

INTERFACE

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Industry Canada — Information Management Newsletter



Progress report on Corporate Information System

Announced by Associate Deputy Minister Kevin Lynch in September 1993, the Corporate Information System is a collection of several existing information systems under a common menu. Once in the system, users select the subject headings that interest them. Systems incorporated into the Corporate Information System include ACCESS (text retrieval), several CD-ROMs, MIDAS and BOSS.

There are now 30 CD-ROM services available comprising more than 14 gigabytes of data and 22 in-house text databases that, together with the Monthly Economic Indicators, MIDAS and TIERS,

comprise another 1.3 gigabytes of data. (A gigabyte is 1 000 megabytes.)

The information available through the system is good and is getting better, says Jim Commins of the Information Management Branch (IMB). New data coming soon include InfoEx (Foreign Affairs publications catalogue), dISTCoverly, Small Business Profiles, Tourism Resource Centre and Econolit.

There is also an easy-to-use tutorial for the text retrieval system under the "Administrative" heading. A new release of the Megatext text retrieval software, expected in the spring, should also bring improved functionality.



NAME THAT TOON

Send us your ideas for a caption for this cartoon. Last issue's winning caption is on page 4.

The new system has been well used, says Jim. "Our tracking of usage shows that the various services were accessed 8 496 times last November by a total of 968 users." During November the system was available to 2 700 users at Industry Canada.

Worth Repeating

"In the long run, we are going to become paperless in the same way we became horseless. Horses are still around, but they're just ridden by little girls and hobbyists."

Paul Saffo
California Institute of the Future

What's Inside

Potpourri	2
Walk-in Centre	2
Bankruptcy System	3
Service Centres	4



Potpourri

► There have been a number of changes in IMB's management recently.

Brent DiBartolo, IMB's latest Director General, has left to become Director General, Finance at Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Brent had replaced **Fruji Bull** who left Industry Canada to become Director General of Health Canada's Information Management Branch.

Richard Guttormson, formerly Director of User Services, is now at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada where he is Director of Technical Services.

Terry Ekdahl has retired from his position as Director of Data Management and Systems Development. Terry is now devoting himself to his first love, sculpting.

► The Information Management Committee has approved a plan to connect Industry Canada through a wide area network (WAN).

This connectivity plan calls for the selection of one primary computing environment (PCE) — or network operating system — for corporate applications, such as the financial resources and human resources systems. The plan recommends that two other computing environments be selected and supported in the short term as secondary computing environments (SCE). The

SCEs would allow the departmental users to migrate to the PCE at a "natural" pace. Program systems will continue in their present environment.

► More than \$1 300 was collected in IMB's sixth annual Ottawa-Carleton snowsuit fundraising drive. In addition, a number of snowsuits were donated. Credit for all the behind-the-scenes work that contributed to this latest success goes to IMB's administrative staff.

► The Computers for Schools Project is still looking for surplus computers. Interested persons can contact the project officers at 998-1803 or 998-1804 in the National Capital Region or at 1-800-268-6608 for all other areas.

What's new at the Walk-in Centre

The Walk-in Centre is a service offered by IMB to all Industry Canada staff who work on IBM-compatible microcomputers.

The centre is there to help with practically any day-to-day problem people might have, explains Alan Morgan of the Walk-in Centre. "We offer advice, a chance to develop skills, help to solve problems and a sympathetic ear for talking about 'computery' things in general." The centre also has a wide variety of software and hardware available for use and experimentation.

The staff at the Walk-in Centre maintain an interest in old software and constantly pursue better ways to work by acquiring a knowledge of new programs. "Recent advances in personal computer software have really been staggering," says Alan. "We help people to keep up with those advances," he explains.

Trying out software at the centre is an ideal way to assess the capabilities being added to new programs, says Alan. "In many cases, we are able to show people how to do things more efficiently with their current software," he adds.

In addition to maintaining the most recent versions of the major wordprocessing, database, page layout and presentation programs, the centre has useful hardware such as a colour printer

to output high-quality colour slides, a large colour monitor for presentations in small boardrooms and a scanner for converting printed documents to electronic files.

The centre is located in room 306D, in the West Tower, at 235 Queen Street. "If you are looking for assistance, or if you are merely curious about what is here, just walk in," says Alan.



Photo: (From right to left) Alan Morgan gives Jean-Francois Martin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Regional Operations, a tour of the Walk-in Centre after helping his staff to prepare materials for a presentation.

