it. Recruitment had been particularly badly affected, and ‘university appointment boards had it made it clear they could not recommend the Council as a career’ (White 1965, p. 100).

The publication of the Drogheda Report, with its emphasis on a long-term commitment to overseas information activities re-established confidence among the staff in the Council’s future. The Council responded to these guarantees positively: ‘the concession of long-term planning and finance would mean an immense gain in efficiency and economy and in the attractiveness of the service’ (British Council, 1953/4, p. 6). Nevertheless, the Council fought back vigorously against the suggestion of a move away from involvement in Europe. ‘What Europe wants from this country is not only the political and commercial information which the Committee are so anxious to supply (although this, too, is needed and acceptable), but also some sign of the warmth of interest and the readiness to join in common enterprises which for various reasons we seemed reluctant, until recently, to display in the political or economic fields’ (British Council, 1953/4). The Council also questioned the way its value was being measured. Such a strong focus on political and commercial ends disregarded the central aim of many of its activities.

For example, the Council has a certain representative aspect. Just as universities and museums exist (and are subsidised) not solely as centres of public instruction or recreation but also out of respect for art or learning in themselves, so the Council exists as a body which helps to interpret overseas the permanent features of our national life and to make available to the rest of the world the British contribution to the knowledge, welfare or enjoyment of mankind. The report sometimes appears to be so keen on doing things ‘to’ people that it occasionally overlooks the question of doing things ‘for’ them. (British Council, 1953/4, p. 8).

The Report conceived of overseas information services as having only instrumental value, with activities leading to quantifiable political and commercial ends (British Council, 1953/4, p. 7). Though the Council was more than happy to accept this role, it also saw its work as having intrinsic cultural value, which the government framework

failed to take into account.

Meanwhile, Drogheda described the British Council as ‘badly over-extended with inadequate resources to meet all the commitments that it is expected to undertake (H.M.S.O, April 1954, p5).’ The grant-in-aid had slowly been eroded after the Second World War and British Council expenditure in the 1952/3 financial year was at its lowest point since 1947. This resulted in the closure of a number of provincial centres and the further reduction of staff overseas, as well as in a general reduction of supplies (books, films, etc.). The general theme of the 1953/4 British Council report was its inability to meet an increased demand for their services within these budgetary restrictions.

The BBC External Services

The BBC’S self-described aim for overseas broadcasting was:

‘To form friendly links through information culture and entertainment; to give news of worldwide importance as it was known in Britain; to show what the British nation as a whole thought about the news; and to reflect the British way of life (BBC, 1953/4, p. 7).’

In addition to these broad objectives, two further distinct strands, clearly of increasing significance, can be seen emerging. Firstly, there was a growing focus on the broadcasting of anti-communist propaganda. Secondly, the BBC was giving ever greater support to British exports by promoting British technology whenever appropriate: ‘Broadcasts in this field ranged from general surveys of a whole industry to short items about new developments or products (BBC, 1953/4, p. 7).

In contrast, the British Council saw itself as focussing on bilateral relationships, rather than simply the dissemination of information. It expressed the view that these relationships - between organisations and individuals (personal, written or spoken links) - formed the ‘substance of civilised intercourse between peoples and the basis of cultural relations (BBC, 1951/2, p. 8).

The BBC carried out various forms of systematic audience research, but in the Annual Reports most of the supporting evidence for the effectiveness of its work overseas was presented anecdotally. The later reports (1953/4) have slightly more detailed breakdowns of the BBC’s listener responses by country and service. Below are some of the examples of self-assessment, and how they are used to evaluate their work.

In 1953, the BBC had 13 listener panels in operation, with panel members commenting on over 1000 programmes during the course of the year. Finnish panel

listeners, for example, provided a mass of evidence about the effect on the audience of Russian jamming of BBC broadcasts. Outside of Europe there was only one open listening panel ('London calling Asia. '), but questionnaire work was being developed for Arabic, Urdu and General Overseas audiences. The year 1953/4 was also the first time listener panels were used to assess listener opinion and reaction in the General Overseas Service in the West Indies and Africa.

