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Merriam-Webster's Guide to

International Business Communications

SECOND EDITION



By Toby D. Atkinson

Mail • Phone • Fax • E-Mail

**All the information you need to
transact business around the world**



- Mail & Internet address essentials
- Mail delivery systems
- Phone/fax codes & procedures
- Phone/fax troubleshooting guide
- Accents & special characters
- International business etiquette
- Conventions of international English
- Style of personal names & titles
- Useful products and services
- Designing customer databases

Merriam-Webster's
Guide to
International
Business
Communications

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Toby D. Atkinson

Merriam-Webster, Incorporated
Springfield, Massachusetts



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1. Introduction

Who Needs This Book?

This book is written primarily for a wide range of office workers who deal with organizations in other countries. It is for secretaries, executive assistants, office managers, marketing communications staff, sales assistants, order fulfillment clerks, shipping clerks, mailroom staff, and technical support personnel. It is for employees of international organizations, diplomatic services, the post offices of the world, international delivery services, economic development agencies, airlines, business hotel chains, business travel agencies, and phone companies. In addition, some computer database designers and systems analysts will find information here that will save them a great deal of research time.

The book contains all the information that the Vice President/International vaguely knows but never communicates to back-office staff at home. It is the course that experienced V.P.'s wish they had time to teach. So it will also be useful for beginners in international sales and for anybody else who wants to be V.P./International someday.

The ideal reader would be one person with complete decision-making authority performing all the functions of the international department in a small company. However, to be realistic, the book assumes that you work in a large organization where you do not have complete control over your environment. It will try to help you get your job done, with limited authority, in spite of a number of common internal obstacles.

Why Is It Important?

The globalization of business is proceeding with amazing speed. It is affecting employees and consumers everywhere. More and more companies are buying foreign components and are counting on worldwide sales of their own products. Consumers and businesses increasingly demand the best product regardless of where it is made.

If a product or service is successful in one country, it can probably be successful in others. These days, it is dangerous for a company not to actively promote sales of its products in other countries. To stay at home is to wait for foreign competitors to arrive on your own doorstep.

But even when companies do not actively promote themselves internationally, foreigners find out about them, particularly about American companies. Foreign visitors come to trade shows in the United States and subscribe to the American trade press. Therefore, more and more American companies receive

unsolicited inquiries from overseas, from both prospective customers and prospective distributors, and have to be prepared to deal with them. Since you may not know that “Wien” is the way Austrians spell “Vienna,” how are you supposed to know which country the fax has come from?

Your colleagues or supervisors will often count on you to take responsibility for a variety of international tasks without offering you much training or information (except when you make an innocent mistake and things go wrong). But their messages have to get through. Contracts and samples have to reach their destinations. And you are expected not to upset foreign executives. Reliable performance makes a lot of difference to your personal reputation and opportunities for recognition and promotion.

There is another reason why the information in this book is timely. Post offices around the world are automating, and thus introducing all kinds of new requirements about how to address mail. Though they are not making any particular effort to publicize this information outside their own countries, it does make a difference to the speed and accuracy with which your mail will be sorted. Everybody in international business has an interest in conforming to these new procedures.

What Has Changed Since the First Edition?

In this second edition we have added chapters on 11 more countries, 9 of which are located in the expanding trading economies of Eastern Europe and South-east Asia. The 47 countries now covered, representing about 95 percent of international trade, include virtually all the major economies plus a few additions so as to include all the principal English-speaking economies and all the countries of the European Union. However, many other countries have been influenced by Arabia, France, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom; thus, an awareness of the terminology and practices in these countries will help you understand those in many others. (A table summarizing facts about all the countries in the world has been added for this edition.)

As would be expected, information about the postal systems of the world has hardly changed since the first edition. A short summary has been included to reflect the growth of international bulk mail services, which have expanded greatly in the past few years and gained in legitimacy and respectability, to the extent that several foreign post offices have established remaining subsidiaries and are competing for international business in the United States and other countries.

