**World Library and Information Congress:
70th IFLA General Conference and Council**

**22-27 August 2004
Buenos Aires, Argentina**

A New Information Policy For International Organizations
Brief Overview of WTO Developments

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ORGANISATION MONDIALE DU TOURISME
WORLD   TOURISM   ORGANIZATION
ORGANIZACION MUNDIAL DEL TURISMO
ВСЕМИРНАЯ ТУРИСТСКАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ
منظمة السياحة العالمية

Introduction:

The World Tourism Organization is an international organization with more than 75 years of history. The WTO has been since 1975 a member of the UN family. On 23 December 2003 it became definitely as a specialized agency of the UN system.
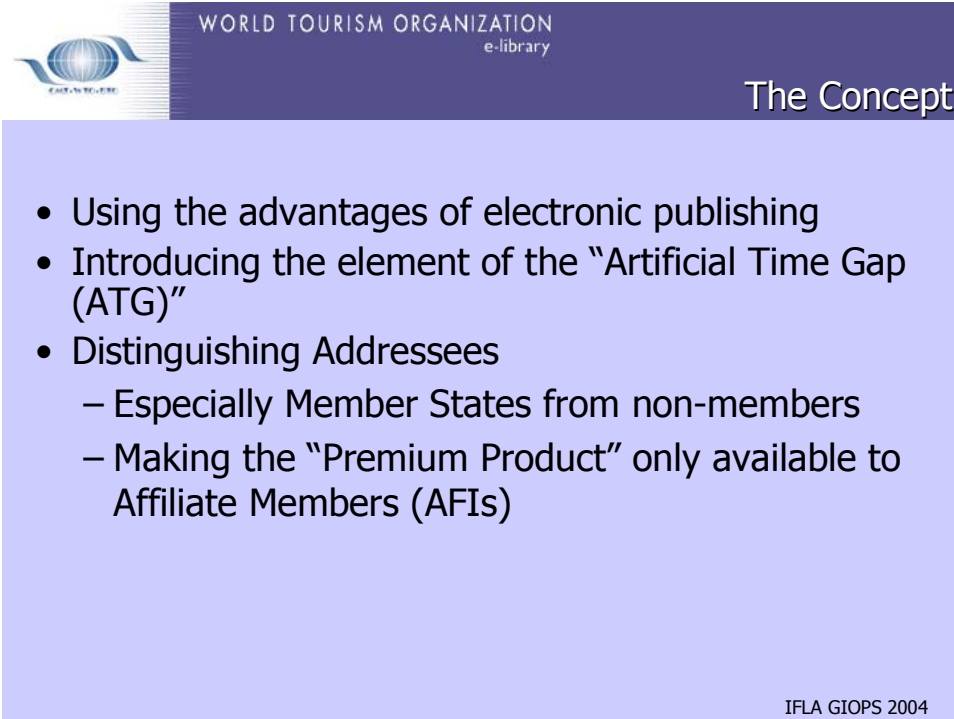
WTO has a membership of 144 member States and is a comparatively smaller agency with 90 staff. Tourism is a subject of increasing and at the same time of varying interest to our stakeholders. As a result, WTO has to prove even harder the value members receive for their contributions.

In the past, WTO circulated all its official communications in paper form. The WTO reports, studies and publications are part of these official communications.

Due to budgetary restrictions, these communications were only sent to the first destinatary named by each government.

WTO considered this situation unsatisfactory and searched for a way to improve the dissemination of its information. On 12 December 2003 WTO presented to its members the WTOelibrary.

