

The HKMA in the Community

The HKMA recognises that it must have the confidence of the community if it is to be able to carry out its responsibilities effectively. To promote this confidence, and to encourage a wider understanding of its work, the HKMA conducts its operations with a high degree of transparency. It also makes extra efforts to inform and educate the public about monetary and banking issues through a number of special programmes.

Objectives

The HKMA serves Hong Kong by maintaining a stable Hong Kong dollar, by promoting a sound banking system, and by helping to develop a financial infrastructure that meets Hong Kong's changing needs. The livelihood of the people of Hong Kong is intimately linked to the HKMA's continuing ability to deliver these services, and the HKMA must have the confidence of the community if it is to do its job well. The HKMA believes that the best way of securing this confidence is through a financial system that is not only efficient, but also transparent and in line with Hong Kong's needs. The HKMA therefore takes seriously the duty of explaining its policies and work to the general public and strives to address the concerns of the community.

In legal terms, the HKMA is accountable to the public through the Financial Secretary, who appoints the Monetary Authority, and through the laws passed by the Legislative Council that set out the HKMA's powers and responsibilities. The HKMA also recognises a broader responsibility to promote a better understanding of its role and objectives and to keep itself informed of community concerns. In its day-to-



day operations and in its wider contacts with the community, the HKMA pursues a policy of transparency and accessibility. This policy has two main objectives: to keep the financial industry and the general public as fully informed of the work of the HKMA as possible, subject to considerations of market sensitivity, commercial confidentiality and statutory restrictions on disclosure of confidential information; and to ensure that the HKMA is in touch with, and responsive to, the community that it serves.

Achievements

A new and strengthened Corporate Development Division was formed in February 1999 to bring together under one unit the various media, education, publications and public relations responsibilities of the HKMA. In addition to its regular duties, the Corporate Development Division devoted considerable resources in 1999 to formulating and implementing a comprehensive Communication Strategy on the Year 2000 issue: this is described in more detail in the Chapter on the Year 2000 issue.

Media

The most extensive and frequent channel of communication between the HKMA and the community is the news media. The HKMA adopts a pro-active approach in its dissemination of information through the media. It continued in 1999 to extend its contact with journalists and to raise the level of transparency in the materials it released. During the year senior executives of the HKMA met

the media frequently in a variety of settings, including press conferences, background briefings, newsroom visits, interviews and technical workshops. Nineteen press conferences were held, compared with fifteen in 1998. A total of 149 press releases were issued, compared with 128 in 1998. The Press Section handled on average 30 press enquiries per day. In response to the international community's continuing interest in Hong Kong's monetary system, senior executives of the HKMA briefed visiting journalists and analysts from overseas on numerous occasions.

Since its establishment in 1993, the HKMA has made special efforts to increase the transparency of its work. It continues to be acknowledged as one of the most transparent and accessible organisations of its kind in the world. Initiatives undertaken in 1999 to raise transparency included the publication of data on foreign currency assets and on the balance sheet of the Exchange Fund on a monthly basis in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) starting from January 1999. It also published a regular schedule of forthcoming major events and press releases.

Publications

The HKMA's various publications are widely respected as authoritative sources on monetary, banking and economic matters. In addition to an *Annual Report*, covering the whole of the HKMA's work, and regular publications such as the *Monthly Statistical Bulletin* and the *Quarterly Bulletin*, the HKMA also published special publications on monetary and banking issues with the aim of

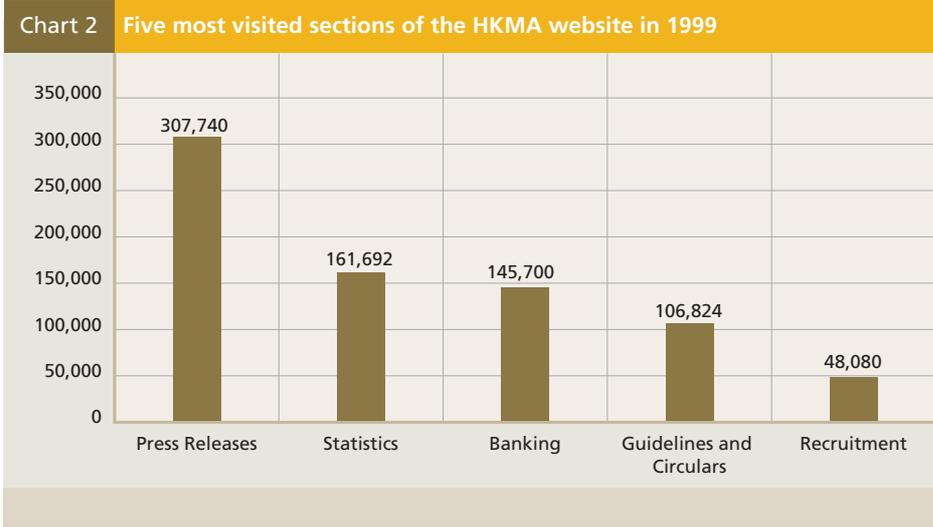


providing information to professionals and stimulating debates. Among these, the *Guide to Hong Kong Monetary and Banking Terms* was published in May to provide an easy reference to members of the public who are interested in financial matters. *Hong Kong's Monetary and Banking System: Review and Outlook Vol.2* (in Chinese) was published in July. A set of ten new HKMA fact sheets, covering various aspects of the work of the HKMA, was published in September. To enable wider circulation, the contents of the fact sheets, as well as other HKMA publications, were put on the HKMA website.

