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**Session 4: Good practices in electronic publications**

**United Nations World Statistics Pocketbook**

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**Introduction**

The World Statistics Pocketbook has been an annual publication of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) since 1976 (formerly called the World Statistics in Brief). The publication was created in response to Member state requests, as part of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (GA Res 2626 (XXV)), for basic national data that would increase international public awareness of countries' development efforts. The resolution was adopted on 24 October 1970 and outlines the goals for a new decade of development objectives for both developed and developing countries. With regard to data availability, the resolution calls for (in paragraph 84, see below), a mobilization of public opinion to support the objectives and policies for the Decade, whereby the United Nations system assists various national information media by supplying adequate basic information.

**E. Mobilization of Public Opinion (Paragraph 84, GA Res 2626 (XXV))**

An essential part of the work during the Decade will consist of the mobilization of public opinion in both developing and developed countries in support of the objectives and policies for the Decade. ... **The role of the organizations of the United Nations system will be to assist the various national information media, in particular by supplying adequate basic information from which these media may draw both substance and inspiration for their work.** There is also an urgent need for increasingly coordinating the information activities already being undertaken by many organizations within the United Nations system. The information stemming from international sources will be aimed primarily at strengthening the sense of interdependence and partnership implicit in the concept of the Decade.

The hope for the Pocketbook from the beginning was to “serve as an appropriate vehicle for disseminating, in compact form, important basic facts relating to various countries” (United Nations, 1976, pg. iii). The Pocketbook is but one publication in response to this mandate and has since transitioned from a purely print publication (varying in size and length) to multiple formats, including print and electronic, as well as an app.

**Pocketbook Content & Global Market Niche**

The first iterations of the Pocketbook (1976 through the 1980's) included a snapshot of global and regional demographic, economic and social statistics, along with country profiles. The text contained a total of 42 indicators focusing on a range of topics from agricultural and manufacturing production to consumption, transport, education and culture. The country profiles were grouped by region and originally contained a map to divide the areas. Beginning in the 1990's the format changed to what is now the base for the current Pocketbook. The global and regional summary statistics were no longer

included and the normally smaller book became a longer, more rectangular edition in hopes of fitting inside a suit pocket (see below the range of Pocketbook iterations from 1976 to present).

### WORLD STATISTICS POCKETBOOKS (1976-2013)



While the format, page length and size of the publication has changed throughout the years, its central purpose to provide quick statistical information for users throughout the world has not changed. The indicators chosen, even from the beginning, were designed to answer provide users a quick reference of the most frequently consulted indicators and time series.

Based on analysis conducted in UNSD, the global market for the Pocketbook and books like it is relatively small. Currently, only two other publications, The World Bank *Little Data Book* and The Economist’s *Pocket World in Figures*, compete for user’s attention with a quick reference compilation of statistics presented in country profile format. Each of the other publications still includes global and regional summary statistics. In addition, when reviewing the global market for publications similar to the Pocketbook, a resounding trend became apparent, which showed that generally when institutions produce a Yearbook and a Pocketbook, the Pocketbook is a smaller extract of the Yearbook data. In contrast, the United Nations World Statistics Pocketbook is part of a collection of publications, including a Statistical Yearbook that the Secretariat produces, but is currently not tied to that publication.

Below is a summary chart of the main global publications and characteristics:

### CURRENT GLOBAL POCKETBOOK MARKET

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Pocketbook free to download?</i>
<b>World Statistics Pocketbook (2014 edition, forthcoming June/July)</b>	United Nations/ Statistics Division	“An annual compilation of key statistical indicators prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Over 50 indicators have been collected from more than 20 international statistical sources and are presented in one-page profiles for 217 countries or areas of the world. This issue covers various years from 2005 to 2014.”	<a href="http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/">http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/</a>	Yes (pdf)
<b>The Little Data Book (2014)</b>	World Bank	“The Little Data Book 2014 is the pocket edition of World Development Indicators 2014. It is intended as a quick reference for users of the World Development Indicators database, book, and mobile app. The Little Data Book 2014 contains 55 key development indicators such as population and population growth, GNI, GDP, GDP growth, exports and imports, and gross capital formation, deforestation, water	<a href="http://data.worldbank.org/products/data-books/little-data-book">http://data.worldbank.org/products/data-books/little-data-book</a>	Yes (pdf)  Regional Comparisons/ Income Comparisons/ Includes Income

