

# INTERFACE

FALL 1995

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CANADA

Industry Canada — CIO Newsletter

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## The technology behind the Information Products

This is the first in a series of articles that will explain the technology that the CIO has put into place to make Industry Canada's World Class Information Products possible.

### The super server

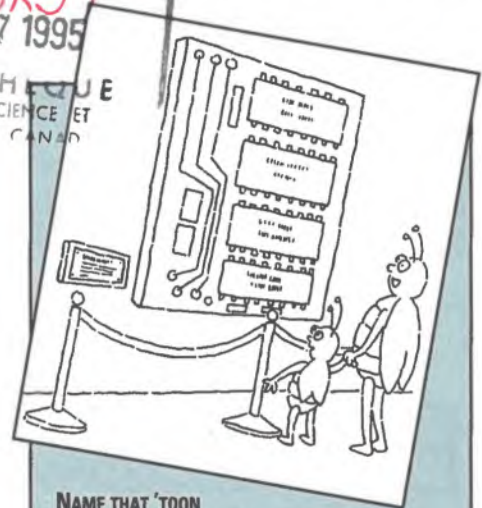
In the third floor computer room at 235 Queen Street in Ottawa, there is a piece of electronic equipment about the size of a small filing cabinet that is the heart of Industry Canada's super server.

This diminutive device is an Alpha 2100 computer that will hold all the information available on-line to departmental clients. Despite its small size, it is incredibly powerful, with two 175 megahertz co-processors and 64-bit addressing. The larger address

gives the super server the ability to access a much larger memory bank in the same way that adding an area code to a seven-digit telephone number increases the number of people who can be called.

The Alpha 2100 has 640 megabytes of RAM, the random access memory space that determines how many applications can be loaded and how much data can be processed at any one time. The central computer also contains 48 gigabytes of disk storage space.

In order to protect the integrity of the data, clients will not have direct access to the central computer. Two intermediary computers —

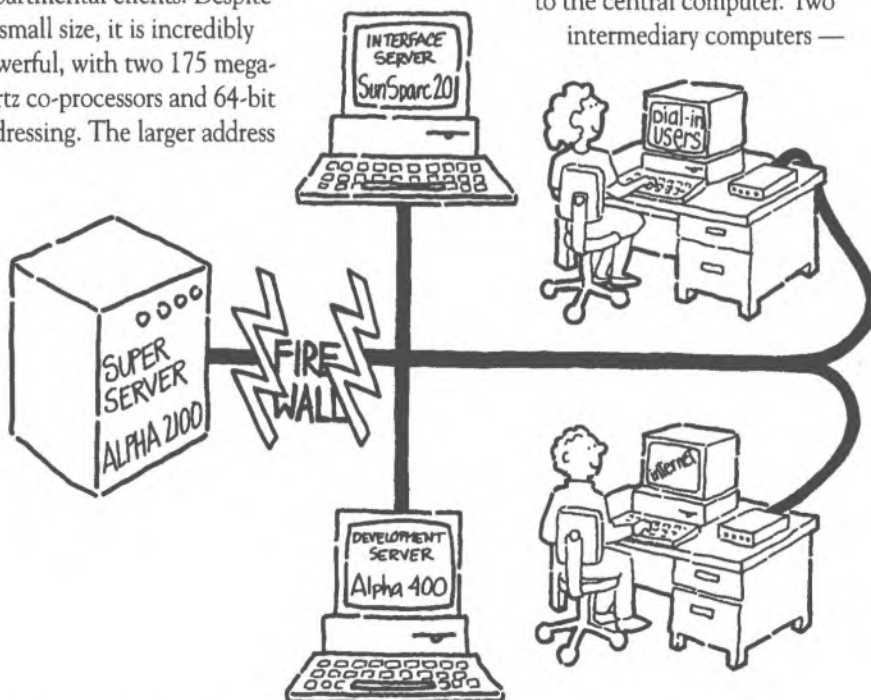


**NAME THAT 'TOON**

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

an Alpha 400 and a Sun Sparc 20 — will interact with customers' computers. The second Alpha computer will handle information requests via the Internet and the Sun computer will handle calls coming in through Canadian commercial networks such as x.25, telephone or ISDN.

*continued on page 2*



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## BRIDGING PROGRAM PREPARES EMPLOYEES FOR WORK WITH LANs

Industry Canada recently began a pilot program to train employees to work as LAN administrators.

