



conneXions

Vol. 1, No. 3 September 1992

Standards Program Office
Bureau des normes

Regional Seminars a Success

I'm pleased to note that the regional seminars on information technology and telecommunications (IT&T) standards were a great success. Held in June in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax, they were attended by representatives from the IT&T industry, government, users and academia. A common thread throughout the seminars was how important it was for us to reach out to the regions and discover the obstacles they face, as well as gather their comments and suggestions on how the standards-making process could be improved to allow them to participate more fully.

The SPO will study the issues identified by the national and regional seminars and develop a report which will suggest a course of action regarding standardization. Our aim is to encourage strong support and participation in IT&T standardization by all interested parties. Once the report is published, it will be widely distributed to all sectors of the industry and the seminar participants.

It is not possible to list the names of all the people involved in these seminars. They did an excellent job, and

the seminars were successful because of their hard work, patience and perseverance. The key coordinators in the regions deserve an extra pat on the back. Thanks to Dale Snowdon (Atlantic), Denis Lachance (Quebec), Mitch St. Jacques (Ontario), Pawas Verma (Central), Harvey Rebalkin (Pacific), and Suzanne LaRoche-Fairchild (DSI/SPO) for their efforts.

Of interest to our readers, the production of the English and French languages keyboard conforming to standards set by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) has begun. We learned from Infologic EBM (1989) Inc. of Montreal, one of the companies manufacturing the new keyboard, that the keyboard emulation software and documentation are now available. The hardware should be on the market in September 1992.

Bill McCrum
Director

Systems Interconnection Research
(Standards Program Office)

Regional Seminars Yield Diverse Needs

More input, stronger partnerships, better access. These were just some of the suggestions made by representatives of information technology and telecommunications (IT&T) companies, governments and users who attended the regional seminars on IT&T standards coordinated by the SPO.

Between 40 and 70 people per region attended the June seminars which were held in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver. The regional seminars followed the national event, held in May 1991.

"We decided it was imperative that we travel to the regions to gain their input on the standards-making process," said Bill McCrum, Director of Systems Interconnection Research. "It was a decision well made. We received valuable feedback from a wide variety of IT&T specialists. The seminars

allowed us to discover some of the unique problems each region faces in regard to developing IT&T standards acceptable at home and abroad."

Regional Diversity

At the Quebec seminar it was noted that documents pertaining to standards are usually available in English. It was recommended that they should also be readily accessible in French.

On the East Coast, marine communications were identified as an issue of extreme significance. Because of the obvious need for sophisticated high seas communications, the East has become a centre of excellence for research in that area. However, many IT&T (continued on page 3)



PROFILE — BEN HO



Ben Ho

Ben Ho was born in Malaysia and received his secondary education there. In 1962, he graduated from the Cambridgeshire College of Advanced Technology in Cambridge, England, with a diploma in Electrical and Electronics Engineering. He was a British Chartered Engineer and Fellow of the Institution of Electronics and Radio Engineers. After graduation, Ben worked in England in telecommunications research and development with such firms as Marconi Ltd. and Cossor Electronics Ltd.

In 1969 Ben emigrated to Canada. Employed by Bell Canada, he was engaged in the development of the Bell System Wide Area Paging (SWAP) project. He was later transferred to Bell-Northern Research (BNR). At BNR he held the position of Manager, New Services Development. He left BNR in 1979 to join the Department of Communications as the Manager of Network and Services Research.

Throughout his career, Ben has always been engaged in the research and development of telecommunications systems and services. He is a strong promoter of new technology and has been actively involved in the development of national and international IT&T standards.

Ben has also worked on the research and development of new applications and security for structured document interchange. He has also been heavily involved with the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), both as a chairman and member of various committees and working groups.

Ben is now promoting the use of Open Document Architecture (ODA) and Standard Generalized Mark-up Language (SGML) standards in Canada. He is also studying issues and problems related to IT&T standards, and is examining ways of encouraging the IT&T industry to participate in Canada's standards activities.