Figure 1: Concept of the WTOelibrary

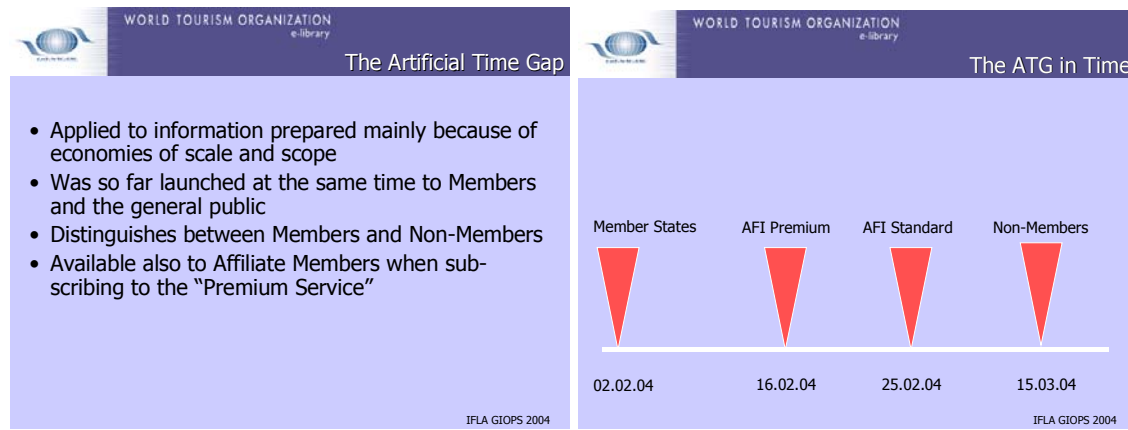WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION
e-library

The Concept

- Using the advantages of electronic publishing
- Introducing the element of the "Artificial Time Gap (ATG)"
- Distinguishing Addressees
  – Especially Member States from non-members
  – Making the "Premium Product" only available to Affiliate Members (AFIs)

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One of the main ideas has been to distinguish the information service provided to Member States from the service provided to non-Members.
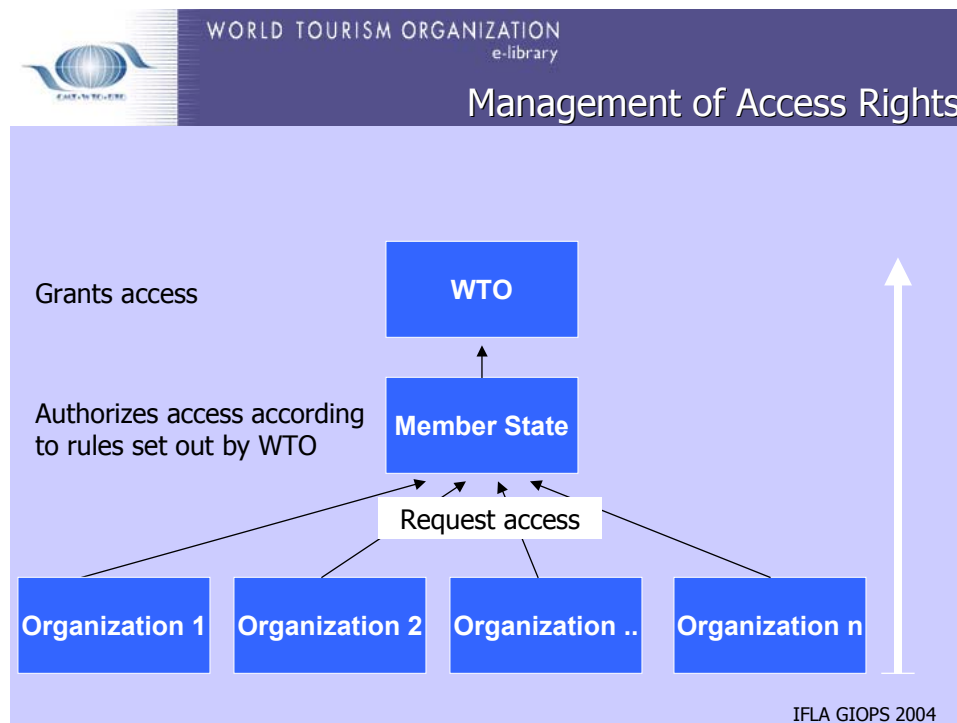
We were first able to achieve this difference by introducing the concept of an Artificial Time Gap (ATG). The ATG is applied essentially to information prepared at the level of an International Organization because of economies of scale and scope and can be called "pooling information". This is often the case with market research. It is often more efficient to have WTO carry out the research than having each interested member State making this effort, i.e. doing it multiple times at the level of member States. Through the ATG the results of this research are made first and exclusively available to member States and after the time gap has elapsed (a time of up to several months depending on the life-cycle of the information), to non-members against payment. Information which refers to standards (standardization information) or which is intended to push a topic on the international agenda (agenda-setting information) continues to be made public, at the same time, to both members and non-members.