LAN administrators implement and support the department's office automation and LAN technology infrastructure, says Linda Parks, the CIO's Manager of LAN Administrators. This work requires the administrators to have expertise in operating the hardware and software associated with workstations, LANs, printers and other network devices.

The Bridging Program is primarily intended for employees from the Administrative and Support groups. It was introduced this year as a pilot project for indeterminate employees at headquarters, including those whose positions had been declared surplus; its success will determine any future expansion of the program.

The pilot project, launched on June 9, was a real success, notes Lucille Piché of the Human Resources Branch. A total of 90 employees submitted applications for

the program. "From this excellent pool of candidates, six were selected for this training program," says Lucille. They are Francine Allen, Ken Cartier, Carole Diotte, Lyle Gauthier, Andrée Pichette and Barbara Soyka.

The six trainees officially started their one-year training program, consisting of four months of formal classroom training followed by eight months on-the-job training, on September 18. ■

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## SUPPORTING CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL INDUSTRIES

Environmental Affairs' ENViNET is a trendsetting example of the use of electronic information networks to deliver information to Industry Canada clients.

"We realized quite some time ago that there was no electronic information source available for environmental industries," explains Lucien Bradet, Director General and Manager. "These industries are a fast-growing sector of the Canadian economy and will play an important role helping Canada remain competitive, so we immediately set about filling the gap."

The branch created ENViNET, an electronic bulletin board with information that is useful to environmental industries ranging from wastewater treatment specialists to firms that clean up industrial wastes. The service, which has been available since January 1994, has also been used by a wide variety of secondary audiences including academics, non-governmental organizations, and associations interested in the environment.

Access to ENViNET has been available through Industry Canada On-Line and through the Internet's Gopher search service. In the future, the service will be available on the super server.

Upon entering ENViNET, users see a series of icons identifying areas they can explore, including

- Products and services — Canadian air, water and waste treatment products; domestic and international markets for environmental services; and information about education, financing, legislation, research, technology development and training available for the industry
- International financial institutions — information about environmental projects sponsored by institutions such

as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank

- Networking with Industry Canada experts
- Newsletters and current events

The branch has also recently added a "What is new on ENViNET" icon so users can find out about new information in all areas without having to search through each one individually.

Users can also use a text search service to look for particular information. ■

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## THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND THE INFORMATION PRODUCTS

*continued from page 1*

These two interface computers will only have a user interface and a table of contents stored in them. When customers hook up, they will be able to browse through the table of contents. When they wish to actually see some of the stored information, the secondary computers will request it from the super server for them. The first time new customers make such a request, the system will also ask them to register.

Their account information will be maintained in a database on the super server.

The text information will be stored on the larger computer in SGML format (see the Spring 1995 *Interface*) that allows the system's "search engines" to find and retrieve what each client is looking for. Two search methods — text retrieval and a relational database — are being set up. "The customer will be largely unaware of the technical aspects," says Colin Wright, who headed the team that set up the super server. "We are trying to make this as seamless as

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## INDUSTRY CANADA MOVES TO NEW OFFICE AUTOMATION SUITE

The department now has a suite of office automation products that will soon be available to employees.

After a lengthy process that involved issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP), evaluating products, presenting options to the Technical Advisory Committee and getting approval from the Departmental Management Board, Lotus Smart Suite was chosen for use by Industry Canada.

Lotus Smart Suite comprises Lotus 1-2-3, a spreadsheet program that many employees already use; Freelance, a presentation and graphics package; Organizer, with features

such as a to-do list, address book and calendar; and AmiPro, a word processor.

Additional Lotus products that were not part of the original RFP will also be available: Approach (a database) and Screen-Cam, a utility that captures sound, screen activity and cursor movement all in one integrated multi-media file.

Several measures are being put in place to help employees through the transition to the new software. WordPerfect will continue to be the department's word-processing standard for the next three years. As well, on-line facilities will be

available, such as the Smart Suite Guided Tour and computer-based training aids.

The Lotus products were chosen after the Industry Canada evaluation teams, working in conjunction with Public Works and Government Services Canada, rated bids submitted by industry leaders in office automation products. The three companies that rated the highest scores then had their software installed and tested in a simulated informatics environment.

*Interface* will publish further details about Lotus Smart Suite in future issues. ■

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## AN INTELLIGENT INFORMATION REPOSITORY FOR EXPORTERS

The International Business Information Network (IBIN) is a collection of information about international marketing designed to support Canadian firms.

