

INTER|FACE

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Industry Canada — Information Management and Accommodation Services Newsletter

Industry Canada puts more emphasis on information products

Industry Canada is greatly increasing its efforts to provide information to small and medium-sized businesses.

The department is creating a range of World Class Information Products that will allow it to provide information to its clients on a far greater scale than ever before. New technology will be used to make information more directly accessible than currently available material.

In order to do this, a wide range of technical and procedural questions must be answered, says David Peate of Information Management and Accommodation Services Branch (IMASB). "The technological issues are very closely related to questions about how product developers will work," he explains. "We need to make careful decisions to make sure we are using the technology as effectively as possible."

The first generation of World Class Information Products is currently being

developed. The eight project teams are creating prototypes of each product line to work out the processes that will later be used to keep the information current and to develop future generations of products. The teams are also addressing various technical and procedural issues as they arise. Pilot projects are being conducted to determine how well clients respond to the offerings.

IMASB will support the teams by providing tools for each stage of product development and by ensuring these tools work together. "Data on a particular aspect of business might be collected as plain ASCII text from a source such as the Internet," says David. "Next, we have to provide a facility so that internal clients can find the data, use it and re-use it to develop information products. Finally, we have to be able to present this information to external clients."

A variety of distribution methods will ensure that clients can get access to the



NAME

THAT 'TOON

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

information they need, says David. "Some clients aren't able to use CD-ROM or the Internet right now," he explains. "Less glamorous technology such as software that allows business people to select information they want and have it faxed to them will also play a very important role."

Turn inside for more information on Industry Canada's new information products. ■

INDUSTRY CANADA MOVES TO PEOPLESOFT

A special version of Peoplesoft, customized for Industry Canada, was rolled out on April 1.

Peoplesoft is a human resources system that has gained considerable popularity in both the public and private sectors. A government-wide version is also being prepared by Treasury Board.

Industry Canada developed its version independently because the department could not wait for the government-wide version, explains James Ma of IMASB. "After the re-organization, we were left with four different groups of human resources systems, with a total of 29 subsystems."

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INTRODUCING THE NEW PRODUCT LINE

Here are two examples of World Class Information Products. Interface will feature the other six products in upcoming issues.

The **Management Information Network (MIN)** will provide practical information on management development for small business — such as expert support, products, services and opportunities to develop skills — anywhere, anytime and in any form. The network will provide a valuable link between Industry Canada, its small business clients and other information providers.

MIN will consist of 1) a directory or other “pointer” system that clients can use to find both public and private sector sources of management expertise such as publications, databases, institutions, and courses and seminars, 2) a set of profiles summarizing the offerings included in the directory and 3) a network of individuals and organizations that business people traditionally turn to for advice.

A human “interface” of trusted advisors, such as lawyers, bank managers, accountants and small-business consultants, will make MIN more friendly to users, explains Michael Flaherty, Product Line Manager. “Our research indicates that small business people prefer to get their advice from a person,” Michael explains.

“The academic case that small businesses need assistance in management development is well established,” says Michael. “The challenge facing the MIN team is the practical one of providing the right information to meet this need to

small business in a world where there is too much information.”

The team will be developing a MIN prototype and pilot testing it throughout the 1995-1996 fiscal year.

Industry Canada’s **Electronic Conferences** will give members of particular industry sectors, or individuals from different sectors who share common interests, a chance to share ideas and information.

The participants will meet electronically through the department’s on-line information system or “super server.” They will either call up directly or can connect through any public data network such as the Internet. Once hooked up, the participants will be able to navigate through a series of menus to find electronic “conferences” on different subjects.

Each conference will have an Industry Canada moderator who will place discussion papers on-line that users can read and respond to electronically.

There is considerable flexibility in the way the individual conferences can be set up, says Keith Parsonage, one of two product line managers. “In some cases, there may be only a single stream, or discussion group,” he explains. “In other

cases, discussion may be broken down into a group of streams and even sub-streams if participants and departmental moderators believe they are required.”

Electronic conferences can be formal or informal, adds Colin Wright, the second product line manager. “In some cases, the discussion may be led by a panel or an individual expert. In other cases, we may just provide a forum for people to make contact with experts in the private and public sectors.”

Industry Canada is well placed to bring the various partners essential for this project together, says Colin. “We can provide the necessary reference material, panelists, speakers and expert moderators needed to make this sort of facility work.”

Each sector of Industry Canada will maintain a discussion area that is organized to meet the needs of their clients. The department will also be able to keep an archive of all proceedings in a central repository.

From the department’s perspective, the electronic conferences will provide immediate feedback from clients on Industry Canada programs and services, says Keith. “We will be able to use this feedback to continuously assess our clients’ information needs.” ■

Worth Repeating

“Civilization advances by extending the number of important operations which we can perform without thinking about them.”

— Alfred North Whitehead, *An Introduction to Mathematics*

DEALING WITH THE LEGAL ISSUES

A guide is being prepared to help employees responsible for creating information products deal with related legal issues.

The *Data Assembly Copyright Guide*, designed for the creators of the Industry Canada Insight database, is in the draft stage. The guide includes an explanation of the legal issues involved with electronic publishing, a "check plan" that covers all the necessary steps for dealing with copyrighted works, and several legal forms written in language approved by the department for use with published materials.

Two of the most important issues are copyright and liability, says Reagan Walker of Legal Services.

Copyright defines two kinds of rights, he explains. One is economic. It protects an author's right to prevent others from reproducing, performing or translating a literary work. Reports, databases and computer software are examples of works protected by copyright. Without such a right, authors would receive no economic benefit for their efforts.