		use, energy use and electricity use per capita.”		Classification
<b>Pocket World in Figures (2014 edition)</b>	The Economist	“Annual bestseller- completely updated and revised, and expanded with new features that include mobile banking, a global peace index, museums and art galleries, the shadow economy and species under threat. Now provides rankings on more than 200 topics that take into account over 190 countries, together with detailed statistical profiles of more than 65 of the world’s major economies and profiles of the world and the euro area.”	<a href="http://store.economist.com/Product-%2820041211%29-EPO%282%29-EB018%282101%29.aspx">http://store.economist.com/Product-%2820041211%29-EPO%282%29-EB018%282101%29.aspx</a>	No; \$34.50  World Rankings Data (half of the book)

Source: Author compilation based on each Pocketbook’s website as listed above, May 2014.

While sales of the World Statistics Pocketbook have ranged from roughly 200 to 300 copies over the past few years, there has been a steady decline (see below). Although this number is not incredibly high, the Pocketbook is year after year considered a UN Publication bestseller. In addition to these sold copies, in the past a courtesy copy has been sent to country representatives around the world in order to ensure greater access to the data. This courtesy will soon cease since users are moving more toward digital access and due to recent budget cuts.

#### **SALES OF THE WORLD STATISTICS POCKETBOOK (2011-2013)**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Release Date</b>	<b>Sales</b>
2012 Print Version	May 2013	274 copies sold
2012 PDF Version*	May 2013	5 copies sold
2011 Print Version	August 2012	294 copies sold
2011 PDF Version*	June 2012	13 copies sold
2010 Print Version	June 2011	347 copies sold
2010 PDF Version*	May 2011	8 copies sold

Source: UN Sales Department, February 2014.

\* Beginning 2009, UNSD began providing a free pdf version of its publications on its website. The UN sales department still maintains a PDF on their site for purchase.

While the print publication has been the primary objective for the Pocketbook, it has also had iterations of digital presence—first as a diskette offering a database version based on the print document in 1996, next to its availability as a free pdf online starting in 2009, afterward to its inclusion in the online database UNdata beginning in 2008 and finally to the development and deployment of an app in 2012-- all of which is discussed in the following sections.

#### **Evolution to the digital age: diskette database to pdf to UNdata**

The first venture into the digital arena for the Pocketbook was in 1996, when the UniWorld Database was created in diskette format and offered along with a print version of the Pocketbook (see below). The goal of this digital resource was to move beyond the limitations of the print edition and become more flexible for users. A broader goal for the endeavour was to “stimulate a global outlook ... and contribute to a better understanding of the peoples of other countries and of international affairs.” (UniWorld Software, 1996, pg. 5)