The HKMA continued its efforts to improve the clarity and attractiveness of its publications and to make them accessible to a wider public. The HKMA's 1998 *Annual Report* received an Honourable Mention in the Best Annual Reports Award from the Hong Kong Management Association.

Website

To take account of the rapidly growing use of the Internet, the HKMA relaunched its website in January 1999 with a number of new features, including an interactive learning centre. During the year the HKMA's website was consistently among the top ten most visited sites of more than a hundred Hong Kong SAR Government websites. It attracted a total of 3,770,530 hits in 1999, representing a 180% increase over 1998. The Press Release column of the HKMA site was the section most frequently visited by net



users. E-mail facilities make the website a two-way channel of communication. In 1999 the HKMA received around 481 e-mails from Internet users from around the world.

In September the Chief Executive of the HKMA launched a weekly Internet column 'Viewpoint', which carries the views of senior HKMA staff on topical financial and other issues. A new 'Viewpoint' appears every Thursday and is printed in full by a number of Hong Kong newspapers in their Friday editions.

Resource Centre and public enquiry service

Day-to-day relations between members of the public and the HKMA take place through the HKMA's public enquiry service and a Resource Centre of publications and information relevant to the HKMA's work, which opened in January 1999. The Resource Centre is open to the public four days a week. Throughout the year the HKMA received a total of 3,880 enquiries, which consisted mainly of requests for statistical or background information from researchers, financial industry professionals, students and the general public. These enquiries were made by telephone, fax, e-mail, letter, and through personal visits.

Table 1 HKMA Resource Centre hotline calls during 1999

Nature of calls	Number
Requests for statistical or other information	3,574
Complaints	231
Questions	67
Suggestions	8
Total	3,880

In 1999, the HKMA continued to improve its enquiry and information services. Following a review in late 1998, the public enquiry service was supplied with a dedicated team of staff in the Resource Centre to enable all enquiries to be handled quickly. The HKMA Resource Centre received 285 visitors and handled 44 walk-in enquiries in 1999.



The HKMA organised a total of 14 school talks for over 3,000 students and 500 Economic teachers in 1999.



Education programme

During 1999, a programme of 14 educational talks was organised for more than 3,000 secondary school students and 500 teachers. The linked exchange rate was the main theme for the students' talks while central banking functions, with special emphasis on banking supervision, were the main theme for the teachers' programme. The state of Year 2000 preparedness of the local banking sector was a further topic during these sessions. The response to the educational talks was very encouraging.



A group of students in Tsuen Wan Town Hall discuss questions with their teacher at an HKMA educational talk.

Legislative Council and other representative bodies

During 1999, the HKMA continued to maintain close contacts with the Legislative Council. Officials from the HKMA appeared before the Financial Affairs Panel of the Legislative Council five times during the course of the year to brief Members on a variety of issues and to present the HKMA's 1998 *Annual Report* to the Financial Affairs Panel in May.

In addition to its formal briefings to the Financial Affairs Panel of the Legislative Council, the HKMA continued its programme of informal contacts with Legislative Councillors. This programme enabled senior staff of the HKMA to exchange views with Legislative Councillors on a wide range of topical issues. The programme was supplemented in January by a briefing session to the research assistants of the Legislative Councillors and staff of the Legislative Council on currency board arrangements and the Banking Sector Consultancy Study.

In 1999 the HKMA held meetings with Provisional District Board Members and business organisations. A briefing on financial issues for Provisional District Board Chairmen and District Officers was held in August. Informal gatherings with business groups, including the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong and the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce were organised during the year.



Staff of the HKMA participate in Community Chest Dress Casual Day on 24 September 1999.





A group of HKMA staff participate in the 1999 Community Chest Corporate Challenge on 14 March 1999.

Community participation

During the year staff from the HKMA participated in various fund-raising campaigns organised by charitable organisations. The HKMA was the second runner-up in the Outstanding Fund-Raiser Award (Civil Servant Category) for the Community Chest's Dress Casual Day 1999. Colleagues from the HKMA also won the first runner-up position among the female participants and the third overall runner-up in the ten-kilometre run of the Community Chest Corporate Challenge.

Challenges

The HKMA will seek to foster continuing confidence in its work by promoting a broader understanding of monetary and banking matters while at the same time ensuring that community concerns are taken into account in the formulation and implementation of policies and the handling of issues.

One of the continuing challenges for the HKMA is to ensure that complex and technical issues are presented and explained in a way that is accessible to people from all walks of life and not just to the financial and economic experts. With this aim in mind, the HKMA will make special efforts in 2000 to improve its communications with the community. In addition to its regular programmes, the HKMA intends to present a major exhibition on monetary and banking topics in the summer of 2000. Given the rapidly growing use of the Internet and the popularity of the HKMA's website, the HKMA will subject the website to a further thorough review with the aim of improving presentation and navigation. As a supplement to the general factsheets on the HKMA, a series of background briefs on banking and monetary issues will be prepared for educational use: the first topic will be on the Linked Exchange Rate system. A special book on the role, theory, and history of currency board systems, with a focus on the Hong Kong experience, is also being planned.

