Title:	**Electronic distribution of documents within SGFS - Secretariat's response to Resolution 5 of the SGFS Subgroup Meeting in New Orleans, December 1994**
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Based on the developments within JTC1 (see attached document JTC1 N3413) and as follow up of Resolution 5 of the SGFS Authorized Subgroup Meeting in New Orleans, December 1994 (SGFS N1256), the SGFS Secretariat considered the possible implementation and use of electronic document distribution within SGFS.

At the moment the only electronic distribution of information within SGFS is by the e-mail-reflector. Sometimes the SGFS Secretariat also receives documents on diskette but neither agreements were made within SGFS about the status and the format of these documents nor the submitter of the diskette expected that the SGFS Secretariat shall always be able to read or print the documents from diskette.

By strict agreements within SGFS all contributions to the e-mail-reflector are considered to be informal. Although in history no strict agreements were made in case of diskettes, documents on diskette were also treated to be informal. A document could only be a formal SGFS document when it was submitted to the SGFS Secretariat on paper.

In March 1995 the JTC1 Secretariat (ANSI) started the electronic distribution of JTC1 documents on diskettes. The JTC1 SC/WG Secretariats and the Offices of the National Standards Institutions began to receive documents only on diskettes, not accompanied by hard-copies. Based on the Guidelines in JTC1 N3413 these electronic documents have to be treated as formal JTC1 documents.

These developments had quite some consequences for the Offices of the National Standards Institutions and the International Secretariats of JTC1 SCs/WGs. Of course it is much more convenient to store small diskettes in parts of your desk drawer instead of millions of pieces of paper in large cupboards. But when the documents have to be further distributed to national standards committees or the membership of international committees (e.g. SGFS), it has some implications.

This needed a special look to the specific options which the Offices of NBLOs and Secretariats of JTC1 SCs/WGs have for further distribution of electronic documents (of importance for the possible electronic distribution of SGFS documents within SGFS).

Option 1: from diskette-receipt to paper-distribution

The Secretariat of a national or international committee could first make a hard-copy of a document received on diskette (or by e-mail) and then further distribute the document on paper. This, of course, is the poorest way to proceed. However, for the near future this could be the only way. The recipients at the end of the distribution chain, i.e. members of national committees and the membership of international committees might not have wordprocessors which can handle all three formats e.g. "standardized" by JTC1 (MSWord, Wordperfect or RTF). Based on the experience with the JTC1 document distribution it appeared in practice that both Wordperfect and MSWord are needed to be able to read and print all JTC1 documents received on diskette. Nevertheless, the choice for this option is a very polite one: the distribution of hard-copies by the Secretariats of national committees or JTC1 SCs/WGs means that the problem of making hard-copies is not passed on to the recipient at the end of the distribution chain.

Option 2: a diskette-to-diskette copying facility

Another possibility is that a Secretariat makes electronic copies of the received documents on other diskettes and further distributes these diskettes to the membership of the committee. This could be a disadvantage: it means that the Offices of the NBLOs should have a diskette-to-diskette copying machine, otherwise a person has to do this boring job. And more-over, in this case the problem of making hard-copies is now passed on to the recipient at the end of the distribution chain. This is the option the JTC1 Secretariat has chosen and which presented the Offices of the NBLOs for a fait accompli.

Option 3: Further distribution by e-mail.

The most elegant way for a Secretariat to further distribute the electronic documents is of course by e-mail. By a simple piece of software the electronic documents can be pushed through to an e-mail membership list or e-mail-reflector. Most of the SGFS members have at least an Internet access, some also have X400. So this indeed is an interesting solution. The current popularity of Internet among the SGFS Membership means that SGFS could use this network for the electronic distribution of its documents. However, the current higgledypiggledy of Internet learned that using only the pure e-mail-function documents can be destroyed annoyingly. Therefore the final solution should be an SGFS FTP-site on Internet or a World Wide Web site.

During the last months NNI discussed these options. The target was to come to a quick and effective implementation of the electronic distribution of documents which will optimize the service of the international Secretariats within NNI so that NNI can offer an international standardization committee a very efficient, fast working and cost-conscious Secretariat.

- Option 1 is seen as a very temporary option. Meanwhile NNI decided to purchase also MSWord next to the in-house-standardized Wordperfect. This means that the SGFS Secretariat can print all documents delivered on diskette, using the MSWord,

Wordperfect or RTF formats (e.g. by offering a printing-on-demand service).
- Option 2 is seen as a short range solution. A diskette-to-diskette copying facility has been bought by NNI so that the SGFS Secretariat can offer a service of distribution of SGFS documents on diskette (aligned with the JTC1 Guidelines)
- Option 3, using an FTP- or WWW-site, is seen as the ideal option for the future distribution of SGFS documents. NNI has started to investigate the cost of the installation of an FTP-site using special techniques for the security of the local NNI network.
- By the way: NNI has already a WWW Home Page: http://www.nni.nl

Based on the abovementioned, some questions should be answered by SGFS:

- Should SGFS implement the same guidelines as the JTC1 guidelines (JTC1 N3413) for the electronic document distribution within SGFS?
- Should SGFS choose for the same document formats as JTC1?
- Should the SGFS Secretariat start with the printing-on-demand service?
- Should the SGFS Secretariat also start with distribution on diskette?
- Does the SGFS agree with the future implementation of a FTP- or WWW-site by the SGFS Secretariat?