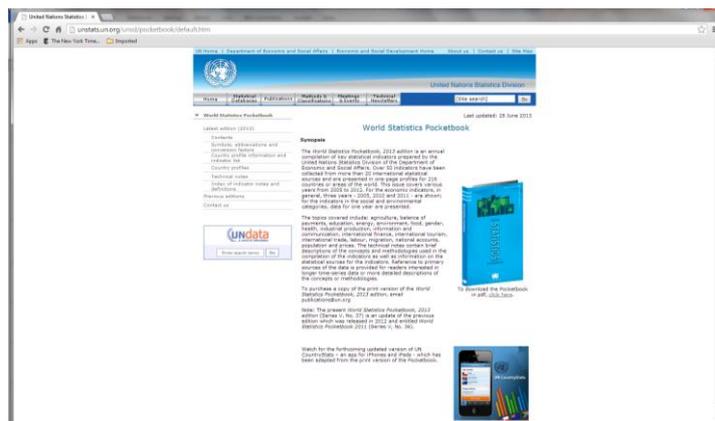
**UNIWORLD DATABASE HANDBOOK,  
DISKETTE AND POCKETBOOK (1996)**



After the diskette, initiatives in 2008-2009 included offering the Pocketbook online for free in pdf format and the inclusion of country profiles online in the UNdata database.

The pdf ensured the data was accessible and free for all users with a basic Internet connection. While this is a fairly basic electronic publication example (it is a static pdf generated from the print publication), it is a very effective way for the information contained in the Pocketbook to reach a wide audience.

**POCKETBOOK WEBSITE & FREE PDF LINK**

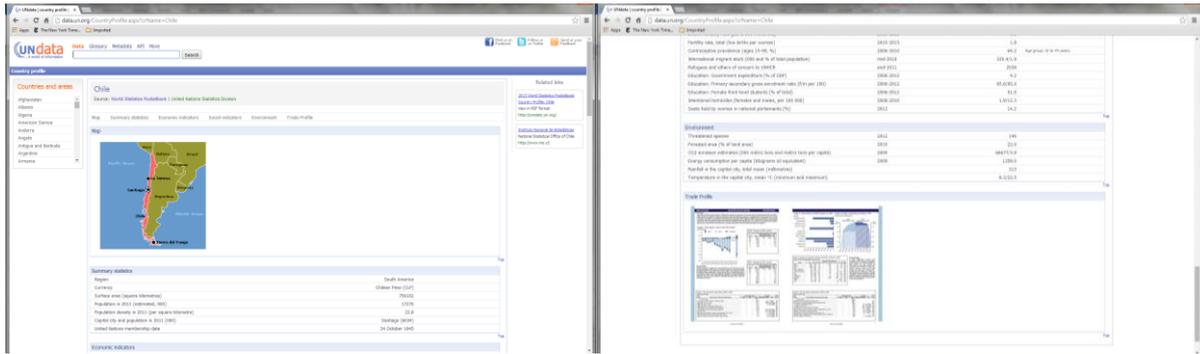


Website: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/default.htm>

UNSD launched UNdata as a new Internet based data portal, bringing together over 30 UN statistical databases into a one-stop gateway for a variety of statistical resources of the UN system. It has remained an important statistical resource and is found at <http://data.un.org/>. The database is considered a powerful tool that brings data to a myriad of users from decision makers, politicians to journalists and students. UNdata serves to promote the dissemination of statistical information in a free format and the overall objective of the site.

The Pocketbook is featured in UNdata as online country profiles in order to aid research by users. While the data is not currently in a searchable format, but is rather a static digital display of the printed publication's country profiles (see below), it allows for greater access to the information contained in the publication since the site has seen over 6 million total visits since 2008.

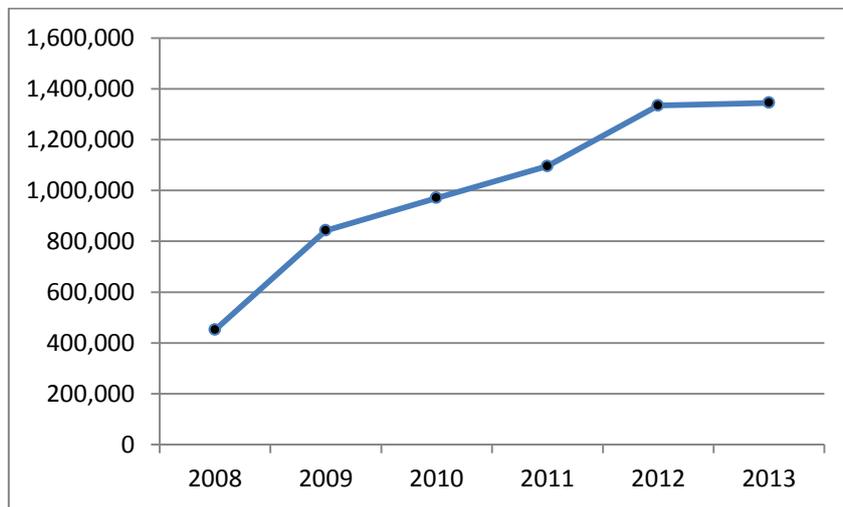
## SCREEN SHOT VIEW OF COUNTRY PROFILE IN UNDATA