The BBC also measured correspondence trends. It was noted, for example, that letters from Iron Curtain countries dropped from over 2,500 in 1950-51 to just 575 in 51/52 (BBC, 1951/2, p. 85). Radio polls were conducted, too. In western Austria results indicated that a third of the adult population tuned into the BBC occasionally; while non-BBC radio survey in November 1951, showed the BBC was the most popular foreign station in Finland (BBC, 1951/2, p. 87).

To testify to the success of their broadcasts about the death of King George VI, the report recounts the glowing feedback received about the broadcast, citing a leader from the '*Madras Mail*':

Yet nothing radio has yet given was more impressive, more sublime, more realistic, than the broadcast narrative of King George VI's last solemn progress from Westminster Hall to St George's Chapel, Windsor. In that broadcast were pathos, beauty, majesty, grief, and redeeming grace. Thus the BBC proved that it was not unmindful of its duty to those who live afar, who are dependent upon it for opportunities to be brought into intimate contact with the great emotional and historic occasions of our age. We all interested therein, whatever our race, for however remote they may appear at times, in a world so closely linked as this, none can escape the effect of historic happenings whether in his own country or others'. (BBC, 1951/2)

Five hundred East German refugees interviewed in Berlin gave further evidence of the importance of BBC news to Iron Curtain countries, where radio was the main connection with the free world. A Bulgarian refugee said; 'In spite of the risks, which accompany listening to foreign broadcast, there is not a set in Bulgaria which does not regularly each evening tune in to the London radio and the Voice of America. The news is spread with lightning speed.' (BBC, 1951/2, p. 14)

Examples of BBC overseas activities

- The funeral of King George & Festival of Britain & The Coronation

The work of the BBC in the year 1951/2 was dominated by two major events: the death of King George VI and the Festival of Britain. The following year, the Coronation was of equal significance.

The 1951/2 Report describes the funeral of King George as the ‘most important series of broadcasts in their 20-year history.’ These broadcasts included: special announcements; a religious programme taken from the Home Service; and a broadcast given outside Buckingham Palace. In addition, the General Overseas Service produced a series of programmes entitled ‘A Commonwealth Mourns its King’, which was distributed to all the leading broadcasting organisations in the Commonwealth.

The Festival of Britain resulted in 1,200 broadcasts in 25 languages, 200 of which were produced in advance. Once the Festival began the emphasis shifted to forging new links between Britain and the English-speaking world. The Festival was also seen as an opportunity to explain Britain and the British to listeners in Latin America, the Far East and elsewhere.

- English by Radio

These recordings, introduced in 1950, supplied English lessons to schools and colleges around the world. The Drogheda Report saw this as a suitable area for expansion (H.M.S.O, April 1954, p3).

- The General Overseas Service

The General Overseas Service, within its framework of news bulletins, continued to provide a wide selection of programmes taken from the BBC’s domestic services. With an increased number and range of discussion programmes, it included recent domestic additions such as: “Colonial Questions,” “Colonial Commentary,” “Asian Survey” and “African Survey.”

- Programmes Promoting Trade

Based on the recommendations of the Drogheda Report, increased attention was paid to British exports and broadcasting was used with the definite objective of assisting trade. This programming was created in cooperation with the Board of Trade and ranged from general surveys of an entire industry to short items about new developments or products.

- Programmes Promoting British Values

The ‘Christopher Columbus’ series, for example, which was broadcast in Spain and Latin America, was devoted to an explanation of the British constitution, British law, and British electoral and parliamentary systems.

- Anti-Communist Activities (propaganda, monitoring, etc)

All sections of the Eastern European Service gave eyewitness accounts of every stage of the British General Election campaign, with reporters sent to several constituencies in England, Scotland and Wales ‘in order to make clear, and in full detail, what is meant by the words ‘Free Elections’’. (BBC, 1952/3, p. 84)’

Following the death of Stalin in March 1953, the European Services were largely concerned with assessing the development of Soviet policy, as seen from Britain. The general trend of broadcasts was to show that, while the British Government and people were ready to welcome any genuine sign of co-operation and peace, there had as yet been no concrete development which would warrant any slackening of the NATO countries’ policy of defensive rearmament:

Broadcasts to Russia and Eastern Europe made clear in particular that the British people firmly condemned totalitarian Communist violations of human rights, and that Britain, while anxious to negotiate settlements with the Soviet Union, had by no means forgotten either the interests of the Communist-ruled populations in general, or, in particular, the need felt by Central and East Europeans for security against Germany. (BBC, 1953/4, p. 72)

- Colonial Broadcasting Development

The BBC continued to assist colonial governments with the development of their broadcasting organisations. A special BBC training course for the colonies brought together students from Jamaica, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia and the Gold Coast.