The world's political geography has changed slightly. South Africa has created new provinces and adopted additional national languages. Slovenia has emerged from the former Yugoslavia as a stable economic entity active in European trade. Hong Kong will undergo changes of unpredictable dimensions during the currency of the second edition.

A number of detailed changes to phone system information have been recorded. First, the European Union is standardizing on an International Access Code of 00. Second, more countries are offering toll-free numbers and there is a trend toward adopting variations of the familiar North American 800 prefix to identify them. Also, a number of countries have changed, or are planning to change, their phone-number structure to accommodate the increased demand for fax lines, computer connections, and distinctive ringing signals.

Office equipment is constantly improving. When the first edition was published, for example, plain-paper fax machines were the exception, and now they are the rule in the industrialized countries.

The biggest changes have, of course, occurred in the computer industry. We have retained the section on the problems of older computer systems, since many computer users will continue to suffer the limitations of MS-DOS, UNIX, and mainframe systems for many years. Dramatic progress on standardizing character sets has been made behind the scenes, and the benefits will start to appear during the life of this book. The Unicode consortium has created a reference document defining all the character sets used in the business world, as well as many others of historical or anthropological interest, and the Unicode has been adopted as the native character set of the Windows NT operating system. The TrueType font specification has been expanded to become TrueType Open (for Microsoft) and TrueType GX (for Apple), which among other improvements cover the accented Roman characters of the Eastern European and Turkish languages.

The Internet, which has existed for many years, has exploded into prominence in the business world, mainly because of the new capabilities of the World Wide Web to transmit attractive-looking pages that can mix graphical images with text and contain links to other pages of information. Its primary business uses at present are for electronic mail and the dissemination of livelier corporate marketing information. Without attempting to provide another general introduction to the Internet, we have added information where there were analogies with material already in the book—for example, explaining how Internet addresses are constructed just as we explained how phone numbers are constructed.

Do You Know It All Already?

Test yourself. The following examples show some addresses as they might very well appear on business cards or in trade directories. I have eliminated most of the punctuation—quite a realistic possibility—but I have identified the countries, which might not be obvious in real-world examples. Not all the examples are perfectly correct postal addresses. Can you explain each one and arrange it as it should appear on an envelope?

Country	Address
Argentina	25 de Mayo 359 3° P. "B" Casilla de Correos 238 C.P. 7600 Mar del Plata Pcia. de Buenos Aires
Belgium	Rue F. Severinstraat 62 b 5 1060 Elsene Ixelles
Brazil	SBN Q. 01 B1. C 70070 Brasília DF
Chile	San Antonio 65 Bellavista Santiago 10
Czech Rep.	Žirovnická č. 23 603 00 Brno
Denmark	Kvægtorvet 19 3.tv 1780 København V
Finland	Ulvilantie 8b A 11 P1 354 SF-00561 Helsinki
France	Immeuble Valmy 64-68 avenue du Président-Wilson Z.A. Briffaut B.P.154 26027 Valence Cedex
Germany	Landstr. 7/3 45440 Dortmund
Greece	Ag. Annis & 190 Orfeos 105 59 Athens