Website: <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName>

While it is not currently possible to count the visits to the country pages, usage of the UNdata website has steadily increased since 2008 (see below), meaning that the country profiles are certainly seen by a numerous audience.

### YEARLY VISITS\* TO UNDATA WEBSITE (2008-2013)



Source: UNSD internal data: Google Analytics for the UNdata website, May 2014

\*Visits are "sessions" as defined and counted by Google Analytics.

In addition to the country profiles available on UNdata, these pages are currently included in tweets sent out through the UNSD twitter account. Country pages specifically related to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are tweeted periodically to inform audiences about these countries in the lead up to the 2014 UN Conference on SIDS (September 2014). The UNSD twitter account has almost 800 followers and is growing every day.

### UNSD TWITTER SITE



### Evolution to the digital age: UN CountryStats app

In 2012, the Pocketbook content was launched as an Apple IOS native app called the UN CountryStats app. The description for the app is: “UN CountryStats is a data visualization tool to compare key economic, social, environmental, trade, and area & population indicators for 216 countries and territories. Indicators, drawn from the United Nations' unique and authoritative data set, can be viewed as complete country tables or visualized as bar graphs. Other useful tools include detailed definitions of each indicator and the ability to save graphs as favourites.” (UN CountryStats IOS app website, May 2014).

The app includes the majority of indicators presented in the Pocketbook, along with statistical sources, technical notes and footnotes. It allows users to compare county data and as well as the opportunity to graph data.

### APPLE WEBSITE TO DOWNLOAD THE UN COUNTRYSTATS APP



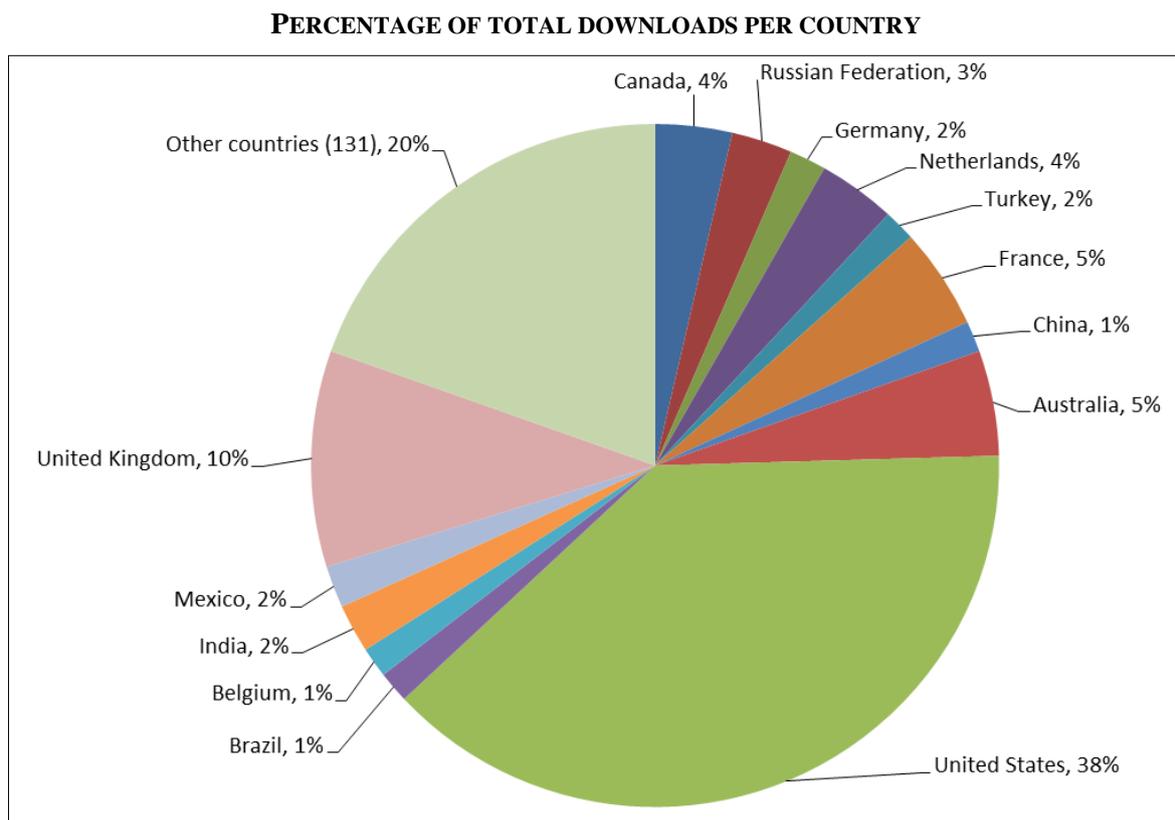
Website: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/un-countrystats/id505192468?mt=8>