- Transcription Service

The BBC’s Transcription Service served two functions. First, it supplied selected English-language editions of BBC programmes to stations throughout the Commonwealth, to the Armed Forces, to the USA and to other countries where English was widely understood. Secondly, it supplied recordings specially prepared by the Overseas Services of the BBC according to the known requirements of particular territories.

Examples of British Council activities

- Visitor Programmes

The British Council made individual grants for 206 engineers (or students of engineering), 115 agriculturists and 439 doctors, nurses and medical students. These scholarships and bursaries were deemed sufficient to pay in full reasonable expenses of the holders during the period of the award. The Council were clearly proud of the range and diversity of these visitors, who included:

an Indian Professor of Bacteriology; a Research Assistant in Industrial Hygiene from Yugoslavia; a Maintenance Engineer from Radio Pakistan; Roads Engineers from Burma; Biochemical Research Workers from Brazil; a specialist in Dairying from Iraq; a Town Engineer from Nigeria; a Lecturer in Crystallography from Chile; a District Medical Officer of Health from Israel; Mining Engineers from India. (British Council, 1952/3, p. 6)

- Promotion of Skills and Knowledge

The British Council was engaged in four sets of negotiation for the supply of engineering and technical training equipment for educational institutions in the Middle East and India (in 1952/3), including the supply for training purposes of three aircraft jet engines. They also distributed engineering & technological films on subjects such as turbo-jet propulsion, advanced oxy-acetylene welding techniques etc and arranged for reviews of 444 British books on engineering in foreign journals.

- Promotion of British Culture abroad

British culture was promoted abroad in numerous ways, notably by the sponsorship of musical and other cultural events, and by the sponsorship of libraries. In the year 1952/3 the first representative was appointed in Japan, where there was found to be a strong local demand for British Council expansion.

The British Council and the BBC appear to work symbiotically to promote British culture abroad. An example of how the BBC perceived their relationship is given below:

For the satisfactory knowledge of modern British music and musicians that is common in Latin America, a substantial part of the credit is due to the BBC, not to speak of the inherent merits of the music itself. It is, however, to be observed that British music is best known and most played in Buenos Aires and that this is a phenomenon of the last few years. The British Council's only Music Centre in Latin America functioned in Buenos Aires, from 1943 till 1951. (BBC, 1952/3, p. 17)

White Paper on Overseas Information (Hill Report), 1957

The Hill Report did not represent a significant change from the Drogheda Report, whose recommendations had yet to be implemented, but did reflect a change in the political environment (post Suez) allowing for action in line with many of the intentions of the Drogheda Report. The Hill Report was more precise and prescriptive than its predecessor; in this section I will outline its measures, discrepancies with the Drogheda report and the organisations reactions to these changes.

The BBC External Services

Although the net effect of the Hill Committee's recommendations was to increase the External Services' revenue expenditure by some £58,000, there is no doubt that the first thought of all staff were for the consequences of the drastic cuts, mainly in the European Services, amounting to £200,000, and not for the increases, which totalled £258,000. (BBC, 1957/8, p. 6)

Overall the changes reflected a geographic shift in focus away from Europe to Asia and the Soviet Union.