New system to handle bankruptcy cases

Industry Canada's Bankruptcy Branch has implemented a new information system that significantly improves its ability to respond to public demands for timely and quality service.

The new IMPACT Information System was specifically designed for the branch's type of business. Its functions include the following:

- estate administration for the registration and supervision of 85 000 commercial and consumer bankruptcies each year
- trustee licensing
- automatic generation of standard documentation and correspondence
- administration and control of undistributed assets and unclaimed dividends entrusted to the Crown for future distribution
- national name searches that enable credit bureaus, financial institutions and legal and accounting firms to obtain insolvency information on their clients
- financial control and billing functions for production of client invoices and collection and control of revenue derived from the estate registration and name search fees

- generation of reports, listings and statistics and provision of bulk data to Revenue Canada, Statistics Canada and other agencies.

In the past, these functions were carried out using centralized mini-computers and COBOL-language-based applications. The new system has an Open Systems environment, using common Intel technology and a UNIX operating system. To meet the need for a distributed computing environment, a client/server model was selected for the branch's headquarters and 14 regional offices. The system also takes advantage of off-the-shelf software such as SYBASE SQL client/server RDBMS, a versatile and powerful database management system, SYSTEM ARCHITECT, which is computer-assisted software engineering, and application development software such as POWERBUILDER.

"The system is unique within the department," says Claude Duguay, Head, Systems Management. "In fact there are probably very few operational systems of this type in the federal government."

Information technology is a key component of the Bankruptcy Branch's present and future program delivery capability, adds John Armstrong, Deputy Superintendent, Branch Operations. "These systems are going to play an even more important role as the branch

gradually moves towards the automated filing of information from the insolvency community and as the federal government in general moves towards electronic data interchange."

"The initiative was a tremendous challenge and the culmination of three year's effort," explains Doug Quesnel, Chief, Bankruptcy Information Services. "No technology was available to simply convert the existing applications so we had to rebuild everything from scratch. But the system is now in full production across the country, and we managed to do it without any show stoppers."

"IMPACT creates opportunities for us to develop improved services for our clients," says Doug. New approaches, such as having insolvency trustees transfer data electronically, expanding the size of the database to include other types of information, as well as shortening data delivery times for clients are all possibilities under consideration. Other future possibilities include exploiting the linking of the system to a new corporate WAN under construction in Industry Canada.

Further information on the system is available from Doug or Claude at (819) 953-6129.

CBSCs — getting connected presents challenges

Having created a powerful new tool to assist business, the government is working to plug the Canada Business Service Centres (CBSCs) into the right networks and data sources, says John Desborough of the Entrepreneurship and Small Business Office.

The current focuses are telecommunications and the assembling of the centres' database, says John. "The pilot projects we ran last year allowed us to standardize the basic equipment, now we have to exploit that potential."

CBSCs are an initiative to make government information resources easily accessible to Canadian businesses, and are directed by a steering committee made up of deputy ministers from across government. Two centres, in Winnipeg and Halifax, are up and running and the remaining eight are expected to be operating by April 1. Standard systems at the CBSCs include 486 computers linked to Novell LANs, the *Faxback* service, which allows users to request documents over the phone, and *Megatext*, a text retrieval system.

A technical subcommittee is studying telecommunications options for CBSCs. The Government Telecommunications and Informatics Services (GTIS) is providing advice; one proposed option is to hook up over the Government Enterprise Core Network (GECN). GECN is a network under development by GTIS to provide connections between participating departments, access to some common applications as well as access to external networks such as Internet and Europeanet.

The CBSCs are also working with GTIS to determine how best to standardize telephone systems. "We have promised the public that they can call and get answers without a runaround. To do this we need a switching system that will direct calls effectively," explains John.

Building a database of programs and services from the industry-oriented departments is another big challenge. "We have to collect information from about 600 areas across 30 departments. That means obtaining the information and a contact name and then keeping that information current."

The database will eventually also have to accommodate information from the provinces.

For further information, call John Desborough at (613) 952-2578.



Francine Doucet, the Informatics Administrator in Moncton, was recently rewarded for her commitment to providing informatics support in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Francine (right) is shown receiving her Exemplary Contribution Award from Guy-André Gélinas, Director, International Trade Centre and Senior Trade Commissioner.

Contest Winner!



Congratulations to Lynda Peach of the Vancouver Regional Office for,
"You see, I keep wanting to jump out of Windows..."

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