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Country	Address
Hungary	1146 Bp. Bartók B. út 73
Indonesia	Jl. Masyudi III/32 Bandung 40184
Israel	Beit Gibor 53 Rehov Ibn-Gvirol 63143 Tel Aviv
Italy	Palazzo Mantova Via Innocenzo III 21 20138 Milano
Japan	Swan Building 9F 1-2-1 Nihonbashi Hongokuchō Chūō-ku Tokyo 103
Korea	35-2 Sangdaewon-dong Kangnam-ku Seoul 165-010
Malaysia	Wisma Damansara Jalan Sultan Hishamuddin 43200 Kajang Selangor
Mexico	Lázaro Cárdenas y V. Guerrero Col. San José Insurgentes C.P. 03900 México D.F.
Netherlands	Kerkstraat 21 II Postbus 649 7300 AR Apeldoorn
Norway	Stenersgt. 20 Pb 196 Sentrum 0101 Oslo 1
Philippines	145 Lopez Real Street Mandaluyong M.M.
Poland	00-830 Warszawa ul. pańska 35/37
Portugal	Rua 15 de Agosto 51-55-4° B Apartado 2574 1114 Lisboa Codex
Russia	115203 Moskva Nevsky Prospekt 109
Singapore	Blk. 12 Chai Chee Road #02-13 Singapore 0316
Slovenia	Trstenjakova 12 61000 Lj.
South Africa	256 Market Road Sandton 2199 Private Bag X2581 Gallo Manor 2052
Spain	C/Galileo 38 bis 3° izq 28015 Madrid
Switzerland	Rue des 3 Ponts 26 Case Postale 1213 Genève 13
Taiwan	7F 263 Sec. 4 Chung King N Rd Taipei 10552
Thailand	1058/1 Sukhumvit 101/3 (Soi Wachira thammasathit) Bangjak Prakanong Bangkok 10260
Turkey	Ferah Sok. Ferah Apt. No:19 Kat: 2 D:4 80200 Teşvikiye-İstanbul
United Kingdom	Harcourt Chambers Eton Road Dorney Maidenhead Berks SL6 9DT
United States	3100 Two America Center 1776 Lincoln Ave Mpls. MN 55440
Venezuela	Calle 89 14A-23 Maracaibo 4001 Edo Zulia

How would you address these men (that is, “Dear Mr. —”)?

Country	Name
Argentina	Enrique Rodríguez Estévez
Belgium	Michel Vander Haeghem
Brazil	Mauricio do Prado Filho
France	PIERRE Christophe
Korea	Yu Dai-won
Malaysia	Muhammad Salim Ambak
Mexico	Enrique Rodríguez Estévez
Nigeria	Alhaji Mohammed Abubakao
Portugal	José Correia de Oliveria
Russia	Sergie Gennadyavich Kuznetsov
Singapore	Tan Ming Ho
Spain	Luis Ángel de la Villa y Sangriz
Switzerland	Pierre Christophe
Taiwan	Yu-ching Tan
United Kingdom	Russell Miller-Jones

How would you address these women (that is, “Dear Ms. —”)?

Country	Name
Austria	Anneliese Swoboda Hofer
Denmark	Annett Nielsen Andersen
Finland	Hanna Korpela-Virtanen
Hungary	Fehér Katalin
Ireland	Maureen Keane O’Leary
Malaysia	Siti Hawa Ismail
Philippines	Isabel Reyes-Cruz
Portugal	Maria Martins Rodrigues
Russia	Marina Grigoryevna Tsvetkova
Singapore	Jennifer Chan-Lee Bee Leng
Slovenia	Cvetka Babnik Maroit
Spain	María Aldaca de Hernández
Sweden	Anna Berg Andersson
United States	Karen Swanson Larsen

How would you dial these phone numbers, some of which are out-of-date or contain errors that are commonly made by overseas partners?

Country	Number
Austria	0732/8205-DW 285
Denmark	45 26 02 30
Finland	(90) 692 681
France	(19) 33 (1) 45.35.35.36
Hong Kong	0-218363
Hungary	(1) 125-873
Israel	(03) 513313-5
Japan	(03)438-0382
Malaysia	02-223 8565
Norway	(055) 1 11 57
Philippines	(632) 436-4348
Poland	(48 2) 6651514
South Africa	(092711) 804-1273
Spain	(91) 351 67 50
Turkey	(94) 223 27 00
United Kingdom	081-605 3624

Conclusion

If you are an office worker who responds to foreign inquiries, or deals with foreign vendors, or has colleagues in other countries, this book contains information you may need on a daily basis. The same is true if you work for an organization that serves (or regulates) international companies.

In an area where it is very easy to look ignorant or foolish, the information in this book is intended to help you do your job efficiently.