Copyright also includes a moral right that allows authors to stop others from significantly altering their work.

Any written material included in a database is protected by copyright and permission must be obtained for its use. The owner of the copyright can ask for

compensation for the use of the material. They may also apply restrictions on its use.

Databases made up of raw data that have been sorted, analyzed and re-arranged by departmental employees are not subject to any prior or underlying copyright.

In addition to copyright concerns, Industry Canada employees must also be aware of liability issues arising from the electronic publication of information products. "The Canadian government is particularly vulnerable as it is seen as having deep pockets," says Reagan. The *Data Assembly Copyright Guide* will include formal disclaimers of liability. ■

LIBRARY CHOOSES TO ADVANCE WITH NEW SYSTEM

Industry Canada's library is installing a new computer system so it can offer more services that clients can access electronically.

GEAC's ADVANCE will become the standard system for the principal departmental libraries. It will allow library users to search for materials held in the three library locations and in external databases and will allow library staff to perform various administrative functions such as circulation control, acquisitions and serials routing. The decision to implement the ADVANCE system was made after several weeks of system evaluation with library staff.

When Industry Canada was created, the combined libraries of the four founding departments had a number of different systems. A new system with more capabilities was selected for use in the new department rather than choosing one of the existing systems, says Gabriel Lepkey, Virtual Library Project Manager. ADVANCE will be an important tool in making the library an electronically accessible source, or virtual library, rather than a physical location users have to walk

to, she explains. "In addition, there was a requirement for what is called distributed processing, which the other systems couldn't handle at the time," she adds.

For library users, the new system offers a single interface, with one set of search commands, to replace the two different systems currently available through the Corporate Information System. The system can also be linked to other library systems, such as those at universities and other government departments.

ADVANCE can also be linked to databases of journal articles, or even to the full text of documents. All of the advanced features will not be available from the



Virtual library project leaders (from left, standing): Gabriel Lepkey, Huguette Perrier, Monique Perrier, Ruth Webster. Seated: Joel Susser. Missing: Estelle Lacroix and Jane Edwards.

beginning, says Gabriel. The search capabilities will be expanded based on needs identified by staff in consultation with users.

Library staff hope to have the system up and running by early fall, she adds. "That is a very ambitious deadline, but we are aiming for it." ■

SOME HELP WITH THE NEW JARGON

The following are terms that will become increasingly familiar to departmental employees as Industry Canada develops its World Class Information Products.

Groupware is software that makes it easier for a team to work together through a computer network. With this type of software it is possible to create, edit and update collections of information without having to circulate paper copies of the materials involved.

Groupware has many capabilities but the most important one is the ease with which a team of employees can manipulate databases using it. Information for a database can be collected in one region of the country, supplemented with expert analysis in another and edited in yet another using groupware.

Although groupware is a very powerful tool, currently available groupware does have some limitations. Most importantly, databases created with this software have to be converted to a different form for the

department's clients to use the information in them. Groupware is also not very good at manipulating databases with statistical information and cannot be used to create relational databases or databases with "hypertext" links.

The best known groupware is "Lotus Notes." Industry Canada is currently evaluating Lotus Notes in a number of pilot projects.

SQL, often pronounced "sequel," stands for structured query language. SQL was developed in the 1980s and has become the standard language for communicating with relational databases. As long as a piece of software can "speak SQL," it can obtain information from a compatible database.

A wide variety of SQL-compatible software is now available, including spreadsheets and word-processing packages. For Industry Canada staff, this means being able to get access using familiar tools on the desktop to data stored in departmental databases.

SGML (standard generalized mark-up language) and HTML (hypertext mark-up

language) are used to "tag" documents so that they can be searched by software designed to display information. Two examples of display software are the Megatext text retrieval system that allows departmental employees to search the corporate database, and the "browsers" used to search Internet's World Wide Web (WWW).

HTML is closely related to, but technically not quite, a subset of SGML. That means that a system using SGML can do everything that one using HTML can and more. SGML is increasingly becoming the standard mark-up language for large databases. It has been chosen as an international standard by the ISO (International Organization for Standardization). HTML is the mark-up language used on the Internet. ■

INDUSTRY CANADA MOVES TO PEOPLESOFT

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A Peoplesoft development team conducted interviews with human resources specialists and created a series of specifications based on the information gathered. The specifications were used to customize Peoplesoft to meet the department's needs.

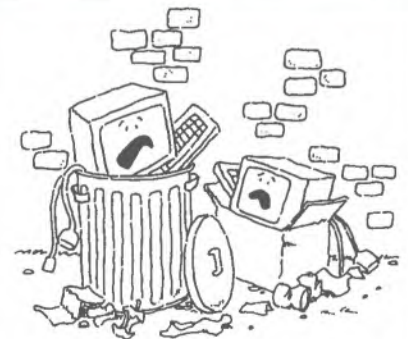
Initially, Peoplesoft will be made available to all human resources specialists on staff, including approximately 200 users at offices in Montreal, Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, Moncton and Halifax

as well as at various sites in the National Capital Region.

A program to prepare departmental trainers to train human resources specialists in the new system began in February.

Plans are to make Peoplesoft available to departmental managers as well. If funding becomes available, the system may be made available to all employees so that they can perform functions such as recording training and checking their leave credits. ■

Contest Winner!



Congratulations to Scott Vasudev and Alain Lauzon of the Canadian Intellectual Property Office for their winning suggestion:

"I crashed into a local bus on the information highway"

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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.