Figure 2: The Artificial Time Gap

Secondly, it was WTO's intention to improve the overall communication with our member States by using the advantages of electronic publishing. As I mentioned before, until December 2003 information was only circulated to one designated person in each member State. With the WTOelibrary this has been changed and now to up to twenty network accesses have been provided to each Member. This enormous change in our information policy has allowed confidential information to become also available to members electronically. Therefore, this new information system has to be managed in a new way.

Figure 3: Management of Access Rights

The Rules set out by WTO allow only institutions to be authorized which are:

> "… governmental institutions playing considerable part in designing the tourism policies of the member State. However, single or network accesses can be only given to those institutions which are full

governmental bodies, such as Ministries (federal or regional), the Parliament, the National Tourism Organization or National Statistical Office."
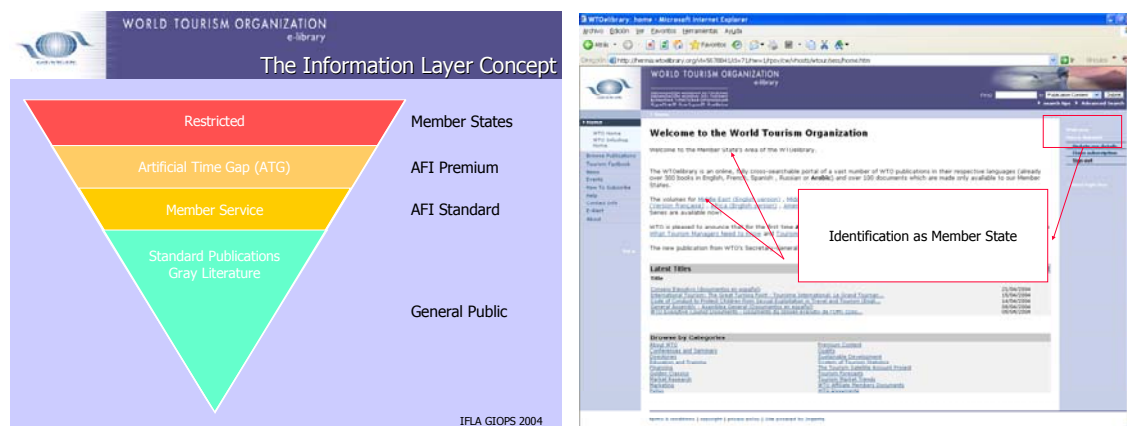
The wide diversification of ministries and governmental institutions that make already use of our information system is -at least from WTO's perspective- quite impressive:

Figure 4: Member State Users

The data-warehouse structure behind the system allows WTO on the other hand to manage the processes in an efficient and safe way. Once registered, the system automatically identifies the user level and grants access to the corresponding information.

Figure 5: The Information Layer Concept

The WTOelibrary also changed the way of handling communications with Members from a Push to a Pull approach. Rather than only sending out printed information, which by its sheer amount of contents is impossible to read, information is now made also available in a way that members find the specific information that they are looking for.

Figure 6: The Annual Output of Printed Material

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Annual Output

Output per Year:
• Some 100 new publications and
• some 1000 pages of WTO documents

Time to read (7 min/page):
• 117 hours for all WTO documents
• 567 hours for all WTO publications in one language
• **Total: 20 weeks p.a.**

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WTO is in that sense among the first organizations that make systematically **all** its information (publications, reports, documents and research papers), which was up to now exclusively circulated in printed format, now as soon as they are finalized available to members through one single interface – the WTOelibrary.

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