2. Office Efficiency

The purpose of this chapter is to provide some concrete and fundamental guidance to help you realize two basic goals.

First, you want to avoid causing problems for foreigners. Your outgoing material should be clear to people who are not familiar with procedures in your country.

Second, you personally don't want to cause expense and delay, even though those two things tend to be unavoidable features of international business.

In one way, this entire book is concerned with these goals; however, this chapter covers five specific areas that often represent obstacles. Since you may not have control over these areas, the book will tell you how to minimize problems even if other people in your organization won't cooperate with you for international requirements.

Business Stationery

"Business stationery" in this context means letterheads, business cards, fax cover sheets, sales literature, product-specification sheets, customer-satisfaction surveys, product-registration documents, dealer and distributor kits, trade-show handouts, direct-mail pieces, newsletters, and anything else that circulates freely outside your organization. It does not include foreign advertising, for which specialist local advice is essential. (The standard paper sheet size in Europe, known as A4, measures 210×297 mm, or $8.27'' \times 11.69''$.)

The typical graphic designer wants all corporate materials to be consistent, elegant, and distinctive. There is nothing wrong with any of these three goals, but the international department has three more important considerations: materials must be (1) *clear to foreigners*, (2) *legible after repeated copying and faxing*, and (3) *easy to file*.

EVALUATING DESIGNS

Your rationale for participating in stationery designs is this: international communications are slower and more expensive, and therefore people are less likely to just call up and ask for a few more copies to be sent to them. You will want to encourage people in remote places to copy your correspondence and your sales materials without coming back to *you* for copies.

The way to evaluate any proposed "design" for stationery is to photocopy it on your worst machine, copy the copy, fax it to the least advanced country you deal with, have them fax it back, and photocopy the return fax a couple more times on your worst machine. The following table details some common problems:

Stationery Design Feature	International Considerations
Type size	Anything that will ever be faxed should be in at least 12-point type; anything <i>intended</i> for faxing should be in 14-point.
Typeface	Sans-serif typefaces should be used for sales literature in Northern Europe, serif faces elsewhere.
Stroke weight	“Thin”-looking fonts fax and copy badly. Type does not have to be bold, but avoid light type.
Paper color	Darker papers cause smudges on photocopies. Remember that you may be dealing with companies whose equipment is older or not as well maintained as yours.
Ink color	Avoid “screening” (reduced color density) on anything that will be faxed or repeatedly copied.
Four-color artwork	Check a black-and-white photocopy to make sure the sense of the document does not depend on the color.
Embossing	Unless embossed type is also a different color from the background, it will photocopy as a blank space.
Shaded backgrounds	Gray backgrounds make text hard to read after faxing and photocopying and considerably increase fax transmission time.
Ruled lines	Horizontal lines come out jagged after faxing and can make a mess out of an otherwise good design.
Addresses	Print your address <i>exactly</i> the way foreigners are supposed to write it, using the shortest possible form. If in doubt, check it with your post office. If you must use a horizontal format, make it clear where the line breaks are supposed to be.
Phone numbers	Print them in the “+ Format” (see Chapter 4). If you feel this is unsuitable for domestic use, print phone numbers twice, once as “Tel. :” according to your usual national convention, then as “Int’l. Tel. :” in the + Format. Use numbers, not letters.
Direct-dial numbers	Do not use them if they are subject to change. Make it clear what they are. Include your main switchboard number as an alternative.
Fax numbers	Use the simple international word “Fax.” Provide an alternative fax number along with your main one if you can. Do not add useless information like “Group III” or the model you use.
Toll-free numbers	Make it clear what these are and where they can be used from; be sure to also print a regular number that is accessible from everywhere.
Layout	Keep letterhead information at the top of the page so that you can fax short messages on half-sheets. Don’t print important information at the foot of A4 paper when faxing to the United States and Canada (see “Words of Warning” in the “United States” chapter).
Registration numbers	Any registration information mandated by your own government should be kept as inconspicuous as possible so that foreigners do not waste time puzzling over it or translating it.