Reductions	Increases
Termination of the Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish Services, the curtailment of the French (by about 50 per cent), the Italian (by about 25 per cent) and the integration of the German and Austrian Services.	The expansion of the Arabic Service to 9 ½ hours a day making the Arabic Service by far the largest of the BBC's language services
Cuts in the European talks and Features department.	Extension of the Russian and Polish Services
Cuts in the North American Service	Additional expenditure on programme allowances, publicity and audience research
The abolition of the Afrikaans Service	The restoration of the General Overseas service from 21 to 24 hours daily

Transcription financial support limited to material to be distributed by the Central Office of Information	The extended use of English by radio
	The extension of transmitter coverage
	Expansion of sound transcription operations

The British Council

The British Council was far more pleased than the BBC with the recommendations of the Hill Report. At the invitation of Dr (Lord) Charles Hill, the Council had submitted proposals for the future development of its work and ‘nine-tenths’ of these had been accepted in the report. The report also reaffirmed the importance of the Council’s existing work. The one area that the report did not recommend an increase of expenditure was in the arts.

The plans for development included the introduction of a scholarship programme (50 in the first year, rising to 100 in the fourth year) to enable key students from abroad to come to Britain for training in English as a foreign language. This reflects a focus on cultural exchange among the elite, which was an important theme in the Council at the time. The report also recommended the expansion of the British Council’s central services, including staff increases at their the headquarters, an improved pension scheme for Council employees and an extension of the British Council programme for the care of visitors.

The report stressed the distinction between governmental and national interests, a distinction that the Council applauded.

We specially welcomed the reference in the White Paper to co-operation with people and interests outside the Government services, because the Council’s work can only be done with the help and advice so generously given to us by a wide variety of educational, professional, scientific and industrial bodies and by many thousands of individual British people. (British Council, 1957/8, p. 6)

In terms of finance, the report recommended a five per cent year on year increase over five years. This meant an increase of about £750,000 of grant-in-aid over the period.

The point most strongly emphasised in the report was the need for more English teachers abroad, which it felt brought clear economic benefits.

The English language is a commodity in great demand all over the world. It is a key to our literature and so to our culture. It is a valuable and coveted export likely to attract other exports— British advisers and technicians, British technological or university education and British plant and equipment. There are clear advantages to be gained from increasing the number of potential customers who can read technical and trade publicity material written in English (British Council, 1957/8, p. 94).’

It recommended the expansion of English teaching in: Burma, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, the Persian Gulf, South America, the Sudan, Thailand, Turkey and Yugoslavia. In the Commonwealth, it wanted expansion in South Africa, Ceylon, India and Pakistan; in the Colonies, in Hong Kong, Nigeria and Uganda.

Audience Research

The most significant change between these annual reports, and those from the period 1952-4 is the increase in comprehensive audience studies. This is particularly true for the BBC. For the first time, the BBC provided a detailed country-by-country breakdown of audience studies. For example: ‘*Hungary*; widespread listening to the BBC was confirmed in interviews with nearly 3,000 refugees who had left Hungary during or soon after the uprising of October, 1956.’ (BBC, 1957/8, p. 48)

Their audience had become ‘... largely systematised by the development of listener-panels numbering over 1,500 members, in the Western Hemisphere, Africa, South and South-East Asia and the Middle East. The panels were asked to comment on matters of programme planning and balance, as well as some eighty individual programmes un the course of the year. Their members expressed themselves freely and often pungently.’ (BBC, 1957/8, p. 57)

Perhaps as a consequence of the British Council’s greater focus on audience research it showed a far greater awareness of its competitors’ activities, noting in the 1957/8 report that the BBC External Services are ‘far behind some others in presenting overseas its [Britain’s] very notable achievements in the arts. After considering a joint report by its advisory committees on music, drama and the fine arts, the Council’s Executive Committee agreed that the present expenditure on the export of the arts would require to be approximately doubled if this country’s efforts were to be brought more into line with those of the principal foreign nations concerned. In 1956-57 direct expenditure on music and drama tours and fine arts exhibitions comprised only 1.6 per cent of the Council’s budget.’ (British Council, 1957/8, p. 16)

Report of the Official Committee on Overseas Information Services (Beeley Report) & Report of the Review Commission on Overseas Representation (Duncan Report), 1967-69

The BBC External Services

In 1952 the Drogheda Report questioned whether in seeking to 'exert influence' the BBC was in danger of 'falling between two stools of the mass audience and the influential minority.' (H.M.S.O, April 1954, p. 2) By 1967, this was again under discussion, by which time the BBC viewed this question with even greater significance because the international role of the United Kingdom had shifted from being a territorial military power to one that influenced people through example and information.

