

# INTERFACE

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1992

ISTC Information Management Newsletter

## ACCESS ISTC

### Text retrieval software

A new computer system will soon make it much easier for employees to find and use information from manuals, directives, telephone books and similar publications. An electronic text retrieval system, called ACCESS ISTC, is being developed by the department. It will enable users to search many large texts at one time for particular words or strings of words. Once it has located all instances of the material, the sections in which they occur can be called up on screen and incorporated into other documents. The system will be available to all employees by the end of March 1993.

ACCESS ISTC will appear as a menu item on each workstation and will function as though its data were stored on a hard drive on the LAN. In fact, the system will draw its information from the Corporate Service LAN.

A corporate server will be installed in each regional office to give regional employees the same access as headquarters. Initial training and support will be available from IMB.

The following items will be the first available for text retrieval:

- *ISTC Directory*
- *The Foreign Travel Directory*
- *ISTC Programs and Services*
- *Industry Profiles*
- *Several administrative manuals*
- *Vidéotheque Catalogue.*

These items were chosen because they are readily available and have a wide audience.



#### NAME THAT 'TOON

Send us your ideas for a caption for this cartoon. Last issue's winning caption is on page 2.

A list of the texts being prepared for future use is under development and will be published after it receives approval from the Information Management Advisory Committee.

Future plans also include offering the department's clients — industry, universities and others — direct access to a similar system. This would let them retrieve selected information, such as sector profiles on the aerospace and information technologies industries, without help from ISTC staff.

The success of ACCESS ISTC depends on the extent to which the information it carries meets the needs of staff. Feedback is welcome. Please E-mail your comments to Jim Commins, Project Leader, IMB. ✉



Roy McSheffrey, Data Base Administrator, IMB, received an Exemplary Contribution Award for his efforts to keep the corporate data base up and running. Here, Roy (centre), accompanied by Fruji Bull, Director General, IMB, receives his award from Robert Joubert, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Finance, Personnel and Administration.

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## Worth Repeating

“Computers are useless. They can only give you the answers.”

~ Pablo Picasso

# POTpourri

ISTC employees on the peer-to-peer network (generally those using Microsoft Mail) can now send e-mail messages to the Canadian trade mission in Paris on ISTC's Corporate Network. This is possible through a link up with External Affairs and International Trade Canada (EAITC) that allows access to international trade officers in the Paris office as well as in the U.S. The relevant addresses are displayed as a separate network list (EAITC TRADE). Employees in the National Capital Region, U.S. posts and Paris are displayed under the names of the cities in which they are located. For more details, call your LAN manager.

IMB's Bruce Gale and Dale Smith, visited the Halifax, Moncton and St. John's regional offices during October. They met with the Business Service Centre personnel and LAN manager in each of the offices. This visit gave Bruce and Dale the opportunity to see the operations and challenges of a regional environment while bringing local staff up to date on projects taking place in Ottawa and other regional offices.

ISTC's first Vendors' Day took place on 26 November 1992. The event allowed approximately 30 consulting firms that specialize in providing informatics services such as application development, feasibility studies and the like to listen as managers from the department outlined their information technology needs for the next year. The information these firms collected gave them an understanding of upcoming requirements in the department. The Vendors' Day approach was adopted in the hope that it will prove more efficient and effective than having managers respond to "cold calls" from potential suppliers.

Windows is still coming. Since the last report in *Interface*, Microsoft Windows has securely established itself as the industry standard for Graphical User Interface and will become an ISTC standard as well. The question is "When?"

Graphical User Interface refers to the controls that allow users to run their computer's operating system and other software. It is often abbreviated as GUI, which is pronounced gooey. GUI represents programs, files and directories as pictures, called "icons," which many people find easier to understand and operate than the Command Line Interface that DOS uses. As discussed in a previous issue of *Interface*, Windows requires a lot of computer memory, which means that, for many ISTC staff, new machines or upgrades will be required. In addition, although Windows offers better productivity than the DOS Command Line Interface, training is needed for its efficient use. There will also be a need for specialized training of LAN-support staff and, possibly, increased support resources.