FAX COVER SHEETS

Fax cover sheets could have been invented by a conspiracy of the world’s phone companies to increase their traffic and waste your money. By using them, you may be adding 45 seconds or more to every transmission for very little benefit.

The only time you need a cover sheet is when you fax a magazine article, a contract, or some other preprinted document.

Keep any cover material short and simple! It does not have to be a full page—and do not ramble on in your own language about who to call if transmission is less than perfect. In many cases, all you will need is a plain gummed tag, or a tag preprinted to look like a small cover sheet. Alternatively, you could make a rubber stamp using the same design.

Avoid complicated logos on fax sheets. They increase the transmission time, and they also increase the risk that the fax machines will think they did not communicate correctly. If company standards oblige you to use a logo, make it as small as the standards allow.

I recommend a “memo” format for faxes, printed off the word processor using a text font of 14-point type, with a larger heading:

FAX (3 pages)	
TO:	FRANÇOIS CORDONNIER International Publishing S.A., Brussels, Belgium Tel: +32-2-233.89.95 Fax: +32-2-234.38.05
FROM:	FRANK SHOEMAKER International Publishing Inc., Los Angeles, CA, U.S.A. Tel: +1-213-869-4630 Fax: +1-213-869-8792
SUBJ:	PURCHASE ORDER FOR ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE
DATE:	January 9, 1997

This style is not to everybody's taste, but whatever design you use, two pieces of information should stand out: (1) how many pages there are, and (2) who it is for. It may be convenient for your own filing to put the destination company (rather than the individual) first in large type, but that does not help the recipients—they *know* what company they work for. Do not make them search for the individual addressee.

Discourage colleagues from sending handwritten faxes to foreigners. People from different countries have difficulty reading each other's handwriting, particularly on a fax. And horizontal guidelines are usually a mistake: everybody wants different spacing, and they look a mess at the other end. If you use them at all, make them as faint and thin as possible.

REPLY-PAID MATERIALS

An International Business Reply Service is available between a limited number of countries. It operates on the same principle as the corresponding domestic service. The card or envelope needs no postage stamp in the foreign country. You deposit money with your local post office, which deducts the postage and a service fee when the reply-paid letter or card is delivered back to you. You

must have a domestic license from the post office before you can use the international service, but you cannot use the domestic artwork because the printing requirements are not the same.

From the United States, you can use the International Business Reply Service for more than half the countries covered by this book (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom). Other countries may join in the future. Also, bilateral agreements may exist between other combinations of countries.

There is also a universal worldwide system of reply coupons which you can buy at any post office in any country and send to any other country, where the recipient must take them to the post office and exchange them for local stamps. However, the system is not only expensive but also inconvenient at both ends, because a coupon does not correspond to a letter or any particular weight of package.

For occasions when you feel you should pay for a reply, try enclosing a few American commemorative stamps and a polite personal note asking if a stamp collector in the office would exchange them for local postage. So many people in the world collect stamps that this usually works quite well and will probably even earn you thank-you notes from time to time.

IF YOU ARE NOT IN CONTROL

If you have to use stationery materials that have been designed for domestic use without consideration for the international marketplace, here are some ideas.

You can often improve the legibility of fax cover sheets enormously with the aid of a pair of scissors and a photocopier that will enlarge and reduce. Cut and paste the “official” version until it works better. Correct for unsuitable paper by copying it first on a “light” setting and then copying the copy on a “dark” setting. Some experimenting will be necessary, but you will only have to do it once.

If you believe your company stationery shows misleading address and phone information, you can make up reply labels or imitation business cards on your computer and enclose them with all outgoing correspondence. You should also have a standard paragraph of text in your word processor with correct and legible contact information, which you can include in any outgoing letter on confusing letterhead.

And do not forget that the time-honored rubber stamp is still available very cheaply.

