

# News, Trends and Comments

## News

### **Japan opens new digital communication link with the US, European Countries**

KDD, the Japanese overseas telegraph and telephone corporation, started in April "VENUS-D", a packet-switching communication link with the US, Great Britain, France, Germany and other countries. This service allows a full range of mutual on-line access combining computers, terminals, facsimile-units.

On the Japanese side the system requires the X25 or other high-level protocol. The Band rate is set to 2400, 4800, 9600 Bd. The system also requires a leased line to KDD; the service area is restricted to Tokyo and Osaka for the time being. For these restrictions, the existing packet-switching link of KDD with the US, the International Computer Access Service (ICAS), will continue. It allows the accessing of host-computers in the US by low-speed terminals, and does not require a leased line.

The on-line access to data bases in Japan will depend on the engagement of the Japanese hosts to connect to VENUS. The problem is enhanced by the fact that the national digital network 'DDX' of NTT is not yet connected to VENUS.

### **New York Times experiencing financial and copyright problems**

The New York Times reported an operating loss of \$325,000 for the third quarter of 1981. The loss is attributed in part to the costs of developing the full text service of The Information Bank. In addition, the Times had copyright problems focussed on its Key Issues Tracking (KIT) service. A number of publishers, including McGraw-Hill, Energy Daily and Petroleum Intelligence Weekly, have claimed that the Times is violating their copyrights in providing abstracts of items from the journals and newsletters in KIT.

### **Call for proposals**

In April, the European Commission is scheduled to launch another call for proposals to set up new database services. In the budget, 5.5 million EAU (European Accounting Units, approx. \$6.5 million) have been reserved. Apply to: CEC, DG XIII B, Office B4/006, Bâtiment Jean Monnet, Luxemburg. Tel.: (Luxemburg) 43012870.

**DIALOG acquisition stalled**

Dr. Roger Summit, President of DIALOG, reported at the London Online Meeting that the California-based organization would continue to operate as before, "for the indefinite future". DIALOG, which earlier in the year achieved full subsidiary status in the Lockheed corporate structure, had been for sale for several months.

**New SDC-Derwent venture launched**

The London Online Meeting also saw the official completion of the joint venture between Systems Development Corporation and Derwent. A side fact that may have escaped notice is that both SDC and Derwent are subsidiaries of the much larger Burroughs and Thomson Holdings Corporations. Can you estimate the number of information companies taken over by larger entities in the last five years? Maybe ISU will hold a contest!

**The new LISA**

Library & Information Science Abstracts is now being published monthly (effective with the January, 1982 issue). This increase in frequency is coupled with other recent improvements in the abstracting service - including monthly indexes, enhanced coverage of the literature, and input from NTIS, ERIC, and PIRA. The agency-arrangement with Learned Information for the on-line version terminates in April of this year. For further information, contact N.L. Moore, Editor, LISA, Library Association Publishing, 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE, UK.

**On-line library service development in Canada**

After successfully surviving in the latter part of 1981 a period of uncertainty as to continuing financial support for its ambitious programs, UTLAS (University of Toronto Library Automation Systems) has now celebrated the inauguration of its "Dual CATSS" (Catalogue Support System). This reconfiguration results in more than a doubling of storage-capacity, and gives access to in excess of thirteen million records. Dual CATSS consists of identical parallel data bases and systems in on-line operation, and its implementation has been described (by W.H. Peters, of Woods Gordon Management Consultants, and UTLAS Interim Chief Executive Officer during the project) as "without a doubt one of the most difficult (tasks) in large scale computing in Canada and perhaps North America".

**Reliability of data networks**

The German Online Info (Vol.5, no.1, Febr. 1982) mentions that only 32% of the 1200-baud connections to the German message switching system Datex-P were trouble-free, compared to 92% via the normal tele-

phone network. For 300 baud, the situation is more satisfactory. The bulletin also has a humorous story from someone who made 25 attempts to access Euronet hosts and succeeded only once.

### **Local area networks**

Since the beginning of March, Xerox's Ethernet is available in Europe.

### **Database comparison**

The British Library has awarded a grant of £4,200 for a study to compare the medical databases Excerpta Medica and MEDLINE in the field of drug information. The study will be done by the Liverpool Polytechnic.

### **ASIS announces information science awards**

At its Annual Meeting, the American Society for Information Science bestowed high awards on three information specialists. Herbert S. White, Dean of the School of Library and Information Science, Indiana University, received the Society's Award of Merit; Pauline Atherton Cochrane the Outstanding Information Science Teacher Award; and Jan Krcmar the Watson Davis Award for continuous service to ASIS.