Examples of comparing the countries and presenting the data in graphs are displayed on the screen shots of the app in an iPhone and iPad below:





The reach of the UN Country Stats app has been its most impressive achievement. It has been downloaded 85,537 times in 145 countries around the world since it launched in March 2012. The percentage of downloads per country is displayed in the graph below.



Source: AppAnnie analytics for UN CountryStats app, May 2014

The competitors for the Pocketbook, The Economist and World Bank, also have apps available for their publications (see below). Currently, the UN CountryStats app is rated on par with the competition, but is not available for Android.

<i>Name of Pocketbook</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>App name -Cost- -Available platforms- -Rating-</i>	<i>App Features</i>
<b>World Statistics Pocketbook</b>	United Nations/ Statistics Division	<b>UN CountryStats App</b> - Free - Iphone, Ipad, Ipod Touch - Rated 4+ on Itunes	Based on the World Statistics Pocketbook.
<b>The Little Data Book 2014</b>	World Bank	<b>WDI DataFinder App</b> - Free - Iphone, Ipad, Ipod Touch, Android - Rated 4+ on Itunes	Based on the World Development Indicators 2014 book and includes more indicators than are included in the Little Data Book.
<b>Pocket World in Figures 2014</b>	The Economist	<b>The Economist World in Figures App</b> - Free - Iphone, Ipad, Ipod Touch - Rated 4+ on Itunes	Based on the Pocket World in Figures. IPad/ Iphone app made free courtesy of Grant Thornton.

Sources: UN CountryStats app: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/un-countrystats/id505192468?mt=8>, May 2014; WDI DataFinder app: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/world-bank-datafinder/id349081196?mt=8>, May 2014; The Economist: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/the-economist-world-in-figures/id438709514?mt=8>, May 2014.

In general, feedback on the app has been positive with respect to its design, utility of the data and ease of usability. The primary challenge for this app is ensuring the data is updated in a timely manner, which is complicated by the fact that its design and updates are conducted by a third party. It had not received an update since the launch in 2012, but will be updated in the coming months to a 2.0 version.

