

# INTERFACE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1993

ISTC Information Management Newsletter

## New Technology key to IBA

A pilot project using new technology to improve ISTC's ability to respond to requests for government information was officially launched on 12 January by the Honourable Thomas Hockin, Minister for Science and Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism). The Improved Business Access (IBA) pilot project which will be run by the Manitoba Regional Office in Winnipeg, will test various systems including:

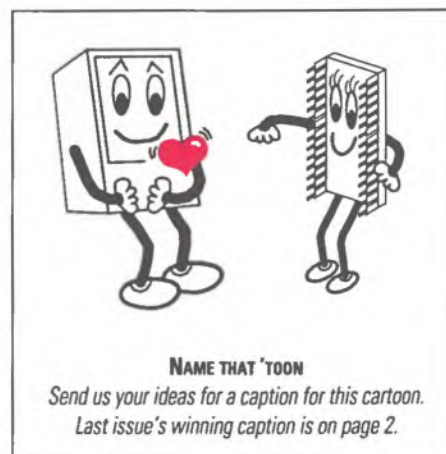
- the Business Intelligence System — a data base of business-related programs, services and contacts in the public and private sectors;
- FaxBack — an automated fax service that provides for 24-hour self-serve information retrieval of documents on selected programs, services and events that are of interest to the business community; and
- a toll-free telephone referral service for business clients.

"The idea behind IBA is that if someone calls ISTC looking for information, we either give it to them directly or we match them up with the person who can," says Tony Kwok, Regional Systems Analyst with the Winnipeg Business Service Centre.

The technology being looked at is modular — meaning that it can function either as a stand-alone system or as part of

existing departmental systems — and is expandable so that both large and small offices can use it. Canadian products were used whenever possible in the construction of the systems.

The technology is only one part of the process. Two-day training sessions designed to help staff to respond to client requests more effectively, and administrative projects,



such as one that deals with grouping services from several government agencies and departments in a one-stop shopping location, are also part of the pilot project.

"The information technology certainly complements the general thrust of IBA," says Tony. "For example, the FaxBack automated faxing system has really impressed users. We can fax people the information they want before they hang up their phone in many cases."

Anyone interested in further information about IBA or about the technology being used during the pilot project should contact Tony Kwok by e-mail. ♥



Minister Hockin is given a demonstration of services offered through Improved Business Access by Tony Kwok and Brenda McEachern, Winnipeg Regional Office.

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## Worth Repeating

“ Not everything that counts can be counted; and not everything that can be counted counts. ”

~ Albert Einstein

## POTpourri

IMB is asking for proposals from companies to provide software that will give desktop computers access to more powerful data bases on the LAN platform.

The Request for Proposal is for the acquisition of a multi-user data base that supports a SQL (Structured Query Language) interface with other products. Such data bases are much more powerful and guarantee better data integrity and security than current PC data bases.

The data base software currently used on desktop computers at ISTC is not designed to handle multiple users over a network. The new software is intended as a key component in ISTC's efforts to allow more user-friendly access to shared corporate data through the corporate network.

Interest in electronic bulletin boards (BBS) at ISTC has led to a national pilot project involving LAN administrators and technical support staff.

A BBS exclusively for these groups was set up in the last week of October. It is designed as a central area where administrators can exchange information related to their work, such as Windows, viruses and e-mail. They also can go on-line to download or upload files.

While the BBS is up and running, the administrators and IMB are learning about and evaluating the hardware, software and procedures used with the technology.

They also are examining a number of issues surrounding the maintenance and support the bulletin board would require if it was expanded for use by a larger group of employees. Some issues are technical concerns about how the system should be set up and how access can be controlled. Other issues relate to the information on bulletin boards (e.g. Who should act as a custodian for the information? and How long should information remain in the board before being purged?).