### **German chemical society honors Dr. Fred Tate**

The Gmelin-Beilstein Medal in recognition of outstanding contributions to the development of chemical literature has been posthumously awarded to Dr. Fred Tate, former associate director of Chemical Abstracts Service. Among other achievements, the society recognized Tate's special contributions to the Chemical Registry System.

### **EUSIDIC activities**

The European Association of Information Services has decided to inaugurate a Spring Technical Meeting, as a regular complement to its annual fall gathering. The first of these meetings, open only to representatives of member organizations, is scheduled for the 28th and 29th April in Paris, and will deal with the questions of a potential on-line code of practice and of restrictions to the use of data delivered on-line.

### **Teletext trial set for Canada**

The Canadian Department of Communications and the CBC have allocated \$6 million for a three-year trial of the Telidon/Teletext system. 50% of the amount will be spent on content development for both French and

English programs in Montréal and Toronto. In addition, \$10.5 million have been set aside for development work on Telidon terminals.

### **Germans and Swiss drop Prestel**

After experimenting with the British Prestel system, West Germany has awarded a \$30 million contract to IBM for the development of a German public videotex system, while Switzerland has selected Standard Electric Lorenz.

### **IBM offers personal computer**

The new IBM "Personal" computer entry into the market dominated until now by Apple, Tandy and Commodore will employ a 16-bit Intel 8088 microprocessor. User memory begins with 16K but can be expanded to 256K.

### **BIOSIS to offer "BITS" diskette service**

BioSciences Information Service, producer of the BIOSIS Previews and Biological Abstracts on Tape (BAT) data bases, has made preliminary disclosure of plans to offer subsets of both files on diskette. Biosis Information Transfer Service (BITS) will provide monthly disks of selected or customized profiles from the data bases it produces. BITS service will allow electronic or mail transfer of data for up to a 25-member "Affinity Group" at the subscribers' locations.

### **Time Inc. enters teletex area**

Time Inc. has announced teletex service in San Diego, California. The news magazine publisher will utilize Telidon in San Diego, with billing activities under the control of its wholly owned subsidiary American Television and Communications.

### **Interactive video lessons**

A system has been launched which enables you to write interactive video lessons without using a computer programming language. It is called The Ghostwriter and has been written for Apple II. It is marketed by: CAVRI Systems Inc., 26 Trumbull Street, New Haven, CT 06511, USA, tel.: (203)562-4979.

### **Research centre**

PIRA, the research association for the paper and board, printing and packaging industries, is moving towards the constitution of an independent, international centre for electronic publishing research, IEPRC.

### **A piece of the action**

New Media Graphics Corporation of Cambridge, Massachusetts, will now master shared videodisks for its customers. Each client may purchase only a portion of the storage-area on a platter for his own material, and receive for the base price five copies of the disk - with the option to buy further copies at a moderate unit-price.

### **Manual**

UNESCO has now issued the second edition of the Reference Manual for Machine-readable Bibliographic Descriptions (formerly the UNISIST Reference Manual). Get it, free of charge, from: General Information Programme, UNESCO, 7, Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

### **Anderla's successor**

Effective March 1st, 1982, Mr. C.N. Jansen van Rosendaal, an Elsevier-NDU director, has been appointed to succeed Professor Anderla as Director, DG XIII B of the CEC, Luxemburg.

### **Cuadra Associates**

Cuadra Associates, Inc. have moved from 1523 Sixth Street to 2001 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 305, Santa Monica, California 90403, tel. no.: (213) 829-9972.

### **Patents for the people**

The UK's Patents Information Network, a cooperative scheme financially underwritten by the British Library, now has its own periodical publication. It will emphasize the informative (rather than protective) aspect of patent literature, and furnish information about the libraries which participate in the network. The PIN Bulletin is available free to interested persons, at least within the UK. The intended frequency is not at this time known to us. Further information: External Relations Section, Science Reference Library (Holborn), 25 Southampton Bldgs., Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1AW, UK (tel. 01-405 8721).

### **New databases**

Management and Marketing Abstracts	Pergmon-Infoline
PIRA Abstracts	"
PAKLEGIS	"
USCLASS (patents)	SDC
USPA & USP70 (patents)	"
Platt's Oilgram News	"
Energy Data Base	"

**Third-world information needs**

UNESCO has initiated a study into the scientific information needs of third-world countries (study targets are Colombia, Costa Rica, Jordan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Malaysia and Nigeria). Further information: UNESCO, 7, Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

**From the USSR**

It has recently been made known that the Soviet Academy of Sciences increased its publishing-activities over the period of the tenth five-year plan. From 1976 through 1980, there were issued 690 monographs and 20,000 periodical-articles - an increase of 20% over the previous five-year period. About 10% of the books were sold abroad; almost one fourth of the journal-production went to foreign subscribers. Source: Wissenschaftsnachrichten aus sozialistischen Ländern.