IMB will be working with LAN managers to determine costs, support and training requirements, and to recommend to management a schedule for implementation. The branch has prepared a draft working paper called "Migrating Towards a Graphical User Interface Environment in ISTC," which may be obtained from your LAN manager or IMB's Carole Beauchamp.

## Dear LANLady:

by Paula Foeller, WordPerfect Support

**Q** ♦ If I am editing a WordPerfect document and accidentally press the Page Down or Page Up key, is there an easy way to return to the last place I had the cursor?

**A** ♦ Yes. If, while in a WordPerfect document, you lose your place by hitting the Page Down or Page Up key, you can go back to the last spot you were working simply by pressing Ctrl-Home twice. Your cursor will automatically return to its last location.

## Hackers unfairly maligned

by Peter Cook, Policy Sector

Like many other disciplines, computer science has had its language and jargon misinterpreted. A case in point is the use of the term "hacker."

Hacker originally described a computer enthusiast who is interested in the internal workings of computers and who wants to find out how all the different parts (including software) work. Many such people were proud to call themselves hackers. Now the term is used, even within the computer industry, to describe people who maliciously damage computer systems.

Properly speaking, a computer enthusiast of the malicious sort should be known as a "cracker" or a "wormer" (a worm is a type of computer virus). Crackers and wormers are usually hackers as well, but hackers are not usually malicious. In fact, the computer revolution itself owes almost everything to hackers, who often worked in their parents' garages, as the founders of Microsoft, Apple and several other major firms would attest.

## Contest winner!



Congratulations to Guy Savard, Administrative Services Branch, for his winning caption.

"...quick Chip, before Daddy resets himself."



## Do you know what *ISTC* "Establishment" is?

It is a shared repository of information for corporate applications — a file containing information on about 130 000 of *ISTC*'s clients (from which corporate applications can draw). It is not a separate application that users can get direct access to, but is available as a menu item to users of the following information systems:

- Business Opportunities Sourcing System (BOSS)
- World Information Network (WIN) Exports
- Program for Export Market Development (PEMD)
- Program Resource Information System for Management (PRISM)
- Resource Accounting Management System (RAMS)
- Small Business Loans System (SBLS)
- Aboriginal Economic Programs (AEP).

Future plans include a linkage to the Company Client System (CCS).

Establishment collects information that is entered into each of these systems about companies that deal with *ISTC*. Because the information is in this central repository, any valid user of any one of the systems can call it up. Basic information such as company name, location, mailing address, and telephone and fax numbers is available to all users.

There are two levels of service. Some features, such as character-string searches, available to mainframe users, are not available to microcomputer users.

The Establishment team, located within *IMB*, keeps the system operating smoothly. It is responsible for the maintenance of the technical software and establishes standards for data entry. Ensuring that entered data is accurate and up to date is the responsibility of users. Overall data quality, therefore, calls for a partnership approach between users and the team.

For more information on Establishment, contact Carole Dunn, Data Analyst, at (613) 954-2808. 📞

## Microcomputer purchase moratorium lifted

*ISTC*'s moratorium on all microcomputer purchases was lifted 16 October 1992.

The moratorium was imposed in March to allow an evaluation of potential suppliers. That evaluation is now complete and the products of Digital Equipment of Canada Ltd. and Sidus Systems Canada Inc. have been established as departmental standards. All microcomputer purchases can now go ahead without *IMB* sign-off, provided only approved equipment is purchased.

Because LAN servers are such critical components of the Corporate Network, managers considering these purchases are asked to contact *IMB* for advice.

The evaluation was undertaken by the department so that it could better serve Canadian industry. *ISTC* and Supply and

Services Canada have a policy to give preference to Canadian-owned manufacturers (Group 1) and "MERIT Partners" — manufacturers who make substantial contributions to the Canadian economy — when buying microcomputers.

Portable computers are not included in the standard. Managers are asked to try to purchase portables from Group 1 manufacturers or MERIT Partners.

The new policy for microcomputer purchases has another benefit because both Digital and Sidus are currently offering excellent prices on 486 machines. Managers upgrading from 286 technology are encouraged to jump to that level.