SPO Staffer Wins Award

Ben Ho has won an Award of Merit from the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). Presented on June 16 at the CSA's annual general meeting in St. John's, Newfoundland, Ben was honoured for his leadership in developing and promoting national and international standards for the information technology and telecommunications (IT&T) industry.

Ben was the only award recipient in the IT&T sector. The Award of Merit lauds those who have worked tirelessly to advance the prestige and interests of the CSA both at home and abroad. Ben is one of 6,000 volunteers developing standards for the CSA. He has been involved in a number of CSA working groups and

committees for over 12 years. For instance, he has served two terms as the international convener of the ISO/IEC JTC1/SC18 Working Group responsible for the development of Content Architectures and Notations for Document Processing and Related Communication.

Recognized in Canada and internationally for his work on Text and Office System standardization, Ben is frequently consulted by the IT&T industry, government departments and academia for his advice and recommendations regarding the development and use of standards in this area.

For the past 10 years, Ben has also aggressively pushed for the

development of standards for Open Document Architecture (ODA) and Open Document Interchange Format (ODIF). Canada has been recognized for its contribution to ODA/ODIF, thanks in part to his input and leadership.

The engraving on Ben's Award of Merit is fitting. It reads, "For his inspired leadership and outstanding contribution to the development of national and international standardization in the field of information technology." His colleagues at the SPO pass along their congratulations.

(continued from page one - Regional Seminars ...)

specialists based there do not feel there is enough weight placed on technologies related to the Coast Guard, shipping, fishing, and the Maritime way of life.

In the West, personal communications research and development is the dominant topic. This may be due in part to the vast expanses of the Prairies and the need for keeping in touch through wireless communications.

But though the regions have developed their own realms of expertise based on the needs and demands of their locales, they sometimes feel isolated by the perceived decision-making centres, namely Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. Dubbed the "Golden Triangle" by seminar participants, this region is home base for many IT&T companies and ventures.

"Many small and medium-sized IT&T companies outside of this area feel excluded by the process because so many of the key meetings are held in the Golden Triangle," said SPO's Ben Ho. "They would like to have more input in standards-making, and would like to see the process come to them. This is one of the reasons why the seminars were such a success -- it allowed participants to voice their views and make timely recommendations based on their needs and experiences."

Global Competitiveness

The regions agreed that if Canada is to excel in the highly competitive IT&T global marketplace, it must make sure its views are heard in the international standards-making arena.

"Canada cannot afford to wallow in introspection while ignoring the rest of the world where the real standards issues are being addressed and decided," said Ike Goodfellow, Assistant Vice President, Global Accounts, for Northern Telecom Canada. "Nor can Canada afford to consume resources in developing national standards at the expense of international participation. Trade does not recognize national borders. It only recognizes standard performance."

Goodfellow, the keynote speaker at the Calgary seminar, added that all IT&T companies, no matter their size, should get involved either through direct participation or via their industry associations.

"Standards that have a direct impact on if and how you do business tomorrow are being forged today in the international standards forums," he said. "All of us must take an active place in the global market and be as influential as possible for our competitive survival and growth."

Dr. Elaine Todres, Deputy Minister for the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications, says that IT&T senior management must become proactive in developing standards because of their global implications. "Standards are now part and parcel of strategic business issues," she said. "And ultimately they affect a company's bottom line."

Government and industry co-operation

Seminar participants also indicated that government and industry should work closely together to set goals for standards, with industry guiding the process. There was strong support for the Federal Government to lead negotiations in mutual recognition of standards among Canada and the Americas based on the Free Trade Agreement, and the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Ron Percy, President and CEO of Datacor Atlantic Inc., told the Halifax seminar that government must not try to take over the standards-making process, but should work hand in hand with industry.

"I am not advocating that we, as an industry group, permit the government -- any government -- to tell us what the standards will be," he said. "We must identify our own future in the knowledge that if we don't, someone else will do it for us in a way we may not like or admire."