**American banks explore videotex services**

A number of large American banks have planned entries into home banking and other home information services. Chemical Bank will offer its Pronto service using Atari terminals, while Marine Midland and Citibank will test limited services with expansion potential for the future.

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## Trends

**The politics of information-flow**

Recent developments pertaining to the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, located at Laxenburg near Vienna, give a good case in point for the political aspects of international information-transfer. The administration in Washington, upon recommendation by the National Security Council, has made known its intention to withdraw the US financial contribution (set last year at \$2.3 million) toward the operation of IIASA. It seems likely that the Soviet Union - which likewise underwrites a quarter of the Institute's budget - will follow suit, since by formal agreement the two nations are to make equal contributions. Thus the continued operation of IIASA is called into some question.

The problem is IIASA's function as a means for 'communist bloc' access to data bases available via US information-retrieval services ('hosts'), in particular Lockheed DIALOG. It remains to be seen how IIASA will react to the American pressure; potentially it will decide not to cooperate, but may simply await the possible withdrawal of passwords. These apparently have already been denied, directly from the USA, to some potential customers in the USSR - as has access to reports distributed by the National Technical Information Service. The

US National Academy of Sciences, it should be noted, will certainly attempt to find alternative, non-governmental, sources for funding the work of IIASA, but these would probably not make up for the lost monies.

The IIASA affair is seen by some as an ominous sign of increasing US information protectionism. No doubt there is reason here for concern also on the part of Western European data-base hosts and 'spinners', as well as the various telecommunications administrations. What positions they will take over the long term is not yet clear. It is furthermore to be wondered whether such an embargo on scientific and technical information is actually in the interest of the United States, or may in fact serve to reinforce the efforts of regimes in Eastern Europe to keep control over the contacts which researchers in their countries have with the outside world.

### **Robots**

Motto for the annual convention of a Japanese labour union: "Be prepared to participate in the robot revolution". How many differences with the Western situation do you note? Are there revolting robots in Japan?

### **IBM robots**

IBM seems determined to succeed in the development of robots. They have launched a pretty intelligent, multi-purpose robot for a low price: around \$30,000. IBM calls these devices "mechanical assembly systems".

### **French information industry**

Mr. Mitterrand has been serious: after some nationalization moves, nearly half of the French information industry is now government-owned. There is a rather complicated network of firms and subsidiaries in which government influence is considerable. It has e.g. been decided that there will be just one type of 32-bit minicomputer in the French market (of course the one imported by CII-Honeywell Bull), and that the introduction of other brands will be resisted.

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## **Comments**

### **Digital videodisc for Derwent**

Derwent, in cooperation with Systems Development Corporation, will sell its patents database on digital optical disc, Monty Hyams announced recently. This looks like a definitive rupture of the relationship with their old partners, Robert Maxwell's Pergamon-Infoline, who have opted for analogue videodisc.

**SDC in Euronet**

In January, a consortium of SDC and Derwent opened access to a host in the United Kingdom on which Derwent's patents databases are available online via Euronet. If the mountain will not come to Mahomet . . . .

**Duplication?**

Brighton Polytechnic has been awarded a grant of £36,400 over three years by the British Library "to develop a system for accepting and interpreting cursive handwritten script by a computer". Is it right that we are pretty sure that at least part of this study will duplicate someone else's research?

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## Calendar of Events

April 5-7, 1982

**1982 Office Automation Conference.** Location: San Francisco, CA (USA). Contact: American Federation of Information Processing Societies (AFIPS), 1815 N. Lynn St., Arlington, VA 22209, USA. Tel.: (703)558-3612.

April 26-30, 1982

**International Congress on Health Organisation and Medical Informatics.** Location: Strasbourg, France. Contact: WAMI, 74 rue de la Colonie, 75013 Paris, France.

April 28-29, 1982

**EUSIDIC Spring Technical Meeting.** Location: Paris, France. Contact: C.W. Cleverdon, Administrative Secretary, EUSIDIC, Rose Cottage, Moulsoe, Newport Pagnell, UK.

May 2-6, 1982

**Tenth Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for Information Science (CAIS).** Location: Ottawa, Canada. Contact: Mary F. Laughton, Conference Chairman, CAIS 82, P.O.Box 2320, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5W5, Canada.

May 3-7, 1982

**International Congress on the Universal Availability of Publications.** Location: Paris, France. Contact: Chief, Section for Development of Information Infrastructures, Division of the General Information Programme, UNESCO, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.