*IMB* received help in this project from Contracts and Professional Services Directorate, ASB; and Harry Schep and Keith Mulligan from Supply and Services' OASIS (Office Automation, Service and Information Systems) Directorate. 📞

## A new look!

The *Interface* Editorial Board is pleased to have Communications Branch staff playing a role in the production, design and printing of the newsletter.

The new look was designed by Thea Vandenberg of Communications Branch. It adds colour to the newsletter without abandoning the principle of "no frills" communications. 📞



The Moratorium Microcomputer Evaluation Team. Left to right, Frank Arecchi, Director, Contracts and Professional Services, ASB; from *IMB*, Patricia Mercer, Projects Manager; Rob Valiquette, Testing Supervisor; Kimberley Price, Administrative Coordinator; and José Pelland, Senior Technical Analyst.

# Walk-In Centre

## What's new?

A new Automatic Document Feeder is making it easier for Walk-In Centre clients to scan printed text and images.

The new Automatic Document Feeder will be particularly useful for people who have large printed documents that they want to enter into their computers. Up to 50 sheets can be loaded and scanned automatically with Truescan OCR (Optical Character Reader) software. Users simply load their papers face up on the top input tray, turn the green "paper load lever" to the right, and away it goes.

The high-resolution HP ScanJet IIc scanner scans the information and copies it exactly the same way a photocopier does, but converts the material to electronic form, instead of printing it, and stores it in its memory. This scanner is particularly well-suited for graphics and gives excellent results with colour or black-and-white photographs, diagrams and logos.

Once entered into memory, text can be converted into word processing documents much faster than it could be entered by a typist.

OCR scanning works best with high-quality print — commercial print on white paper. Coloured paper or ink, especially light blue print, newsprint and some photocopies can cause problems. It isn't even worth trying to scan most faxes or handwriting.

Graphics that have been scanned can be incorporated into documents to make the text easier to understand (studies show that readers are 50 percent more likely to understand and remember information in texts that include graphics).

So whatever your scanning needs, no appointment necessary — bring your material, a diskette and just Walk-In! Employees in regional offices wanting to use the scanner should contact the Walk-In Centre at (613) 954-8090.

## Establishing standards for bilingual EDP

Employees in IMB are working hard to make it possible for ISTC staff to work in both French and English on their computers. This means ensuring that all tasks performed on computer can be accomplished in both official languages.

Government departments have been working toward this goal ever since the *Official Languages Act* was passed in 1988. Putting the policy into practice — ensuring that ISTC employees, particularly those in regions where a bilingual working environment is deemed essential (called "prescribed regions"), can use computer technology in either language — is proving to be difficult.

Two things have to be worked out to make bilingual use possible, says Al Laschinger, Manager, Systems Development, IMB. "We need to purchase equipment and programs that allow use in two languages and we need to make all the hardware and software work together in both languages," he explains.

To do this, three kinds of standards have to be set:

- standards that establish the types of computer hardware and software, as well as professional services such as consulting, ISTC should purchase;
- standards that govern the development of computer programs and systems produced by ISTC; and

- standards that allow ISTC to set up computer environments (i.e. computers working together with networks and relational data bases) that accommodate the use of either French or English as the language of work.

Purchase standards have been developed and are already in use in the department. A document outlining these standards, which still awaits formal blessing from senior management, was published in June.

IMB keeps track of software and hardware products that meet these standards and provides lists and advice to managers who make decisions about computer purchases.

Standards for the development of systems and for establishment of a bilingual computer environment present a number of challenges, says Al. "Even if every piece of hardware and every computer software package supports the complete set of French characters, we would still have problems because the character set is defined in different ways by each vendor," he explains.

Problems arise when data are sent from one machine or software package to another. Unless the recipient machine or software understands the sender's definition of special characters, a word entered as *île* could end up looking like *ile*. "This presents a major challenge for us as we work to ensure that ISTC staff are able to use the official language of their choice when they sit down at their computers," says Al.

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Please E-mail your comments, suggestions or story ideas to (INTERFACE) or by mail, to the *Interface* Editor, ISTC, Room 340F, West Tower, 235 Queen Street, OTTAWA, Ont., K1A 0H5.

Recyclable Recycled