The Information Management Advisory Committee (IMAC) is a sub-committee of the Information Management Committee (IMC). It is a non-technical forum for business managers representing all sectors and regions to review and endorse information management policies, standards and projects. IMAC provides advice and recommendations to the ADM-level IMC and has been chaired by the DG, IMB. IMAC's most recent meeting was held in Ottawa on December 3 and it will next meet in Winnipeg on February 18. One agenda item will be the selection of a new chairperson from among user community members. For more information about IMAC, talk to your local representative.

ISTC has been commended for its use of ACCESS ISTC to address the problems of paper burden and text searches. An article in the December 1992 issue of *Canadian Datasystems* singles out ISTC as one of the first departments to tackle the problems head on — not just in small areas or for single items such as administrative manuals.

Financial managers from across government showed great interest in a software directory developed at ISTC when it was demonstrated to them at the Financial Management Institute of Canada's Shared System Showcase on November 25 and 26.

The Systems Information Source (SIS) is an on-line directory of all ISTC computer systems. It allows users to search the department's entire software inventory for the systems they need based on criteria they choose.

IMB's Maggie Chartrand and Bruce Gale gave approximately 40 detailed presentations of the system (as well as many brief overviews) at the show. A group from Supply and Services Canada, which is responsible for the distribution of government proprietary software among different departments and agencies, was particularly interested. "They see SIS as a potentially useful tool in the management of their own inventory and as a possible distribution vehicle for the Software Exchange," says Bruce. ♥

## Contest winner!



Congratulations to Paul Gray, IMB, for his winning caption.

"Fire on the 'ready' and don't miss this one."

With honourable mention to Doug Pidduck, PEMD Coordination Unit.

"Quick, hit the Scroll Lock before he gets away!"

## Dear LANLady:

by *Deb Hogg*, Saskatchewan Regional Office

**Q:** When working in Word-Perfect, if I block text and save it to move or copy to another part of the document (F12 (Block); Ctrl-F4 (Move); 1 (Block); 1 (Move) or 2 (Copy), can I type in additional text before retrieving what I have saved?

**A:** Yes, there is a way to do this. If you press F12 (Block) Ctrl-F4 (Move); 1 (Block); 1 (Move) or 2 (Copy), you can press F1 (Cancel) to eliminate the message "Move cursor; press Enter to retrieve". You can then use your enter key as needed. When you wish to retrieve the saved text, press Ctrl-F4 (Move), 4 (Retrieve), 1 (Block). You can also retrieve the block over and over using the last series of commands rather than blocking it and moving it again. ♥

## Business model a valuable tool

IMB is preparing a business model of ISTC that could be a valuable resource for staff in other branches.

Business models are generally prepared for organizations developing new systems, according to Sharon Hallam, Strategic Planning Officer, IMB. "The business model gives a really clear picture of what an organization is doing, which is essential to developing new systems," she says.

The business model is useful for other purposes as well because of the way the information is organized. "It is a method of accumulating information on an organization's business in an ordered fashion. You can use it to analyze what a whole organization is doing or you can roll it down to the level of what individuals are doing to help you develop job descriptions," she comments.

The information is broken down into components that give an overview of what the organization does and how it does it. "This material is ideal for anyone doing strategic planning or business re-engineering, or for anyone who has to prepare their group for reorganization," says Sharon.

The business model components include the following:

- an organizational model that maps positions and could be used to map tasks and responsibilities. This is a tool for planning because it makes it possible to look at functions across a whole organization and determine which ones are particular to certain parts of it.
- a process model that maps tasks and functions, which can also be used to illustrate operations and data flow. It provides the basis for an analysis called functional decomposition — a detailed look at operations in terms of main and primary functions. "It also enables managers to analyze data flow at the purest level — it separates the information flow required to support the business from the information flow that maintains the organization that does the business," explains Sharon.