Mailroom Procedures

ENSURING CORRECT POSTAGE

It is essential to have some foolproof way of ensuring that correct postage is put on intercontinental airmail. Nothing is worse for your personal reputation than mail that is returned for additional postage. Nothing is more frustrating for an executive than to discover that an urgent package of sales literature went by sea because the postage was insufficient.

It is only natural for mailroom people to push everything through a postage meter without reading the addresses. You will make the same mistakes yourself

if you stamp your own mail at the end of the day. You *must* have some system of identifying letters that require special postage *at the time you seal the envelope*. There are two ways to create a workable system—you should use both.

First, the mailroom should have a separate rack or tray for everything that needs special postage. If you send mail to places in three different postage categories, the mailroom will need a stack of three trays. You, as the international expert, should see that the mailroom has current postage information for all the countries that you deal with. Make sure that the information is clearly posted, so that even casual users like your executives can figure the right postage if they decide to rush something out on a weekend when no support staff are around.

Second, you should have envelopes with colored borders for airmail, and colored airmail stickers as well. This is all for the benefit of your own office more than for the post offices, so that international mail will stand out when it is being franked. If you cannot get colored envelopes or stickers, at least put a bright yellow gummed note marked (or rubber-stamped) "AIRMAIL" on the upper-right-hand corner of the envelope so that it will be noticed at franking time.

COST SAVINGS

There are three traditional classes of international mail: letters, parcels, and "other objects." Any of these three categories can travel by surface or by air. There is also now air express mail. You can save considerable amounts of money by sending out "other objects," officially called *Autres Objets* or *AO* (French being the official language of the long-established Universal Postal Union). Officially, two categories of mail can travel as AO: printed matter and small packets. In practice, this means that almost everything except individual letters is admissible. You will need current local postal information to be sure of the regulations, but as a general rule you can expect to save money sending anything AO that weighs between 4 oz. and 4 lbs. Of the countries covered in this book, only Australia (1 lb.) and Italy (2 lbs.) have lower weight limits. Do not be discouraged if there seems to be a lower weight limit for printed matter; overweight printed matter can travel as a small packet at the AO rate as long as it has an appropriate customs label.

Allowed at AO Rates	Not Allowed at AO Rates
Invoice accompanying merchandise	Invoice alone
Mass mailing	Personalized letter
Diskettes	Blank stationery
Cassettes	Film and microfiche
Videotapes	
Samples	
Computer printouts	
Files and old correspondence	
Sales literature, manuals	

Short greetings, highlighting, underlining, correction of errors, and short instructions like "OK to distribute" do not count as personalization and will not stop a shipment from being considered as printed matter.

There are no practical disadvantages to using AO rates. Delivery times are the same. There are a couple of possible objections, but they should not deter you. One theoretical disadvantage is that AO mail is subject to postal inspection and must be easy to unseal and reseal. Europeans generally meet this requirement by using pressure-sensitive envelopes, and Americans do so by using clasp envelopes. Your international mail is subject to customs inspection anyway, whether it is AO or not. The second theoretical disadvantage is that the treatment of undeliverable AO mail may be different, and worse. However, most of your mail *is* deliverable, and, for that matter, the treatment of undeliverable international first-class mail is not wonderful.

All you need to do is to write (or rubber-stamp) on the envelope **AO PRINTED MATTER** or **AO SMALL PACKET**. You will still need your airmail labels, because there is an AO surface rate, too. If you are a perfectionist, you could write (rubber-stamp) on the flap **Unsealed packet, open for inspection**. If you are an *extreme* perfectionist, you could add French translations, which are, respectively: **AO Imprimés**, **AO Petit Paquet**, and **Envoi non clos, peut être ouvert d'office**. "Airmail" is the well-known **Par Avion** in French. Envelopes are sold in some countries with preprinted messages for AO rates.