The BBC asserted that its programmes such as news bulletins, which attract very large audiences, were listened to by the very influential. However, if these listeners were regarded as the main audience then broadcasting was an extremely uneconomical way of reaching them. By its very nature broadcasting was available to an ever-increasing number due to the proliferation of the transistor radio in the 1960s. However the primary way in the BBC believed it exerted influence was not because the elite may listen to their broadcasts, but the fact they are aware that many more are doing so. (BBC, 1966/7, p. 84-87)

On the basis of an assumption that 'the opinion of the public at large counts, however slowly and imperceptibly it may make itself felt' (1966/7, p. 4.) a broader philosophy was developed:

The aim of external broadcasting cannot be to achieve quick changes of opinion but to contribute to a climate of opinion, and for the BBC at least opinion based on an assessment of the facts. This is a long-term process, and while the size of audiences may be measured, the final result cannot be expressed in statistics. Quite often it is true there will be short-term bonuses. Over the past year, for example there have been instances of BBC programmes about British products for export resulting in sales. A broadcast in the Maltese Services, the smallest of the BBC vernacular services, was acknowledged to have had an immediate and favourable effect on the course of events during the dispute between Malta and the British Government.' (BBC, 1966/7, p. 87)

Echoing this sentiment, Mr P. S. Raman, Director of Broadcasting at Radio Singapore, noted on the opening day of the Seventh Commonwealth Broadcasting

Conference that ‘the validity of the Commonwealth cannot for ever be merely in ships and troops. It has to be in the validity of a set of values and attitudes.’ (BBC, 1967/8, p. 11) It is from this perspective that the BBC stressed the importance of public service broadcasting; the broadcaster’s duty to create an informed public opinion, without partiality or political control; the key role of broadcasting in education; and the value of programme interchanges as a continuing link between Commonwealth countries. The focus on impartiality, education, and promotion of shared ‘values and attitudes,’ in order to create a favourable ‘climate of opinion.’ shows an increasing focus within the BBC of what may now be termed its soft power.

The Beeley Report felt that in view of the importance of the BBC External Services in supporting export promotion, and despite the need for reductions in public expenditure, that overseas information expenditure should remain at the current level activity for the next four years. In reality this cap on spending equated to a reduction in the activities of the BBC External Services.

The British Council

In its 1966/67 annual report the British Council clarified within its own terms of reference, its constitutional relationship, describing itself as often forming the ‘connecting link of a partnership between the Government, which supplies most of the funds, and many independent educational and cultural institutions in Britain.’

While the BBC saw its influence coming predominantly from an appeal to the masses, the British Council, given the personal nature of its work, took a more targeted approach. The difference is epitomized by their ‘basic principle of service to the visitor or student as a unique individual and not merely as a unit in a mass.’ (British Council, 1966/7, p. 28) Inevitably this led to many of the British Council activities focusing on elites. For example of the 470 British Council scholarship holders (in 1996/7), most were young postgraduates likely to make their mark later in life. Rather than merely influencing the elite, the British Council viewed itself in having a role in creating them. However, the majority of the British Councils activities such as English Language Teaching, provision of libraries, and promotion of sports, are less explicitly attempting to directly influence opinion.

Examples of BBC overseas activities

- Supporting Trade

The BBC saw its role supporting trade as secondary to its broadcasting function,

however it was also aware of the importance of these activities. The External Services continued its close co-operation with the Board of Trade and the British National Export Council in supporting trade. A special article in the Board of Trade journal and publicity helped to increase the flow of information from industry to the External Services. These activities were of added urgency due to the devaluation of sterling in 1967.

Continued concerns about the extent to which the BBC should be engaged in the promotion of trade was emblematic of the recurrent conflict between editorial independence and the pressure to cater for numerous other government interests linked to its funding.

- Monitoring

Growing awareness of the wealth of material available from the monitoring services is the reason the BBC gives for the increase in growth of the sale of the Service's daily publication, 'The summary of World Broadcasts.'

