

Agencies leading journalism boom

THE twofold increase in news agency employment between 1983 and 1985 reflects Hongkong's importance as an Asian centre of international news, according to a newly-released manpower survey report.

The survey, the third of its kind carried out by the Journalism Training Board since 1981, polled 340 magazines, newspapers, radio and television stations and news agencies at the end of 1985.

Although 27 news agencies still account for a relatively small part of the territory's booming journalism industry, their share as employers of journalists had doubled, the report said.

It said the total manpower in the industry rose to 4,763 from 4,033 in 1983. The number of jobs in magazines shot up by 51.8 percent, while jobs in radio and television grew by 14.1 percent.

Newspaper employment, however, is down by 2.5 percent since 1983.

The report said the sharp reduction in employees reflected in the 1983 survey "had clearly slimmed the newspaper industry and probably allowed it to increase productivity."

"We have fewer papers but more men and women working in them," said Mr Frank Ng, secretary of the training board and himself a long-time journalist. "Those which survived in the recession are getting bigger."

The survey found an increased number of women working at all levels of magazines and newspapers since 1983.

Women now form 31 percent of the employees in

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by

Pamela Ngai

the industry, compared with the 23 percent in the 1983 survey.

The number of women in the "supervisory and editorial" level grew by 49 percent, while the number in the "reporting, photography and production" level grew by nearly 66 percent.

But women are still lagging behind in the most senior ranks of the media. At the "executive and senior professional" level, the number of posts for women grew considerably more slowly — only 22 percent since 1983.

Mr Ng said there are a number of reasons for the growing number of women in the field.

One is changing social attitudes, he said, which means that more women are free to enter a profession such as journalism with notoriously irregular and demanding working hours.

Another is the growing number of "amusement" magazines being published in Hongkong, which largely seek to employ women as writers, he said.

A third factor, he said, might be the computer-led "revolution" in the printing field. Traditionally all-male typesetting workshops, where type was hand set, are giving way to computer rooms whose working conditions attract many women employees.

"The number of computer print operators has increased 10 times since we carried out our last survey in 1983," he said. "The conditions are very suitable for many women."

He also pointed to the growing demand for women to feature in on-camera roles in the broadcast media.

The report is based on a survey carried out by the board to provide information on employment in the mass media field.