Interested employees should call Sharon Hallam at (613) 941-4245. ♥

## Fifth Annual Snowsuit Fund

The Ottawa-Carleton Snowsuit Fund was the big winner in the IMB-sponsored Fifth Annual Snowsuit Fund Raffle held December 7. A record total of \$1 976 was raised, thanks to the efforts of a persistent sales team. The top three ticket sellers were the Corporate Network Support Team, Kimberley Price from IMB and Lucienne Graveline from Investment Canada. Prizes were donated by Bell Canada, IST and ISM.



Credit for the behind-the-scenes work goes to IMB's administrative staff, who are pictured above — (left to right) Bonnie Lavigne, Alison Bone and Diane Montgomery.

## HRB using electronic forms during GE conversion

The GE conversion process has provided the Human Resources Branch (HRB) with an opportunity to further automate certain personnel functions.

Managers are using an electronic form developed by HRB to prepare new work descriptions for positions affected by GE conversion (those currently classified as AS, CM, CR, DA, GS, IS, OE, OM, PE, PM, PG or ST). Managers can send the completed form to the evaluation committee as an e-mail attachment.

The forms are available as a WordPerfect macro. (A macro is a command that performs a number of steps concurrently — in this case it formats a WordPerfect document so that it can be used as an electronic form.) All the manager has to do is fill out the form on screen and forward it through e-mail. "So far, the WordPerfect forms have proved ideal for the job," says Jocelyne Cameron of the Classification Quality Improvement Group, which has been studying ways to automate processes related to personnel classification.

**Personnel Services and Training Centre** / **Services Ressources et Formation Canada**

**Human Resources of Parliament Canada**

ADM responsible / S-41 A responsable

**WORK DESCRIPTION (LJREP)** / **DESCRIPTION DE TRAVAIL (PLJREP)**

Branch / Direction générale

Person Number / Numéro de poste

Division

Proposed Classification / Classification proposée

Section

Position title / Titre de poste

Approved Classification / Classification approuvée

Supervisor's Classification / Classification du superviseur

CLIENT - SERVICE RESULTS - RÉSULTATS APRES LES BESOINS DU CLIENT

Location of position / Lieu de travail

Effective date / Date d'entrée en vigueur

**KEY ACTIVITIES - ACTIVITES PRINCIPALES**

**SUBSTANTIATING DATA - DONNEES JUSTIFICATIVES**

Factor - Facteur 1  
SERVICE DELIVERY - PRESTATION DE SERVICES  
Influence - Influence

Factor - Facteur 2  
CARE AND RESPONSIBILITY - SOINS ET RESPONSABILITE  
Responsibility for the Work of Others - Responsabilité de travail des autres

Factor - Facteur 3  
Responsibility for Care of Individuals - Responsabilité des soins aux individus

Resp for Financial Resources - Resp en matière de ressources financières

Resp for Technical Resources - Resp en matière de ressources techniques

HR 107 890

The Classification Quality Improvement Group recommended taking advantage of automation for GE conversion to the group responsible for implementing the process — the Universal Classification System Implementation Group.

HRB has plans to complete the automation of all forms associated with human resources action requests. Once an electronic authorization procedure is worked out, all managers will be able to send a completed human resources action package electronically.

In addition, the branch intends to make on-line access to historical and current data on all positions in the department available to managers. The information, stored in the Human Resources Information System, will be available for managers to read or copy to another application. ♥

## Mainframes still versatile and useful

Although many people in the computer press are ready to lay them to rest, mainframe computers are alive and well.

At ISTC, mainframe activity has increased steadily in recent years. The mainframe runs all the department's major data base applications and can handle more than 1 000 on-line users concurrently. More than 30 years of software development and established procedures has made the mainframe a very practical alternative for many uses.

Mainframes handle backups well. Software available for mainframes makes it possible for the entire process to be done automatically. ISTC takes advantage of this technology to back up all mainframe data every day. "An additional off-site backup ensures that if the worst happened and the mainframe datacentre burned down, the most we would stand to lose is one week's data," says Ralph Zimmerling, Technical Support Specialist.