- Liberalisation of Eastern Europe

The gradual process of liberalisation of Eastern Europe in the year 1966/7 was heavily attributed to the activities of the BBC External Services with many describing the transformation as 'revolution by radio.' Correspondence such as this supported the significant role the BBC played, with its calm objective reporting:

Just as during the Second World War, so also today, hundreds of thousands of faithful Czechs and Slovaks listen to the voice of the BBC, it is well known symbolic signature tunes, which suddenly sound stronger and more convincing. You can be rightly proud that you can work the BBC. Our nations are with you; they will not betray their real friends; they will remain faithful. The truth will prevail,' (BBC, 1966/7, p. 65)

- Chinese Cultural Revolution

The Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966) highlighted the precariousness of much of the External Services' work. In 1967/7 there were riots in Hong Kong and violence against British people in Beijing. As such the BBC had to strike a delicate balance between 'the need for forthrightness on the one hand' and the 'danger of drawing fire upon exposed British lives on the other,' (BBC, 1966/7, p. 64)

- English by Radio and Television

Demand continued for the BBC's English by Radio and Television. English by Radio

transmissions with vernacular explanations were broadcast in 28 of the BBC foreign language services and provided basic teaching for listeners in Europe, French-Speaking Africa, Latin America, the Arab world and Asia. A new series of television English lessons called 'Skim John' was produced in collaboration with the British Council. The 26 films combined elementary teaching with a science fiction serial and were issued in Arabic, French, German, Spanish and English.

Examples of British Council activities

In the 1965/6 reports the Council drew attention to the breadth of their work in five continents, and in 75 countries. With about four-fifths of the Council's services being devoted to the developing countries.

- English Teaching

English teaching maintained its position at the very core of the British Council's report. The British Council continued to recruit British teachers for posts in a wide range of educational institutions overseas, with about 700 teachers recruited by the Council working overseas. About two-thirds of these taught English and about half held Council-subsidised posts. The Council primarily provided a facilitating role through consultation with local authorities, negotiation of conditions of service, and the assistance in training and general welfare.

- Personal Contacts

One of the British Council primary duties was to 'extend the contacts between Britain and other countries beyond the normal diplomatic and commercial limits and, in particular, to develop contacts in educational, scientific, professional and cultural spheres.' (British Council, 1966/7, p. 12) The British Council believed 'the bringing together of those who are, or will be, leaders in their own walks of life can moreover have an influence out of all proportions to the number of those involved.' (British Council, 1966/7, p. 12)

This work can be divided into two parts: arranging British representatives of education, science and the arts to go overseas to meet their opposite numbers; the development of a network of Council offices in Britain, servicing students and all manner of other visitors.

- Sport

One of the comparatively recent areas of new activities for the British Council was the promotion of sport, involving ten visits to Commonwealth countries in East and West Africa, Ceylon, Malaysia and the West Indies. Most of the visits were designed to provide coaching, especially in football but also in cricket, hockey and athletics.

- Books

In the year 1966/7 the supply of books overseas was curtailed for financial reasons. However in the same period, the number of books borrowed from Council libraries

throughout the world reached a record of over five million, a 10 per cent on the previous year. The majority of these books are used for educational purposes, with a survey in Nigeria confirming that almost all the readers were studying for examinations.

With the assistance of the Publishers Association and in collaboration with the Book Development Council, the British Council organized 123 book exhibitions in 1966-67, with a total content of 82,000 books, in 61 countries.

- The Sciences

Working with the Centre for Curriculum Renewal and Educational Development Overseas the Council continued to expand its science education work at school level. This included scientific exchanges with the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, with an increasing focus on the exchange of agricultural production techniques.