IBIN, another of the department's World Class Information Products, will also be a support tool for departmental officers serving clients. "Our staff often end up answering very basic questions,"

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possible so the clients only have to know what information they want and don't have to worry about how it is obtained."

All the text information stored on the super server will also be duplicated as a series of Microsoft Word 2.0 files for clients to download. "We chose this format because it was the most commonly available format that would allow us to provide elegant print-ready files with embedded graphics for our clients' use," explains Colin. ■

says Ron Lockhead, who is leading the IBIN team. "This is very time consuming and does not represent good value for either the department or its clients. The IBIN will provide clients with the basic background so that they can refine the questions they ask."

The IBIN will be available primarily through the super server and will be integrated with the other World Class Information Products there, says Ron. "Once this is all up on the super server, there will be no walls between the products." Super server users will have access to a wide variety of information from all products, including the following from IBIN:

- International business development activities/events
- Key contacts
- Sector/market reports
- International financial institution procurement opportunities

The IBIN team has done a lot of work collecting the related information and structuring it so that it is easy to search, says Ron. "This project was driven by a number of partners from departmental offices right across the country working with a small team here in Ottawa. We are building an integrated information collection and dissemination system that will provide both clients and Industry Canada staff with easy access to information."

The team that created IBIN sees their work as being a part of a much larger, government-wide service. "This is all part of a Team Canada approach to international trade," says Ron. "We do not want to work in isolation."

Ultimately, the team hopes to also include information from organizations outside the federal government in IBIN. ■

## CIO PROVIDES TOOLS FOR INTERNET PUBLISHING

The CIO is preparing a series of Internet publishing guidelines for departmental staff preparing materials for electronic publication.

"We want to encourage departmental staff to use the Internet, so we are preparing a series of standards to help them do so," explains David Waung, Director General, Strategic Information Branch. All Internet sites for Industry Canada are now under the supervision of the CIO.

*"We want to promote a balance between creative development on the one hand and maintaining a consistently high departmental standard on the other."*

An official Industry Canada publishing process is also being developed for departmental information providers to ensure that all standards are met and that the information they provide is as accurate and complete as possible. "We want to promote a balance between creative development on the one hand and maintaining a consistently high departmental standard on the other," says David. "That was not possible in the environment that had evolved so far."

That environment included no less than 60 separate Internet sites for Industry Canada that were located on seven different servers. There were thousands of documents available through these sites, many of which were not published in both official languages. A small number of them also contained out-of-date information.

A further concern was that the purpose of some sites was not clearly defined. For example, sites that were clearly intended for discussion among departmental officials were accessible by the general public. In

### *Internet publishing guidelines*

- All Industry Canada Internet publishing sites shall promote a cohesive corporate image.
- Industry Canada's Internet publishing sites shall comply with, or exceed, the requirements of the *Official Languages Act*.
- The sites shall also comply with, or exceed, the standards established by Treasury Board's *Internet Guide*. This guide is available at the following address: <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/tb/pubs/in/ine.html>
- Material published on Industry Canada Internet publishing sites shall not violate the copyright of others and shall protect Crown copyrighted material.
- All information published on Industry Canada Internet publishing sites shall meet high-quality standards for design, content and timeliness.
- Authors and managers of Industry Canada Internet sites shall comply with the relevant government publishing and communications policies.

the future, all Industry Canada Internet sites will be carefully labelled depending into which of four categories they fall:

- external publishing sites for high-quality documents such as World Class Information Products
- external program delivery sites for Internet services such as SchoolNet
- internal sites that will be closed to the public and will abide by departmental communications policies
- external research and development sites that will be clearly labelled as such. In addition, a standard disclaimer message will be prepared and documents intended for the general public will no longer be distributed through these sites to minimize the opportunity for confusion about their purpose. ■

## Contest Winner!



*"It's my new software for farmers — 'CobuServe'."*

Congratulations to Derek Brown of the Ontario Regional Office in Toronto for suggesting the winning caption.

Published by Chief Information Officer, Operations Sector.

Editor: Dale Smith

Please E-mail your comments, suggestions or story ideas to (INTERFACE) or mail them to: *Interface* Editor, Industry Canada, Room 156B, East Tower, 235 Queen Street, OTTAWA, Ont., K1A 0H5.