Overall, the participants acknowledged that the establishment of IT&T standards should reflect the technology it governs -- that is the process should be faster, keeping up with the rapid technological changes within the industry. If this can be achieved, say participants, then Canada can ensure its special interests are represented both in North America and abroad.

Based on the information gained from the seminars, DSI/SPO is conducting a study which will analyze the issues identified there. A report outlining recommendations on strategic action required by the Canadian IT&T industry will be published at the end of the year and circulated to seminar participants and other interested parties.

For more information on the report and seminars please contact Ben Ho at (613) 990-4496, or fax him at (613) 957-8845.

CIGOS Achieves a Global Profile

The Canadian Interest Group on Open Systems (CIGOS) is gaining greater international recognition, thanks in part to the department's Standard Program Office (SPO).

CIGOS is an organization of the Canadian IT&T industry, suppliers, users and government departments. Its aim is to encourage the growth and use of Open Systems in Canada based on demonstrated conformance to international standards.

At a May meeting of the International Laboratory Accreditation Conference (ILAC) Committee 2 in Teddington England, DSI/SPO, on behalf of CIGOS, argued there should be a global understanding of the criteria spelled out in the current ISO/IEC Guide 25 regarding IT&T laboratory accreditation. This would help to provide a more uniform assessment of test labs conducting software and communications conformance testing. In turn, this would lead to wider recognition of test results and certificates, and would assist negotiations of multi-lateral recognition agreements.

The ILAC Committee 2 agreed that further interpretation of the criteria was indeed a priority, given the fact that similar work was in progress in Europe, North America and Asia/Oceania. Os Monkewich of DSI was nominated as the project leader, and the group has been asked to complete the interpretation by the end of 1993. The group's aim is to submit the final version to the International Organization for Standardization Conformity Assessment Committee (ISO CASCO) for processing once

ILAC has approved the report. By participating in this group, CIGOS is enhancing its reputation as a leader in this field, both at home and abroad.

In addition to acting in the international arena, CIGOS is also making its mark in North America. On recommendation from DSI, CIGOS became a member of the North American OSI Testing and Certification Policy Council last February. The Council's mission is to provide a North American focal point for the development, coordination and harmonization of policy for worldwide OSI testing and certification. With CIGOS' participation, the Council has produced a policy document which is being circulated for public comment in the United States and Canada. It will also be used in a meeting with the European Community this month.

A CIGOS representative, supplied by DSI, is also on the ISO/IEC Workshop Program Committee (WPC) on Worldwide Recognition of Test Results. WPC is an informal group of members from representative organizations who meet at least twice a year to coordinate efforts to push for the global use of standards-based IT&T products. They promote the concept of a universally accepted accreditation program, as well as the recognition of harmonized voluntary testing and certification processes. WPC's goal is to ensure that relevant technical documentation produced in one region can be accepted and used in another region.

Also in February, DSI requested and received approval for CIGOS to join the OSI^{one} Executive. This group is

dedicated to inter-operability testing and registration of inter-operable Open Systems products. Membership on the Executive is made up of international OSI groups including OSINET Corporation, COS I-Lab, INTAPnet, OSIcom, EurOSInet, BRISAnet and the Hong Kong OSI Co-operative (HOSIC). As a full member, CIGOS can participate in all of the Executive's meetings and contribute to the decision-making process. Os Monkewich is the CIGOS representative on the Executive.

At home, DSI, a key member of the CIGOS Infrastructure Group, is helping to write a proposal for a broader program for Open Systems testing services in Canada. Inter-operability, registration and test tool validation will make up a key part of the final proposal.

For more information on DSI or CIGOS activities please contact Os Monkewich at (613) 990-4494, or fax him at (613) 957-8845.

"Connexions" is published by the Standards Program Office of the Systems Interconnection Research Division, Department of Communications. It is produced for internal use only, and concentrates on issues of concern to the standards-making process for the information technology and telecommunications industry. For more information please write to us at 300 Slater Street, 16th Floor, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0C8, call us at (613) 990-4492, or fax us at (613) 957-8845.