The mainframe's efficient handling of backups has led IMB to begin looking into using it to back up information on LAN servers.

Recent developments, such as a graphically oriented user interface (GUI — Windows), also have made it much easier to provide user-friendly services with the mainframe. It is beginning to become a very large corporate data server.

Other functions that the mainframe could perform to streamline operations in the department include distributing new software, such as the latest version of WordPerfect, across the department. ♥



Essential services are provided to ISTC by contract staff Kim Roberts and Tony Hempinstall

## **Contract staff key to delivering IMB services**

The behind-the-scenes efforts of contract staff at IMB are essential to maintaining and supporting all the computerized information that ISTC staff use everyday. They help keep critical information systems in the department (such as mainframe operations, the Corporate Network and e-mail) running and provide central support for microcomputers and LANs.

Two of these contract employees — Kim Roberts and Tony Hempinstall — provide valuable services to help the department fulfill its business requirements.

Kim works in TextCom Support and has been involved with the department's e-mail system since its inception. As the technology has advanced, so have her responsibilities. These include managing the administrative functions for both the VAX-based e-mail system and the new peer-to-peer system during the transition between the two. This work involves ensuring that all accounts and user addresses are up-to-date, and creating and modifying distribution lists using a combination of automated and manual processes.

In the future, as the use of e-mail expands, Kim will be helping employees

locate e-mail addresses for people elsewhere in government and in the private sector, in Canada and abroad. This will be done using the X.400 international standards for electronic messaging and, eventually, with X.500 Directory Services.

As a system manager in Mini-Mainframe Support, Tony's area of expertise is the mini-computer environment, including the Hewlett Packard series 70 system, and the VAX3600 and 3800 computers. These systems contain such applications as the Automated Records Management System (ARMS), the Departmental Assets Management Information System (DAMIS), the International Library System (ILS), the Human Resources Information System (HRIS), and the Deputy Minister's Correspondence Tracking System. Tony ensures that the information stored in these systems is secure and available for use each day. This means regular troubleshooting sessions for both hardware and software and constant monitoring of each system's performance.

Tony is the liaison with the Corporate Network team for mini-mainframe concerns. He is also currently evaluating the UNIX platform as part of the assessment being made of the impact of Treasury Board open systems standards on the department's computer environment. ♥

## **Information management standards catalogue now available**

IMB has prepared a catalogue that outlines all of ISTC's information management standards.

Michel Bégin, A/Manager, Information Centre, who was project manager for the standards catalogue, finds standards are essential if staff in the department are to share data effectively. "This catalogue is designed to communicate information to employees about the standards, their development, and subsequent updating," says Michel.

All standards are listed alphabetically, by code number and by category. Within the category section, standards are cross-referenced. The categories are Planning Standards, Applications Development and Maintenance Standards, Design Standards, Procedural Standards, Hardware Standards, Security Standards, Programming Standards, Software Standards, Text Standards, Communication Standards and Graphic Standards.

Each standard is written in either a one or two-page format that includes a short description for non-technical readers; the status of the standard (planned, proposed, current, under review or obsolete); names and telephone numbers of contact; and any related references.

Currently, the catalogue, made up of detachable fact sheets, is available as a series of WordPerfect documents (in English only), but IMB is looking at ways to place it in a more sophisticated electronic form that would make it easier for people to use.

The WordPerfect version is now available through the LAN Administrators' electronic bulletin board. To get a copy, interested employees should ask their LAN Administrator to download it and make it available on their LAN. ♥

# Walk-In Centre

## What's new?

A portable 31-inch colour monitor that can be hooked up to either a VCR or a computer is now available for people who want to spice up their presentations.

The Mitsubishi monitor has stereo sound and is ideal for presenting material to groups of 10 to 15 people. The monitor is on a rolling stand and can be moved easily to any location in headquarters.