### **Lessons learned & Challenges**

#### *Pdf as “e-book”*

Technically, the pdf document of the Pocketbook is not an “e-book”, but serves as our low-tech version until such time as an e-book is feasible and warranted. Since the pdf is available online for free, it has been the most useful way to get the data in the hands of users. With the app, the pdf possibly trails in the number of users, but unfortunately there are not current analytics on the number of downloads of the pdf version. A quick snapshot of three months shows almost 5,000 downloads, so the potential reach for this product is large. A pdf in many ways can serve as a first foray into the digital world, just like the diskette was in the 1990’s.

#### *App is king*

Clearly, the reach of the app is impressive and considering the relatively low cost to produce and maintain it, the app is a positive strategic choice. In addition, it is very easy obtain analytics on the downloads of the app and users can also easily leave their comments for improvements and/or suggestions. Also, since the app has been downloaded in 145 countries, it is clear that it has immense reach, even to developing countries. The downside to a native IOS app is that it has to be updated externally and is not available in other platforms (i.e. Android). Since our focus is to make the information widely available as possible, we are considering the option to create a web-based app that has a “responsive” design and is therefore platform-independent, and available on any device and system. In addition, it can more easily be maintained within UNSD and updated more frequently.

#### *Analytics, users & target audiences*

For a print and web-based product, we have to corral analytics on the sales, downloads and use of our products from a variety of sources. With the case of the Pocketbook, there is reliable information from only a few sources, which makes measuring the success of the publication and tailoring future goals and strategies quite difficult. One improvement we hope to make in the near future is to ensure accurate numbers are available for the downloads of the pdf, as well as where users are located. In addition, while we have data on sales numbers, we do not know who the users are of the product or where they are located.

### **Next steps & improvements**

*Targeting correctly: using a dissemination plan and surveys*

One way to glean more information regarding the users of the Pocketbook and to therefore learn to target our product more effectively is to create a very quick survey for users to fill out before being allowed to download the pdf. Just knowing from what sector users of the Pocketbook are coming from, along with location would be extremely helpful. Additionally, it would be useful to know what information is being sought after and used in the product. Once we have a better idea of the utility of the product and where gaps in information lie for our users, we can create a more tailored and targeted plan for not only the Pocketbook content, but also how we disseminate the information.

#### *Linking our products*

The Pocketbook is one of three products that the Section produces. The other publications include the Statistical Yearbook and a Monthly Statistical Bulletin. Presently, the publications comprise similar data, but the processes for each publication are separate. In order to increase efficiency for the production of these products, it is essential to link the products in a more cohesive way—first with regard to consistency in naming, codes, etc., but also in sources and the indicators used. One particularly interesting fact of most pocketbooks in the global market is that they are usually tied to a Yearbook or a larger database. It would be useful to examine the feasibility of this model for the World Statistics Pocketbook.

#### *Visuals*

As we are in a data age driven by conciseness and illustration, it is imperative to consider the inclusion of visual aspects for the future of the Pocketbook and/or other products from the Section. In particular, comparisons of country data in the form of infographics or with the use of maps is highly popular and could be useful to digest the large amount of information in the Pocketbook. Also, this can add value to the inherent utility of the Pocketbook, since it can be hard to analyse many rows of data. The next step, beyond improving analytics, understanding our users better and linking our products, is to introduce visual elements for the future of the Pocketbook.

#### **References**

United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 2626 (XXV), A/RES/25/2626, New York, 1970.

United Nations, World Statistics in Brief (First edition), Series V, No. 1, New York, 1976.

United Nations, World Statistics Pocketbook 2013 edition, Series V, No. 37, New York, 2013.

UniWorld Software, User Handbook for UniWorld Database, London, 1996.

UNData website: <http://data.un.org/>

UNSD World Statistics Pocketbook website: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/>

UNSD twitter: <https://twitter.com/UNStats>

#### *Apps*

UN CountryStats: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/un-countrystats/id505192468?mt=8>

WDI DataFinder: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/world-bank-datafinder/id349081196?mt=8>

The Economist World in Figures: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/the-economist-world-in-figures/id438709514?mt=8>