- The Arts

The biggest single event in 1967 was the World Festival of Performing Arts at Expo 67 in Montreal. The Council arranged appearances by the Bristol Old Vic Company; the Royal Ballet with Fonteyn and Nureyev; the Bath Festival Orchestra under Menuhin; the English Opera Group in Britten's church operas as well as in chamber operas by Britten, Handel and William Walton; and the National Theatre,

Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS) Review of Overseas Representation (Berrill Report), 1978

The British Council

As a result of the CPRS review, and its radical recommendation for the abolition of the British Council (alternative less extreme measures were also recommended), the British Council set about providing a more thorough, quantitative and diverse justification of its activities. Much of the Director General's report was focused on how the Council's work was financially self-supporting. Though not in itself a justification for the Council's work, financial independence at least diminished the need to justify what it was doing.

We suffer in the Council from the lack of tangible yardsticks of effectiveness. How can you tell if cultural relations are working efficiently? Would the cold wind of commercial reality shrivel up the generalisations about contributions to international understanding? How do you know if staffing levels are right in an organisation that does not have to show a profit? One way to find out is to get into the market place. We went into the market place to sell services that were required overseas and could be provided on no other basis. The experience gained from these limited beginnings has come to inform, and to improve, all of our work, whether revenue-funded or not.

Take, for example, specialist courses: if people overseas will pay to come on your courses and fill the places available then, if you have got your sums right and ensured that the fees reflect the full economic cost of the courses, you may be confident that you are in tune with what the overseas customer wants and are providing it efficiently. The courses we have run in the last year and which have proved this point - on subjects as disparate as library planning and design, management and diseases of sheep, and computerized medical tomography - are detailed elsewhere in this report. (British Council , 1978/9, p. 11)

The British Council's revenue came from numerous sources: funds from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Overseas Development, and as reimbursement from the Ministry of Overseas Development (for money spent by the BC on behalf of their schemes). The Council also received funding from 'Other Agencies.' This included money to run fellowship schemes from multilateral agencies, such as UNESCO, FAO and the European Development Fund, and money from overseas governments. Its third, and rapidly growing, revenue stream was the Council's own earnings, including income from libraries, fees from specialist courses and from publications and examinations provided by the Council. The largest contribution in this category came from the provision of English-language teaching.

The BBC External Services

In response to the cuts in the External Service proposed by the Berrill Report, 2,500 letters of protest were received from listeners. Of these, close to 1,700 related to vernacular services and the remaining 800 came from listeners to the English language 'World Service' (previously known as the General Overseas Service). A high proportion of the letters came from the US, and there were also 902 letters from Japan. The BBC argued that this unsolicited feedback was less positively biased and demonstrated the significance of the BBC abroad.

It is ironic that a report whose purpose was to reduce Britain's external broadcasting effort to a level appropriate, in the view of its authors, to the country's' reduced circumstances should have produced as its principal results such a striking reaffirmation by those for whom our broadcasts are intended of the importance they continue to attach to them.' (BBC, 1977/8/9, p. 44)

In addition, the BBC also carried out the usual audience studies on a routine basis in a number of countries each year. Here, the BBC often commissioned independent market research companies to obtain information about the size and nature of audiences. A typical survey informs us that in Portugal in March 1977, among a representative sample of all adults, the BBC Portuguese service had a regular audience of around 215,000 adults. In less developed countries, appropriate market research organisations could not always be found and the nature of largely rural populations made it difficult to collect information, which made specific comparison of audience size difficult.

The BBC also found other, more qualitative measures of audience feedback helpful. For example; in 1977 nearly 14,000 questionnaires were completed by a wide cross-section of BBC listeners. These answered specific questions, such as reasons for listening and preferred listening times.

Examples of British Council activities

- English Language Teaching

In the preceding years, there had been a shift of focus away from teaching English to general students to teaching English for specific purposes, such as English for petroleum engineers. There had also been an expansion of 'revenue-funded' English teaching, allowing for an expansion in the services provided, with new operations in Costa Rica, Ecuador, the Federal Republic of Germany, Singapore, Syria and Venezuela. Other British-based commercial organisations and Anglophile societies had expanded their English language teaching and rather than compete with these

organisations, the British Council decided to complement their work by specializing in the type of English course they offered.