If you have significant quantities of mail for another country, you will need to evaluate a specialist service which will put it into the mainstream of the other country with local postage. Refer to the chapter on "Useful Products and Services."

SPECIAL POSTAL SERVICES

The post offices can trace your mail if you send it *Registered* (letters) or *Insured* (parcels). There is a simpler and cheaper system, equivalent to U.S. Certified Mail, called *Recorded Delivery*, but it is not universally available by any means. From the United States, it is available only to Belgium, China, Czech Republic, Italy, Korea, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Turkey, and Venezuela, of the countries covered by this book. Registered and insured mail (but not recorded delivery mail) is kept in a secure area and a trace is kept of its travels. You can request a return receipt on any of these special mailings.

It is unusual for registered and insured mail to get lost, even in countries where the regular mail is unreliable, but it does travel more slowly. It is well worthwhile to insure a parcel for a nominal value, just to get the trace and secure handling. However, actually tracing anything or making a claim takes months. On the other hand, the international return-receipt system works poorly, even in advanced countries. Local letter carriers do not recognize the international documentation. Do not be surprised if your return receipt never comes back.

ENVELOPE DESIGN

A casual mailer cannot deal with all the different envelope dimensional requirements of different countries, and it is not really safe to rely on the international standard margins because many individual countries are more restrictive. However, it is important to comply with margin requirements, because you will want Optical Character Recognition equipment to read your envelopes so as to avoid delays. If you leave a top margin of 40mm (1.6"), side margins of 15mm (0.6"), and, most important, a bottom margin of 20mm (0.8"), most countries' equipment should be able to read the address. If you have special airmail enve-

lopes printed for your company, consider putting faint gray margin lines or corner indicators at these positions. Avoid printing advertising or other messages on envelopes, and certainly keep them well clear of the address.

Refer to Chapter 8 for additional advice about making addresses acceptable to OCR equipment.

There should be a return address on every letter leaving your office, since it is a fact of life that letters get returned. Your address should be printed or rubber-stamped at the top left corner. If you are a perfectionist, you could also stamp it on the flap for the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries.

Bulk Mail

If your office is mailing more than about 10 lbs. (5 kg) of international mail per day, you should probably seek specialist advice. There are two options for reducing costs. First, most post offices have special programs for international mail deposited in quantity. In the United States, the term used is *ISAL* (International Surface Air Lift). The alternative is a service known as *direct entry* or *direct injection*, offered by third-party remailers, in which your mail is freighted to the country of destination outside the postal system and deposited in the foreign country as though it were their domestic mail. Mail for direct injection obviously has to be prepared strictly in accordance with local bulk-mail requirements. For example, it must have a local return address and it must be sorted and grouped for the particular country, whereas international mail rules do not require you to know these details. The handling of undeliverable directly-injected mail will be different from undeliverable ISAL mail, probably worse. Nevertheless, cost savings can be appreciable. Remailers often act as consolidators for ISAL mail and can advise you and assist with preparation.

People sometimes question the legality of remailing services. In the early 1990s, the system for settling charges between postal administrations gave rise to strange opportunities for arbitrage. For example, a major Swiss corporation was dispatching large quantities of mail to its domestic Swiss customers from the Mediterranean island of Malta. There were cases in which post offices blocked remailers on technicalities. However, the growth of remail services has been impossible to ignore. Some Third World countries have profited handsomely, and some European postal administrations have joined in enthusiastically and established their own remailer subsidiaries. The Seoul Congress of the Universal Postal Union attempted to put the system of international settlements on a more rational and commercial basis. This is making remailing more universally acceptable, while removing some of the potential for savings that existed during the last few years. Changes in international mailing costs are to be expected over the next five years as more and more post offices in the world adopt commercial accounting practices. You will need help from intermediaries who are familiar with current practice as well as current regulations. Local letter shops (mass-mailing services) can put you in touch with international remailers.

Export Documentation

For the most part, export documentation is a specialist subject, and you will have banks and freight forwarders to help you with it. This section is written