Staff at the Walk-In Centre will take care of all the necessary connections to hook the monitor up. Employees who wish to use it in conjunction with their own computers will get all the instructions they require.

The monitor works in place of the computer's regular monitor. If used in conjunction with a presentation software package, the screen can display prepared slides, charts, spreadsheets or illustrations.

Presentation software and advice on how to use it is also available.

That advice now comes from a new technical advisor, Alan Morgan, who brings a Master's in Computer Science degree from Concordia University and 20 years of EDP experience to ISTC. Alan has extensive knowledge of WordPerfect, dBase, several spreadsheet programs, including Quattro, and a background in programming. He has previously acted as a project manager for a number of federal government projects, such as the WIN Exports program at External Affairs and International Trade Canada.

So, to meet Alan or learn more about our new monitor or the many different types of software and hardware that are available, just Walk-In! ♥

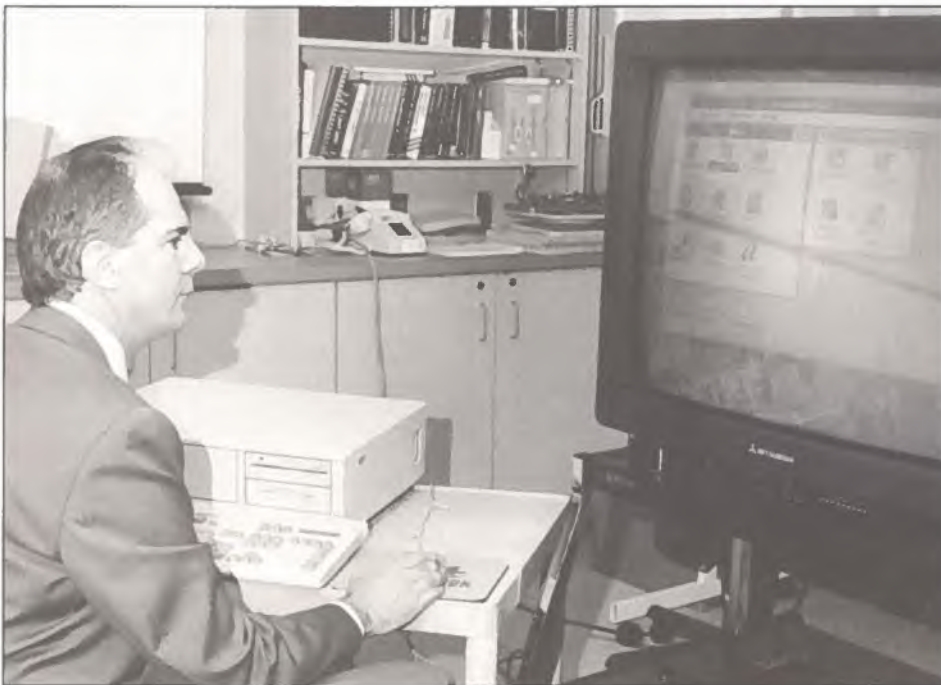
## Exploring new developments in information technology

The Information Technologies Industry Branch and the Materials Branch are taking advantage of the latest developments in information technology to develop a new approach to providing financial, trade and economic data to their front-line officers.

Powerful personal computers and CD-ROMs with their own user-friendly software platforms allow virtually unlimited amounts of information to be available at the desktop level. These tools can be used to get information to the officers who need it quickly and at a reasonable cost.

Over the past few months, the two branches have been working to acquire informatics products that:

- are relevant to the day-to-day work of line officers;
- are maintained and supported by outside suppliers;
- are easy to use for anyone with basic computer skills;
- provide basic source data at the desktop level;
- are updated regularly, usually monthly;
- provide an easy interface with LOTUS and/or an SQL data base;
- facilitate the sharing of any subsequent development work among branches because of the common information source that is used; and
- are on CD-ROM-type media and can be made directly accessible for users on the branches' LANs.