In this annual report, the Council noted how English teaching had the indirect benefit of assuring the Council's reputation abroad, stating that: 'if we had not been in the business of paid teaching from the beginning, we should not have attained the high level of professional involvement worldwide which we now enjoy.' (British Council, 1977/8, p. 28)

- Libraries and Library development

The Council had begun to diversify its library activities, gradually developing them into 'multi-media information resource centres.' (British Council, 1978/9, p. 42) The library at Accra, for example, had been re-organised to incorporate a teacher-resource centre with a new reference collection. The demand for British books remained strong, with the Council's libraries loaning 5 million books to its 342,000 members. The library in Bombay had a long waiting list, with about 5,000 names on it. (British Council, 1978/9, p. 19)

- Overseas visits

The Council viewed short overseas visits by British experts as one of the best ways to make British achievement and skills known abroad. Visits promoted mutual understanding and a helpful exchange of ideas. One recent example cited, was the visit of a delegation of Vice-Chancellors and senior academics to China led by Director-General, Sir John Llewellyn.

- Culture

Due to increased travel costs and the cost of hotels and subsistence, it had become increasingly difficult to mount international tours of ballet and theatre without subsidy. The British Council played a crucial role in disseminating British theatre abroad. The Council also continued to expand in its music and art services and in 1977/8, the Council supported 87 music tours covering 72 countries as well as 19 loan exhibitions, most notably of a Henry Moore retrospective at the Musee de l'Orangerie.

- British Volunteer Programme

The Council continued its support of its Volunteer Programme overseas. Six full-time Council officers were tasked with administrating 665 volunteers in 13 developing countries.

- Council-assisted visitors to Britain

In 1977/78, the Council welcomed almost 3,000 visitors to Britain and organised programs to meet their professional requirements. The Council also provided

numerous courses and summer schools in Britain to enable professional and academic leaders to discuss their work and learn about developments in their field.

Examples of BBC External Services activities

- Industry and Exports

While emphasising the success of its industry-and-exports programme, the BBC did all it could to make clear that this did not compromise the quality or impartiality of its general broadcasting service.

The BBC External series do not advertise what they broadcast about British products and their manufacturers must be as newsworthy as the rest of their output. And export orders do not inevitably result from programmes featuring British products. Yet it is obvious from the response world-wide that they do stimulate interest in the products of British industry and that foreign firms frequently hear of a British product for the first time through the BBC External Services. (BBC, 1977/8/9, p. 49)

While conceding that it was hard to quantify the success of their export programme, they cited the example of a British truck firm that, as a direct consequence of a programme on the Saudi Arabia service, had received orders for £2m. Tourism programmes also make a contribution with the particularly popular ‘Shopping à Londres.’

- Rebroadcasting and Transcription

Rebroadcasting was a service in gradual decline, as other stations developed their own broadcasting services. Nevertheless, there were still 146 regular relays of the BBC world news. As local broadcasting networks became more developed, rebroadcasting was increasingly usurped by transcriptions services.

Transcription programmes were now bought in over 100 countries, with over 200 programmes on offer. Revenue and volume sales were 20 per cent above the previous year. During the 1977/8 new subscriptions were taken out by the Israel Broadcasting Authority, Radio Papua New Guinea and Radio Cairo (BBC, 1977/8/9, p. 53).

- English by Radio

There were large audiences for English by Radio programmes such as ‘The Weekly Echo’, which developed comprehension skills through stories about the life and work of a provincial newspaper. 117 countries were broadcasting BBC English by Radio series in their domestic programmes.

The BBC also produced English teaching television productions. 'Songs Alive', for example, was a series of colour TV programmes which exposed the learner to English through traditional songs. The series had already been screened in Germany and television stations in Holland, Belgium, Japan, Singapore, Hungary, Hong Kong and Yugoslavia were to show it the following year.

Revenue from publishing activities in English teaching also reached a record high in the year 1977/8. A popular beginners' course, 'Let's Speak English' had become highly successful in Spanish-speaking countries and further editions were planned in Arabic, Chinese, Finnish, Indonesian and German.

- Monitoring

While subscriptions to the SWB remained steady, there was a marked growth in sales of selections from the service's news file to international news agencies, which had come to appreciate how this could fill gaps in their own reporting from more inaccessible places. The African file was the most in demand, and was the only source of news for the fighting between Cambodia and Vietnam.

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