Alan Morgan works with new 31-inch monitor in the Walk-In Centre

Specifically, the branches are getting company-based financial information from Standard and Poor's Corporation Compustat Services, a provider of financial data bases and advanced PC-based software products for financial analysis. The branches are also working with various divisions within Statistics Canada to obtain Canadian and world trade data, as well as macro-economic/CANSIM (Canadian Socio-Economic Information Management System) data. These two information suppliers were contracted to provide source data as well as user-friendly software platforms that allow access from desktop computers.

"It is hoped that having easily accessible information right on the desktop will foster a more productive work environment by promoting more effective use of electronic data bases in general and better use of computer tools for analysis," says Jim Milne of the Materials Branch. "This 'direct information empowerment' has begun to fundamentally change the way in which individual officers in the two branches interact with clients and has the potential to help refocus the role of ISTC as a significant information node for industry and other governments."

For further information, contact Jim Milne at (613) 954-1845. ♥

## Language issues addressed by keyboard standard

Typing French characters on a computer keyboard will take fewer than seven fingers and your right thumb now that a new government-wide standard for keyboards has been adopted.

The Government Keyboard Standard for Information Technology Equipment outlines the language requirements for all keyboards purchased after 1 January 1993. It was developed by Treasury Board in response to a section of the *Official Languages Act* that asserts that departments must now ensure that widely used automated data processing and communication systems work in both English and French.

The keyboard, in conjunction with a driver (the set of instructions the computer uses to interpret each character that is typed), will make bilingual use possible, and as a result, make typing in French much simpler.

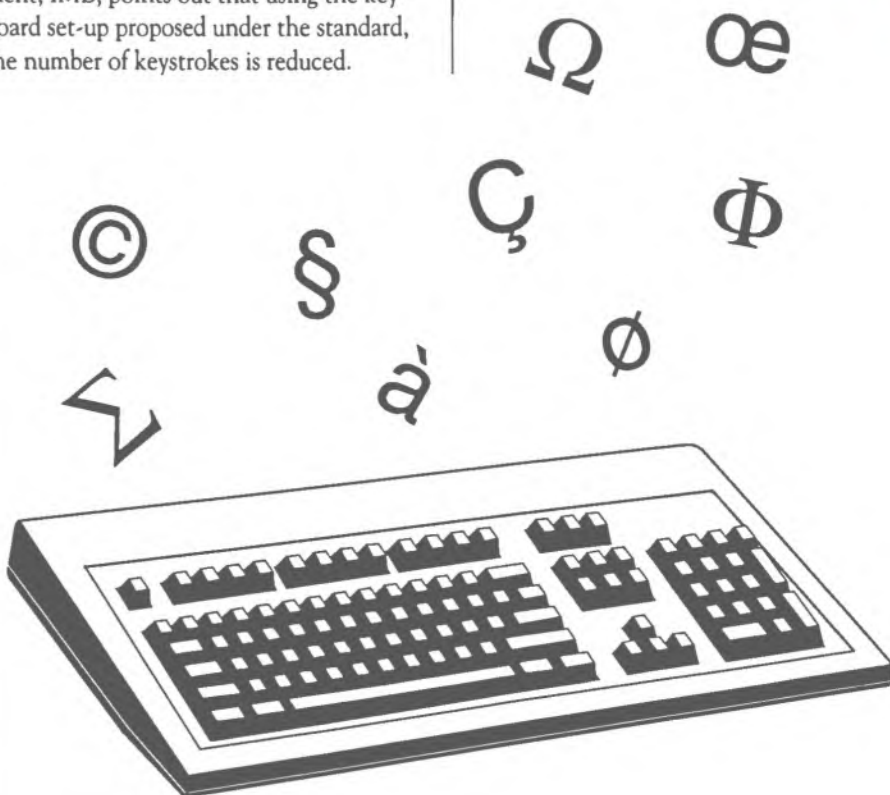
The special characters are all available on the current keyboard, but in some cases, it takes five keystrokes to get a single one. Al Laschinger, Manager, Systems Development, IMB, points out that using the keyboard set-up proposed under the standard, the number of keystrokes is reduced.

The new standard means that employees will see some changes to the labels on the keys and to the characters generated by some of the keys. Each keyboard will also have two new functions: level 3 shift (which causes character keys to generate a third character the same way that regular shift causes them to generate a second one) and group shift (which allows access to different groups of characters — the total set of characters that can be produced by all levels of a keyboard, for example, English, Greek and Russian).

The two functions have been defined by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and will eventually be standard on all keyboards.

"The new language standard applies only to newly purchased equipment," adds Al. "Treasury Board has set a very reasonable approach for implementation. No one will have to do expensive retrofitting, because the standard only applies for new purchases."

Treasury Board has prepared a bulletin that explains the technical details of the standard in plain language. To get a copy, call Al Laschinger at (613) 954-2839. ♥



## Changing role of support staff studied

Information Technologies Industry Branch (ITIB) has been conducting a pilot project sponsored by ISTC's Women's Bureau to examine how new office technology has changed the role of support staff.

The Women's Bureau conducted a study on how the role of support staff has changed with the impact of technology. A number of recommendations for improvement were made as part of the study. Various initiatives based on these recommendations have been launched within ITIB over the past year to raise the awareness of other employees about how technology is affecting the workplace. The pilot project was first suggested by the Task Force on the Advancement of Women, Phase II (1990).

"Information technology has made support staff's work less interesting and has decreased their awareness of the details of their own organization's activities, so the most challenging and rewarding parts of support work have been eliminated," says Leanne Johnston, who coordinated the pilot project. "For example, support staff no longer copy or type correspondence or interact with clients on the telephone as much with the advent of word processing and voice mailboxes. They are now likely to spend more of their time doing simple, repetitive jobs such as formatting documents."

A number of administrative changes were made within the branch at the outset of the pilot project; support staff were given voice mailboxes, and enclosed workspaces. In addition, position titles were changed (from secretary to office coordinator, for example). "But these changes by themselves are merely cosmetic if the actual work cannot be made more rewarding as well," says Leanne.

To make support work more rewarding, branch support staff began meeting regularly and holding sessions with managers and officers to negotiate new roles involving more value-added tasks.

The experience of negotiating with managers and officers made it clear that broad participation in the discussion and greater awareness of the issues are needed. A branch-wide focus day on the theme "Technology — Help or Hindrance? It depends where you are sitting" was held as a result. That event led to the establishment of a task force with support staff, officers and managers as members, that is continuing to work on the issue.

"The pilot project is now wrapping up, but the subjects it dealt with will be of ongoing importance to the department," says Leanne. ♥



Here it is, a list of basic terms you should practice before the mirror every night until they roll off your tongue as easily as you slip a floppy disk into its drive!

**Memory** — there are two main parts to computer memory, Read Only Memory (ROM) and Random Access Memory (RAM). You use portions of both every time you use a computer.

**ROM** — this is the "how-to" of the computer, it is not accessible to the user, but contains the instructions that enable the computer to perform its routine tasks. ROM's contents become available whenever the power is turned on.

**RAM** — This is the most important part of the computer, the working memory. It is the temporary holding area that allows the computer to work on data without constantly retrieving it from the disk. The RAM contents are erased whenever the computer is turned off. Today, 2 megabytes (Mbs) of RAM is considered a minimum requirement, while 4 Mbs is better, and room to expand is the best of all.

**Operating System** — All computers need an operating system. This is the resident program that tells your computer how to work and how to interpret your basic commands. Today's choices include MS-DOS from Microsoft, PC-DOS and OS/2 from IBM, and Unix. ♥

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Recyclable Recycled

